

PARISH OF BLESSED JAMES BELL

*Serving St Benedict's, St Mary's & St Oswald's,
Warrington*



SYNOD SUNDAY
29th Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)
18th October 2020

Entrance Procession

Music: Holy God, we praise thy name – C A Walworth

Collect

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

R. Amen.

Liturgy of the Word

First Reading *(1 Thess 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.

The word of the Lord.

R. Thanks be to God.

Psalm 96

Give the Lord glory and honour.

- 1 Sing to the Lord a new song;
sing to the Lord, all you lands.
Tell his glory among the nations;
among all peoples, his wondrous deeds.
- 2 For great is the Lord and highly to be praised;
awesome is he, beyond all gods.
For all the gods of the nations
are things of nought,
but the Lord made the heavens.

Gospel Acclamation (Lourdes)

Gospel

(Matthew 22: 15-21)

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

R. Glory to you, O Lord.

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 said, '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.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

R. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily

Bidding Prayers

Liturgy of the Eucharist

Preparation of the Gifts

Music: Libster Jesu – J S Bach

Prayer over the Offerings

Lord God,
may the gifts we offer
bring us you love and forgiveness
and give us freedom to serve you with our lives.
Through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen.

Eucharistic Acclamations

Sanctus En Fa Majeur – Lourdes

The Mystery of Faith

**When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup,
we proclaim your Death, O Lord,
until you come again.**

Communion Rite

Music: There is a longing in our hearts – Anne Quigley

Prayer after Communion (*Synod Prayer*)

Father, we thank you
for the love you have shown us
in the gift of Jesus, your Son.
We thank you for the gift of the Church,
through which you show us
that you are always with us
and are always at work in our lives.

As we journey together to Synod 2020,
help us to become the Church
that you are calling us to be.
May your Holy Spirit be powerfully at work among us.
Strengthen each of us
and guide Francis, our Pope,
and Malcolm, our Archbishop.

Help us to respond
to the challenges of our times in new ways
to bring your love to all our sisters and brothers.
We make this prayer through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

St John Henry Newman: pray for us.

Concluding Rite

Distribution of Communion

Music: Take and eat – Michael Joncas

Acknowledgements

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Reflection on the Gospel

By Fr Simon Gore

Director of Animate Youth

One of the things that always amazes me about Jesus is his way with words. I have always appreciated a good turn of phrase and I enjoy verbal sparring and clever word play, and when you read the Gospels it seems we are often given a better lesson in how to use language than we might get by studying Shakespeare for a year.

I do often wonder how accurate the Gospels are in this regard? Was Jesus really so quick with his answers when he was asked difficult questions? Was he like a good stand up comedian with his responses lined up and waiting for any would-be heckler? Or are we given a slightly redacted version of events and there was actually a lot more 'umm-ing and ah-h-ing'? It doesn't really matter, of course, but I would still like to know. And I would especially like to know how he came up with this classic line that we hear today, 'Give unto Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's'.

At the start of American presidential debates and as our own politicians are grilled over pandemic responses you could not ask any one of them to come

up with a more brilliant political answer that shuts the opposition down and gives you the high ground.

The pharisees and Herodians had approached Jesus with malice in their hearts. They were not innocently asking a question to aid their own moral and spiritual life. It was a trap. But Jesus sees through the trap and sends them on their way, slinking back from whence they came. A lot of ink has been spilt trying to ascertain what exactly Jesus might have meant for us when he says to give to Caesar and to give to God. There has often been a tendency to use this phrase as a basis for the separation of Church and State, that is to say that they are two separate entities and so obedience to the state must be absolute.

But I am always a little guarded about being so definitive about Jesus offering us political lessons for modern living. If Jesus wanted to give us political guidance he had plenty of opportunities, and this was one such opportunity when he could have been far more forthright if he wished to leave a lasting political message for us to follow. Indeed, it seems to me that it rather demeans the message of Jesus by having him bandy words in a tawdry political circus. Surely Jesus was above such things, and so the words he offers are intended to elevate us above such things as well?

Taken out of the obvious political background to the question and its possible repercussions Jesus seems, to me at least, to be reminding me that although I live in the world I should not forget about God. A fairly simple message really. I am reminded that I can live in this world and in this society and give and take from that world, the realm of Caesar. But while I live and move and have my being here I should not forget about God and should always take the time to reflect on where God is in this realm and in my life: I should give to God.

Hardly ground-breaking, I think. But I must confess that this passage of scripture has come at an opportune time for me as I wonder if I have forgotten this fairly simple message recently.

The reason I say this is because I have become slightly obsessed with the newest government pandemic guidelines: which country is now on the red-list, can I meet my mates for a pint or will I get arrested if I set foot outside the door? I have certainly paid attention to what is of the world, what is of Caesar. And of course, to keep up to date with the news and that which can help keep us safe is the sign of a good citizen so I do not worry too much about that.

But I do worry that I could quote you statistics about transmission rates in Belarus but cannot quite remember what I read in the Office of Readings this morning. That can't be right.

Jesus' clever word play reminds me, at least, of a very simple fact. I cannot allow myself to devote all my time and energy to the world at the risk of losing time with God. I should make more time and create more space to give to God what is, ultimately, his: my life.