Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

Gospel text (*Mt* 22:15-21): The Pharisees went off and plotted how they might entrap Jesus in speech... Knowing their malice, Jesus said, "Why are you testing me, you hypocrites? Show me the coin that pays the census tax." Then they handed him the Roman coin. He said to them, "Whose image is this and whose inscription?" They replied, "Caesar's." At that he said to them, "Then repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God."

The political State: legitimacy and limits

EDITORIAL TEAM evangeli.net (based on texts by Benedict XVI)
(Città del Vaticano, Vatican)

Today, Jesus responds to the Pharisees that, if the roman emperor is guarantor of Law, he may then demand obedience. However, this extent of obedience is, at the same time, reduced: there is what belongs to "Caesar" and there is what belongs to God. When the "Caesar" upsurges as God, he has surpassed his limits, and to obey him would be to deny God.

If we consider these correlations, we discover a very sober conception of the State: to the extent which it guarantees peace and Law, these correlations correspond to a divine provision (a sort of creatural sorting). You have to respect the State precisely in its profane character; this need arises from the essence of the man as "animal sociale et politicum". At the same time there is a delimitation of the State: it has its own scope, which it may not exceed; because it must comply with the highest "Right of God".

—"You shall worship the Lord, your God, only". The refusal to worship the Emperor and, in general, the refusal to worship the State, is nothing else but the refusal to totalitarian States.