‘The Question of Paying Taxes’ (*Matthew 22:15-21*)

Sunday 18 October 2026 Year A

Collect

Lord Jesus Christ,

We all get caught up in the cares of the world,

We build our Towers of Babel on money, prestige, power, influence.

Help us to return to Jesus and, in Him, build your civilisation of love here on Earth.

Amen

Scripture

The Question about Paying Taxes

15 Then the Pharisees went and plotted to entrap him in what he said. 16 So they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, “Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one, for you do not regard people with partiality. 17 Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not?” 18 But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, “Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites? 19 Show me the coin used for the tax.” And they brought him a denarius. 20 Then he said to them, “Whose head is this and whose title?” 21 They answered, “Caesar’s.” Then he said to them, “Give therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things that are God’s.” 22 When they heard this, they were amazed, and they left him and went away.

New Revised Standard Updated Edition

Reflection

Are we caught up in money, taxes….the cares of ‘the world’? .....

Do we follow Jesus in centering our lives in love and leaving to Caesar the things that are Ceasar’s? .....

As we reflect on this Sunday’s Gospel, these are central questions. We live in a wealthy and privileged society where consumption is a way of life. We shop 24x7 to the detriment of our less fortunate brothers and sisters around the world.

Jesus rejects this worldly focus. The flattering comments of the Pharisees that simply demonstrate their arrogance and distance from God. He re-focuses them, and us, on the reality that worldly matters are passing. They have their place, but our primary focus needs to be on God, is whose image we have been made.

This has profound implications. It means that our primary orientation is creative and infinite, rather than destructive and fleeting. Jesus is not rejecting the things of the world. He is just putting them in their proper place.

Our daily lives need to be the same. As Benedictine Oblates, we know everything is sacred. Nothing is separate from our Creator. To keep this focus we must begin each day in prayer, personal and communal, and then we are properly disposed to use the goods of our world, and they are goods used in the right way, to create, to build up.

Have we remained faithful to our vows and balance our day between prayer, study and work?

As Oblates, often living in busy cities and towns, it is so easy to get caught up in the demands of work and family commitments and let these sound daily practices fall away.

This theme of balance between the *'City of God and the City of Man'* is wonderfully treated in the recent encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas* by our Augustinian Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV. In addressing the challenges of AI and technology, Leo wisely reminds us of Catholic Social Teaching and the guidance of Church Fathers like his Holy Father Augustine.

He lays out an ethical framework centred on building a civilisation of love. Like Jesus, he doesn't reject what is Caesar's, in this case the power of Artificial Intelligence, but reminds us of its proper use. It must be used creatively to build up society and be accessible to all.

So let us take time in silence today to reflect on the proper use of worldly goods to build up the civilisation of love. This is our creative purpose exemplified by God Incarnate, our Lord Jesus Christ, in today's Gospel.

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,

Help us to use the blessings of this world creatively,

Praying, sharing and working each day to build Your civilisation of Love.

A world where all goods are shared and Your beautiful creation is sustained.

Amen

For Further Reflection

Magnifica Humanitas, Pope Leo XIV (2026)

Section 183 - The Culture of Power and the Civilization of Love

Faced with these transformations, we must recall the principles of Social Doctrine — the dignity of the person, the common good, the universal destination of goods, subsidiarity, solidarity and justice — for they are criteria for judging whether technologies truly serve humanity or are subjugating it. We should, therefore, consider these principles as guidelines for our decision-making.

This Lectio was prepared by Paul ‘Godric’ Griffiths, Oblate OSB, Jamberoo Abbey (1994)