

New Brighton, Sunday 6th November 2022

22nd Sunday after Pentecost

“Render, therefore, to Caesar, the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.”¹

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.

Usually, when we hear or remember this word of Jesus, we understand the legitimacy to pay tributes and taxes to governments. We focused mainly upon the first part of Jesus' teaching that we heard today.

As we know, the best way to read and explain the Sacred Scriptures is to place them under the enlightenment of other excerpts of the gospel, and more generally the whole Bible.

This morning, the church did the work for us, putting together several excerpts across the various texts of the mass proper.

More than a good reason given to pay your taxes, which is fair, by the way, the general idea of the mass this morning, is about the time to give account to God at the end of our life, as we are approaching the end of the liturgical year.

In the short excerpt of the Epistle to the Philippians, Saint Paul spoke twice about the coming of Jesus Christ. And the Lord in the Gospel gave this word of justice: “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's”. No doubt the sentence was chosen as we are getting closer of that day of our life when we will give account to our creator. For real, today we feel the same way than past Sundays: the idea of the end of the times, accompanied with the same feelings of fear and contrition, but moreover, confidence in his merciful bounty.

“If You, O Lord, mark iniquities, Lord, who can stand? But with You is forgiveness, O God of Israel.”²

These two lines, which opened the mass with the prayer of the Introit, are our supplication to God to obtain from Him, who is the sovereign judge, the forgiveness for our life of sins. But if you read it carefully, we are not directly asking for it. We don't even mention the word forgiveness. We acknowledge our own unworthiness to receive all the blessings God wants to give us. If God was only looking at our sins, any hope of forgiveness would be lost for us.

But we also know about his Divine Mercy, which is a divine quality and attribute. Therefore, bent with shame, but confident, we are standing before the Lord and say, covered with our miseries, “O Lord, hear my prayer.”³

¹ Mt, XXII, 21

² Ps CXXIX, 3-4; Introit of the 22nd Sunday after Pentecost

³ Ibid, 2

This desire to receive the mercy of the Lord is present and in us because it feeds a bigger and greater desire, the one we meditate with the second glorious mystery of our rosary: a holy desire to go to Heaven. Later during the mass, we contemplated in spirit how the company of the Saints in heaven would be enjoyable and nice: “Behold how good it is, and how pleasant where brethren dwell as one,”⁴ did we sing in the gradual as we just celebrated the feast of All Saints. The church contemplates here the days we waited so long for, and that we will spend in the Heavenly Jerusalem, when we will be one with Christ, and when the graces of his eternal consecration will continuously be poured over us in a perfect and beautiful fragrance of holiness.

To give a last comfort before hearing the teaching of the Lord in the Gospel, the verse of the Alleluia, come to comfort the shy people amongst us. These who fear the trials and difficulties that will surely happen before the final reward of the eternal contemplation of God in Heaven. “Let them that fear the Lord, hope in Him. He is their helper and their protector.”⁵ Do not be afraid: those who fear the Lord, meaning those who are used to carry with them the desire to accomplish his divine will in all things, those are helped and protected by the Lord himself.

But as we are so well prepared to present ourselves in front of the Lord, it seems that one last thing still refrains us to come in front of Him, and we call someone else to speak on our behalf in front of God. The Offertory antiphon asks an ultimate grace from God: that the words we would say to introduce ourselves should not be said from us, but placed upon our lips by the Son. As we are approaching the time we will give account, we know that we will only be gracious to Our Lord if he finds in us only what is from him, from His Son. The Grace of God, which makes us share the intimate life of God, is making us sons before the Father, who can only love us from that moment.

And the thanksgiving for being justified before the Lord is said at the end of the Mass with the Communion antiphon: “I call a upon you, for you will answer me. O God, incline your ear to me, hear my word.”⁶ I'm praying you because until now you always heard and granted me. Please, would you continue?

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Amen

Main source used: Dom Ludovic Baron, L'Expression du chant grégorien, 2nd volume, commentaire liturgique et musical des messes des dimanches et des principales fêtes de l'année : Le Temporal, de Pâques à l'Avent. Éditions Saint Rémi, 1947.

⁴ Ps CXXII, 1; Gradual of the 22nd Sunday after Pentecost

⁵ Ps CXIII, 11; Alleluia verse of the 22nd Sunday after Pentecost

⁶ Ps XVI, 6; Communion antiphon of the 22nd Sunday after Pentecost