Tuesday of the Ninth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (*Mk* 12:13-17): Some Pharisees and Herodians were sent to Jesus to ensnare him in his speech. They came and said to him, "Teacher, we know that you are a truthful man and that you are not concerned with anyone's opinion. You do not regard a person's status but teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it lawful to pay the census tax to Caesar or not? Should we pay or should we not pay?"

Knowing their hypocrisy he said to them, "Why are you testing me? Bring me a denarius to look at." They brought one to him and he said to them, "Whose image and inscription is this?" They replied to him, "Caesar's." So Jesus said to them, "Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God." They were utterly amazed at him.

"Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God."

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Today, we marvel again at Christ's wit and wisdom. With his masterly response, He directly points out to the fair autonomy of the worldly realities: "Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar" (Mk 12:17).

Today's Word, however, is something more than knowing how to successfully get out of a conflict; it is something utterly relevant to all aspects of our life: what am I giving God? Is it really what I prize more in my life? Where did I place my heart? "For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be" (Lk 12:34).

Yes, indeed, according to St. Jerome, "you must necessarily render unto Caesar the coin in his image; but you willingly give your best to God, because it is his image, not Caesar's, that is on us." Throughout his life, Jesus Christ constantly poses the matter of choice. It is up to us to choose, and our options are clear: either we choose the worldly values to live by or we decide to live by the Gospel's values.

It is always a time for choice before us, a time for conversion, a time to "replace" our life again in the dynamics of God. Our prayer, and especially the prayer made by God's Word, will gradually reveal to us what God expects of us. He who opts for God becomes God's dwelling place, for "whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him" (Jn 14:23). And prayer becomes the true school where, as Tertulian says, "Our Lord Jesus Christ himself

declared what he was, what he had been, how he was carrying out his Father's will, what obligations he demanded of men." If only we would succeed in choosing the right way that suits us!

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- "Authorities should exercise devoutly in peace and meekness the power given them by God." (Saint Clement of Rome)

- "Caesar is not everything. Another sovereignty emerges whose origins and essence are not of this world but of 'the heavens above': it is that of Truth, which also claims a right to be heard by the State." (Benedict XVI)

- "From the beginning of Christian history, the assertion of Christ's lordship over the world and over history has implicitly recognized that man should not submit his personal freedom in an absolute manner to any earthly power, but only to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Caesar is not 'the Lord'..." (Catechism of the Catholic Church, Nº 450)