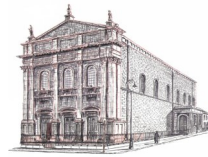




**PARISH OF ST. AGATHA**  
**16TH/17TH OCTOBER 2020**



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**POPE SAYS: GOOD CITIZENS MUST CONTRIBUTE TO SOCIETY AND BEAR WITNESS TO THE GOSPEL**

Pope Francis tells Christians they have the duty and the responsibility to be a living presence in society, inspiring it with the Gospel. He called on Christians to dedicate themselves generously to the promotion and defence of human dignity in today's world, bearing witness to God and the meaning of life. The Pope reflected on the Gospel reading of the day (Mt 22: 15-21) in which Jesus spells out the criteria for the distinction between the political sphere and the religious sphere, and gives clear guidelines for the mission of all believers of all times. The reading, the Pope said, "shows us Jesus struggling with the hypocrisy of His adversaries." First, they pay Him compliments but then insidiously try to put Him in trouble and discredit Him before the people by asking whether it is lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not." It was a time, in Palestine, he added, when the domination of the Roman Empire was poorly tolerated, also for religious reasons, and for the people, the image of the emperor on coins symbolised an insult to the God of Israel.

**SEPARATION BETWEEN POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS SPHERES**

Jesus, the Pope explained, knew his interlocutors wanted to trick him into falling into a pitfall by answering either a "yes" or a "no". Jesus did not fall, but his answer was clear: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's".

With this reply, he explained, "Jesus places Himself above the controversy," acknowledging that the tribute to Caesar must be paid, but recalling that "each person carries within him another image, that of God, and therefore it is to Him, and to Him alone, that each person owes his or her existence." "In this sentence of Jesus we find not only the criterion for the distinction between the political sphere and the religious sphere; clear guidelines emerge for the mission of all believers of all times, even for us today," he said.

It is a duty of all citizens, the Pope continued, to pay taxes and comply with the laws of the state. "At the same time, it is necessary to affirm God's primacy in human life and in history, respecting God's right over all that belongs to Him."

**THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH AND OF CHRISTIANS**

Pope Francis went on to explain that it is the mission of the Church and of Christians to speak of God and bear witness to Him to the men and women of our time. By virtue of Baptism, he said, we are all called "to be a living presence in society, inspiring it with the Gospel and with the lifeblood of the Holy Spirit." Thus, the Pope urged believers to commit themselves with humility and with courage, and make "one's own contribution to building the civilisation of love, where justice and fraternity reign."

**BELIEVERS MUST BE HONEST AND CONSTRUCTIVE CITIZENS**

Pope Francis concluded invoking Our Lady to "help us all to flee from all hypocrisy and to be honest and constructive citizens. And may she sustain us, disciples of Christ, in the mission to bear witness that God is the centre and the meaning of life. (Vatican News).

**OUR MISSION IS TO SPEND OF OURSELVES ON EACH OTHER**

Today is Mission Sunday and the evangelising mission of the Church is to spend of ourselves, using the divine currency of Love, Mercy and Charity, on each other, as reminded in today's Gospel (Matt 22:15-21), by Jesus. Give honestly to those who are owed, whether it be taxes or charitable offerings to the poor. To give to the Poor is to give to God. Jesus tells us to, **give back to Caesar what belongs to Caesar – and to God what belongs to God.** The Roman coin had the likeness of Caesar imprinted on it, to remind the people they belonged to him. More importantly, we Christians have the likeness of Jesus imprinted on the coin of our hearts, to remind us that we belong to God. We are stamped with the Seal of the Holy Spirit. Jesus brought Redemption into the world, and like a coin, spent everything of Himself on us, in order, to purchase humanity from the death-grip of Satan. Jesus used Himself as a paid ransom to purchase Freedom and Eternal Life for us. We owe Him everything, because we are in debt to Him, for giving us a New Life beyond the grave. Our re-payments begin now.

**COST OF DISCIPLESHIP**

To be a disciple of Christ incurs a cost. In the Responsorial Psalm today, God asks us to **Give Him Glory and Power** and to entrust ourselves to His reign, allowing Him to teach us the Way to Heaven. The cost of discipleship, is to fully bear witness to God's Teachings, with no exception. The early Christians bore witness to Christ with their lives, knowing they were made in the image of God and not Roman idols. God came to us in the Poor, so we are to, **give back to the Poor, what belongs to the Poor,** meaning, to **share** with them our wealth of love, compassion and money, if we see them in need.

**DUAL CITIZENSHIP**

No Government can claim to itself divine powers of absolute authority. All are subject to the higher demands of Truth and Justice and the Dignity of the person centred in God. In Ireland, there is a desperate attempt by our Government to save lives from Covid-19, yet, on the other hand, they are desperately attempting to get a law passed, which will kill citizens through euthanasia. This is hypocrisy of the highest order and only pleases Satan, and not God. They forget that redemptive suffering endured by Christ, saved the world from the satanic virus of death. We all possess dual citizenship, between belonging to the political territory on earth and to God's Kingdom. We must decide now, which is more important to us? Life belongs to God, so give it to Him and not to Death. Euthanasia, like abortion, is a mortal sin. We must stop offending God, if we expect order to return to the world.

**SUFFERING SERVANTS ON EARTH AND IN PURGATORY**

We are created in God's own likeness (Gen1:26-27), as Suffering Servants (Is 53:3-12) on this earthly pilgrimage, in order to atone for the sins of the world. Those who half-heartedly rejected the Cross, are now Suffering Servants in Purgatory. We are created not to belong to ourselves, but to God, as co-redeemers of the world. In His Goodness and Mercy, He redeemed (saved) the world by the giving of His Precious Blood, His Life (1 Cor. 6:19-20), and now we must contribute to the existence of the world, by offering ourselves as co-redeemers, and living by His Will.

**PENANCE REQUIRED**

Today, ask myself, do I acknowledge that my soul and whole body and life-giving blood belongs to God and not to myself? Do I give to God what rightfully belongs to Him? We are called to spend of ourselves in the form of making sacrifices and penance. Our Lady of Fatima told Lúcia, the Servant of God, that **the sacrifice required of every person is the fulfilment of his or her spiritual duties in life and the observance of God's Law. This is the penance that I now seek and require,** she said.

**SERVE GOD FIRST**

Our earthly life is a pilgrimage, requiring us to do penance and make sacrifices to God, which in turn, will save us from the fires of Hell. Our prayers and sacrifices will lead to Peace in this world and the world to come. Lúcia said, **Our Lady stressed the importance of saying the ROSARY every day, to conquer the Enemy (Satan) and bring Peace to the world.** Am I praying a Rosary every day, especially in these un-peaceful times? The Minister for Finance recently said that this virus is **an invisible enemy.** We Christians know who the Enemy is and must begin now to be guided by God's Authority and Wisdom. St Thomas Moore, the English Martyr said: **Yes, I am the King's good servant, but I serve God first and foremost.** God bless, Fr. Brendan.