29th Sunday Mission Sunday

Hypocrites! Why this trap set for me? Let me see the money.' They handed him a denarius coin and he said, 'Whose head is this? Whose name?' 'Caesar's' they replied. He then said to them, 'Very well, give back to Caesar what belongs to Caesar – and to God what belongs to God.' The word Caesar simply means ruler or emperor. This most profound teaching which is the basis of the Church's social teaching on justice and equity in our relations with the state did not just happen. It is the result of an insidious plot by the Jews bent on the destruction of Jesus. In their attempt to trap the Lord they pitted their human reasoning against divine Wisdom and failed. The plot was simple. But firstly we need to understand the plight of the Jewish people who had been invaded by foreigners. The Jews were heavily taxed by the Romans to pay for their army and the expansion of the Empire which the Jews detested. So taxes by the Romans were despised by the locals. If one supported the Romans in this regard they were unpopular with the Jews. On the other hand, if one refused to pay due taxes then one could be arrested by the authorities and put into prison. It was a no win situation – they had the Lord in a bind, so it seems. Yet in a few short words, Christ resolved the apparent conflict and provided us with this principle in social ethics. *Render unto Ceasar what belongs to Ceasar and to God what belongs to God*.

Also how often are we in a no win situation – as it seems – and suddenly a door opens and we can see the light or sort out our problems. In our dealings with the Government, be it State or Federal, we need to remind ourselves that all civil entities are transient and not absolute in their authority. For God is above them all, and one day, they will answer to the Lord for their civic stewardship. What is fascinating is that God can also use them to accomplish his will. In the prophetic book of Isaiah we note the reference to Cyrus, this great king, 'who did not know the true Lord' but nevertheless, did his will. King Cyrus reigned over the first Persian Empire (Iran) and when he conquered Babylon in 539 he issued an edict for the Jews (as a non Jew) that ended their seventy year Babylonian exile, allowing them to return to Jerusalem and rebuild their Temple. Thus, Cyrus, as the state authority supported religion using funds and governance. In that context of equitable relations between Church and State, each with own rights and duties, we note that throughout history the state has benefited much because of the generosity of God's faithful. On this Mission Sunday the Church marks the centenary of World Mission Sunday and Pope Leo is calling Catholics to rediscover the mission of the whole Church. The annual celebration traditionally the penultimate Sunday in October—invites Catholics to look beyond the boundaries of their own parish, diocese and country and remember something fundamental: we belong to a Church without borders. Established by Pope Pius XI in 1926, World Mission Sunday is set aside for prayer, reflection and support for the Church's mission of evangelisation, particularly in places where the Church is young and communities face significant challenges. Pope Leo has chosen the theme 'One in Christ, United in Mission' for this centenary year. More than a slogan, it is an invitation to rediscover what makes the Church missionary in Malawi, Africa. Living in one of the most remote communities in Malawi, education is not a given. For some, the distance, cost, and resources required to attend school are deciding factors in whether school is even possible. With the support of Catholic Mission, a new primary school - St Peter's Nyamikuta - is being built. Our contributions on this day can help. Let us be generous to those in need and build up their society. *Render unto Ceasar what belongs to Ceasar and to God what belongs to God*.