The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

ANGELUS

Saint Peter's Square
Sunday, 22 October 2023

[Multimedia]

Dear brothers and sisters, *buongiorno*!

The Gospel of today's Liturgy tells us about some Pharisees who join with the Herodians to set a trap for Jesus. They were always trying to set traps for him. They go to him and ask: "Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" (*Mt* 22:17). It is a ruse: if Jesus legitimises the tax, he places himself on the side of a political power that is ill-supported by the people, whereas if he says not to pay it, he can be accused of rebellion against the empire. A real trap. However, he escapes this snare. He asks them to show him a coin, which bears the image of Caesar, and says to them: "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (v. 21). What does this mean?

These words of Jesus have become commonplace, but at times they have been used incorrectly — or at least reductively — to talk about relations between Church and State, between Christians and politics; they are often interpreted as if Jesus wanted to separate "Caesar" from "God", that is, earthly from spiritual reality. At times we too think in this way: faith with its practices is one thing, and daily life is another. And this will not do. No. This is a form of "schizophrenia", as if faith had nothing to do with real life, with the challenges of society, with social justice, with politics and so forth.

In reality, Jesus wants to help us place "Caesar" and "God" each in their proper place. The care for earthly order belongs to Caesar — that is, to politics, to civil institutions, to social and economic

processes, and we who are immersed in this reality must give back to society what it offers us, through our contribution as responsible citizens, taking care of what is entrusted to us, promoting law and justice in the world of work, paying our taxes honestly, committing ourselves to the common good, and so on. At the same time however, Jesus affirms the fundamental reality: that man belongs to God: *all of man* and *every human being*. And this means that we do not belong to any earthly reality, to any "Caesar". We are the Lord's, and we must not be slaves to any earthly power. On the coin, then, there is the image of the emperor, but Jesus reminds us that our lives are imprinted with the image of God, which nothing and no one can obscure. The things of this world belong to Caesar, but man and the world itself belong to God. Let us not forget this!

We understand, then, that Jesus is restoring each one of us to our own identity: on the coin of this world there is the image of Caesar, but you, me — each one of us — which image do you carry within yourself? Let us ask ourselves this question: what image do I carry inside myself? You — whose is the image of your life? Do we remember that we belong to the Lord, or do we let ourselves be shaped by the logic of the world and make work, politics and money our idols to be worshipped?

May the Holy Virgin help us to recognize and honour our dignity and that of every human being.

After praying the Angelus, the Holy Father continued:

Dear brothers and sisters, once more my thoughts turn to what is happening in Israel and Palestine. I am very concerned, grieved. I pray and I am close to all those who are suffering: the hostages, the wounded, the victims and their relatives. I think of the serious humanitarian situation in Gaza and I am saddened that the Anglican hospital and the Greek-Orthodox parish have also been hit in recent days. I renew my appeal for areas to be opened, for humanitarian aid to continue to arrive, and for the hostages to be freed.

War, any war that there is in the world — I also think of martyred Ukraine — is a defeat. War is always a defeat; it is a destruction of human fraternity. Brothers, stop! Stop!

I remind you that I have proclaimed a day of fasting, prayer and penance for next Friday, 27 October, and that on that same evening at 6 p.m. in Saint Peter's Square, we will spend an hour in prayer to implore peace in the world.

Today we are celebrating World Mission Sunday, which has the theme: "*Hearts on fire, feet on the move*". Two images that say everything! I urge everyone, in the dioceses and in the parishes, to participate actively.

I greet you all, people of Rome and pilgrims, in particular the *Siervas de los Pobres hijas del Sagrado Corazón de Jesús* religious sisters, from Granada; the members of the *Centro Académico Romano Fundación*, the Confraternity of the *Señor de los Milagros*, of the Peruvians in Rome; and thank you, thank you for your witness! Keep up the good work, with such beautiful devotion.

I greet the members of the "All custodians of humanity" lay missionary movement; the polyphonic "*Sant'Antonio Abate*" choir of Cordenons, and the associations of the faithful from Naples and Casagiove.

I also greet the young people of "*Casa Giardino*" (Garden house) of Casalmaggiore; the group of young friends from the Emmanuel Community; the directors and teachers from the "*Jean XXIII*" Catholic School of Toulon, and the students from the "*Saint Croix*" High School of Neuilly.

I wish you all a happy Sunday. You too, young people of the *Immaculata*. And please, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch. *Arrivederci*!

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