

Here's a text if you've only a minute ...

I am the Lord, unrivalled; there is no other God besides me.

First Reading

He will judge the peoples in fairness.

Psalms

'The King's good servant, but God's first.'

St Thomas More

Almighty and ever-living God,
Our source of power and inspiration,
Give us strength and joy
in serving you as followers of Christ.

Old Opening Prayer

This week's texts if you want to reflect further:
Isaiah 45: 1,4-6; Ps. 95 (96); 1 Thessalonians 1: 1-5; Matthew 22: 15-21



James Tissot (1836-1902), *The Tribute Money*
(Wikimedia Commons)

'Give to God what belongs to God' (*Gospel*)

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ST BEUNO'S OUTREACH IN THE DIOCESE OF WREXHAM



Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Year A, 22nd October 2023

'Give to God
what belongs to God'

Today's readings concentrate on God as ruler over all the world.

The **First Reading** teaches us about the relationship between God and Cyrus, one of the most powerful earthly rulers. Even though Cyrus did not know God, God works through him, giving Cyrus all that he needs to help accomplish God's plans.

The **Psalms** calls us to speak of the Lord's greatness and glory throughout the world, and to pay him worship and honour.

In the **Second Reading**, St Paul gives thanks to God and prays for the Christian community in Thessalonica. Chosen and loved by God, the community – aided by the power of the Holy Spirit, and strengthened by its faith and hope in God – continues in its work.

The **Gospel** message is that we belong completely to God and are therefore called to offer God our entire selves. Jesus is aware that the Pharisees and Herodians are trying to trip him up when they ask if Jewish people should pay taxes to the Romans. Although he confirms that this is reasonable, at the same time he also affirms that *our first duty is to serve God*, and to give God what is due.

This week, maybe we can pray for the rulers and leaders of our world, particularly during these difficult times. We ask that God will work through them towards justice and peace. We pray too that the Holy Spirit will guide each of us in how we can serve God best.



Opening Prayer

Almighty ever-living God,
grant that we may always conform our will to yours
and serve your majesty in sincerity of heart.

First Reading Isaiah 45: 1, 4–6

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 and women may know
from the rising to the setting of the sun
that, apart from me, all is nothing.

I come to my time and place of prayer willingly and intentionally.
As always, I take as much time as I need to become still. There is no rush.
What is going on in my life at the moment? I note how I am feeling, then
gently and lovingly turn my attention towards God.
When ready, I slowly read the text. Where am I drawn?
I savour any word or phrase that particularly moves me ... allowing God's
word to enter into my heart, my senses, my whole being.
What am I noticing?
I read the text again. Perhaps I picture myself as Cyrus, the Persian king
chosen to be part of God's plan.
How does it feel being called by my name, anointed, and taken by the
hand by the Lord?
Maybe I ponder where the Lord is taking me, what he is asking of me.
Is there a gateway I need God to help me open? Is there something
holding me back, getting in the way perhaps ...?
Reminding myself that God loves me exactly as I am, and not how I feel I
ought to be, I speak to Jesus from my heart about whatever arises.
I listen for his response.
As I read '*there is no other God besides me*' perhaps I ponder – might
there sometimes be 'other Gods' in my own life: my mobile phone, my
work, my car...?
Again, I speak to Jesus simply and freely, and ask for his help.
Giving thanks for this time, I slowly close with a prayer of my choice.

Gospel Matthew 22: 15–21

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 person'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'.

As I prepare for prayer, I become aware of my breathing. As I breathe in,
I take in God's love; as I breathe out, I surrender any concerns to God.
When ready, I read the Gospel slowly, carefully, letting the words soak in.
Perhaps I ponder the phrase '*give back to Caesar what belongs to Caesar –
and to God what belongs to God*'. I think of all that God has given me.
How am I offering my time and my entire self to God?
Does my faith always impact the way I live my everyday life?
Into what areas of my life might I need to allow God to come?
Perhaps I want to tell Jesus of any worries, fears or pressures ... anything
that might be holding me back.
He is listening ... he already knows and understands.
I can tell him my deepest longings too, just as I would a dear friend.
As I read the passage again, I may find it helpful to imagine myself in the
scene: perhaps as a Herodian ... or a disciple of the Pharisees or of Jesus ...
or just as myself.
What do I see and hear? What do I notice about Jesus ... how he holds the
coin ... the tone of his voice ... the expression on his face?
Do his eyes catch mine? How do I feel about that?
Perhaps he says something to me. How do I want to respond?
I ask Jesus to give me the grace I need at this time, so that I can follow him
more closely.
Giving thanks and praise to God, I end slowly '*Glory be ...*'