

## **“Give to God what belongs to God”- World Mission Sunday 2023**

When a crime is committed, its gravity is assessed by probing into the intention of the criminal. If it is a pre-meditated act, then it is a grave crime and the punishment is harder.

The Pharisees who came to Jesus came with the precise aim of trapping him. It was a pre-meditated trapping plan. Seeking the company of the Herodians, whom they otherwise hated, to execute their plan of trapping Jesus, shows their hypocrisy. But Jesus did not give in to the malicious intent of the Pharisees, and confronted them on their own terms.

The answer on the tax paying issue that Jesus gave to them, that they should give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and give to God what belongs to God, was an appropriate way of avoiding the trap of the Pharisees; that was beyond their grasp. They were forced to accept the defeat, and Jesus called them hypocrites because they were insincere in their intent.

But the deeper meaning of what is contained in Jesus answer is what matters us. The coin belongs to Caesar, because it bears the sign and mark of Caesar. But the human heart, the human person is sealed with the mark of God. Therefore, it belongs to God, and God alone.

Whatever one may possess, all his wealth and riches, everything material and therefore perishable, are not what primarily belongs to God. The most precious thing that belongs to God, is human heart, the human soul that is immortal. “Let’s create him in our own image and likeness” (Gen 1.27), is the core point of Christian anthropology. The human person/soul bears the mark of God.

Baptism and confirmation place a seal, not cancellable on our soul, the seal of belongingness. We are bought with a precious price; the blood of

Christ shed on the cross. That is what makes us, precious in the eyes of God.

Today we celebrate WMS. World Mission Sunday is a day set aside for Catholics worldwide, to recommit themselves to the church's missionary activity through sharing prayer, learning and offering financial support to mission dioceses around the world. This year's theme for WMS- is **"Heart on Fire, Feet on the Move"**. Today's psalm 96 invite us to consider how God's saving presence is meant for all people. "Tell God's glory among all nations, among all peoples". When gospel tells us, "Give to God what belongs to God", if God is the source of all life, then ultimately all we have and all we are comes as a gift from God.

God is still calling people to follow Him and share in his mission to the ends of the earth. We the baptized, are baptized into Christ's mission to bring light into the world. --- On this Sunday, we renew and celebrate our call as missionary disciples. We join with Catholics around the world to support the missionary church wherever it is planted and taking root, and now persecuted more than ever. (e.g. world picture of persecutions)

Like the disciples, chosen to bring good news to the poor and liberty to captives, God is still revealing himself to us in his Word made flesh and life in the Eucharist. God shows no partiality and intends that all may experience his saving presence. As St. Paul confirms in our 2<sup>nd</sup> reading, it is through God's grace and mercy that we are all chosen to receive the gospel of Christ and sent by the holy Spirit, to be ambassadors of God's saving deeds.

Therefore, today, may our hearts also burn with his presence and our feet be on the move with his Spirit, as we recommit ourselves to Church's saving missionary activity with new vigor and enthusiasm, on this World Mission Sunday.