

## READINGS AND REFLECTIONS – TWENTY-NINTH SUNDAY -- A

### **First Reading**                      Isaiah 45:1, 4-6

A reading from the prophet Isaiah

Thus says the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus,  
whom he has taken by his right hand  
to subdue nations before him  
and strip the loins of kings,  
to force gateways before him  
that their gates be closed no more:  
It is for the sake of my servant Jacob,  
of Israel my chosen one,  
that I have called you by your name,  
conferring a title though you do not know me.  
I am the Lord, unrivalled;  
there is no other God besides me.  
Though you do not know me, I arm you  
that men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun  
that, apart from me, all is nothing.

### **Responsorial Psalm**                      Ps 95:1, 3-5, 7-10

*Give the Lord glory and honour.*

O sing a new song to the Lord,  
sing to the Lord all the earth.  
Tell among the nations his glory  
and his wonders among all the peoples.

*Give the Lord glory and honour.*

The Lord is great and worthy of praise,  
to be feared above all gods;  
the gods of the heathens are naught.  
It was the Lord who made the heavens.

*Give the Lord glory and honour.*

Give the Lord, you families of peoples,  
give the Lord glory and power,  
give the Lord the glory of his name.  
Bring an offering and enter his courts.

*Give the Lord glory and honour.*

Worship the Lord in his temple,  
O earth, tremble before him.  
Proclaim to the nations: 'God is king,'  
He will judge the peoples in fairness.

*Give the Lord glory and honour.*

## **Second Reading** 1 Thessalonians 1:1-5

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Thessalonians

From Paul, Silvanus and Timothy, to the Church in Thessalonika which is in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ; wishing you grace and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

We always mention you in our prayers and thank God for you all, and constantly remember before God our Father how you have shown your faith in action, worked for love and persevered through hope, in our Lord Jesus Christ.

We know, brothers, that God loves you and that you have been chosen, because when we brought the Good News to you, it came to you not only as words, but as power and as the Holy Spirit and as utter conviction.

## **Gospel** Matthew 22:15-21

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

The Pharisees went away to work out between them how to trap Jesus in what he said. And they sent their disciples to him, together with the Herodians, to say, 'Master, we know that you are an honest man and teach the way of God in an honest way, and that you are not afraid of anyone, because a man's rank means nothing to you. Tell us your opinion then. Is it permissible to pay taxes to Caesar or not?' But Jesus was aware of their malice and replied, 'You hypocrites! Why do you set this trap for me? Let me see the money you pay the tax with.' They handed him a denarius, and he replied, '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.'

## REFLECTIONS

The coin – the denarius -- bore Caesar's image – it belonged to him, and those who used it also came under his power.

But what bears God's image? What belongs to God?

All that is created bears God's image – all belongs to God.

Hence Jesus' reply is more than a clever answer to a treacherous question.

It is rather a challenge to recognise that the entire world stands under God's sovereignty and is not divided into two quite separate domains – one part for God and the other for civil authority.

Translated into today's situation the issue becomes how we treat what bears God's image: the environment and especially the apex of God's creation – human beings.

The useful touchstone is to examine how we care for that which is vulnerable and voiceless. The natural environment falls into this category as do certain groups of vulnerable people – among them the young, the poor, the disabled, the marginalised, the immigrants, the victims of violence, and the elderly.

We still have much to do before we manage the natural environment in a non-destructive way.

We still have much to do before the vulnerable in our society are treated with the respect and given the protection that they deserve as human beings.

O God,  
whose image we bear  
and whose name we carry,  
yours is the world and all it contains.

Form our wills at all times to accord with your own,  
and so direct our hearts,  
that we may render you undivided service.

Recall us to our true allegiance,  
so that above the powers and rulers of this world  
you alone may claim our fullest loyalty and love.

We make our prayer through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
God for ever and ever.

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