

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Within your will, O Lord, all things are established,
and there is none that can resist your will.
For you have made all things, the heaven and the earth,
and all that is held within the circle of heaven;
you are the Lord of all.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

COLLECT

Almighty ever-living God,
who in the abundance of your kindness
surpass the merits and the desires of those
who entreat you,
pour out your mercy upon us
to pardon what conscience dreads
and to give what prayer does not dare to ask.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of
the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

FIRST READING

Isaiah 5:1-7

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.
Let me sing to my friend
the song of his love for his vineyard.
My friend had a vineyard on a fertile hillside.
He dug the soil, cleared it of stones,
and planted choice vines in it.
In the middle he built a tower,
he dug a press there too.
He expected it to yield grapes,
but sour grapes were all that it gave.
And now, inhabitants of Jerusalem
and men of Judah,
I ask you to judge
between my vineyard and me.
What could I have done for my vineyard
that I have not done?
I expected it to yield grapes.
Why did it yield sour grapes instead?
Very well, I will tell you
what I am going to do to my vineyard:
I will take away its hedge for it to be grazed on,
and knock down its wall for it to be trampled on.
I will lay it waste, unpruned, undug;
overgrown by the briar and the thorn.
I will command the clouds
to rain no rain on it.
Yes, the vineyard of the Lord of hosts
is the House of Israel,
and the men of Judah that chosen plant.
He expected justice, but found bloodshed,
integrity, but only a cry of distress.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 79

Response:

The vineyard of the Lord is the House of Israel.

- You brought a vine out of Egypt;
to plant it you drove out the nations.
It stretched out its branches to the sea,
to the Great River it stretched out its
shoots. (R.)
- Then why have you broken down its
walls?
It is plucked by all who pass by.
It is ravaged by the boar of the forest,
devoured by the beasts of the field. (R.)
- God of hosts, turn again, we implore,
look down from heaven and see.
Visit this vine and protect it,
the vine your right hand has planted. (R.)
- And we shall never forsake you again:
give us life that we may call upon your
name.
God of hosts, bring us back;
let your face shine on us and we shall be
saved. (R.)

SECOND READING

Philippians 4:6-9

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the
Philippians.

There is no need to worry; but if there is
anything you need, pray for it, asking God for
it with prayer and thanksgiving, and that peace
of God, which is so much greater than we can
understand, will guard your hearts and your
thoughts, in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers,
fill your minds with everything that is true,
everything that is noble, everything that is good
and pure, everything that we love and honour,
and everything that can be thought virtuous or
worthy of praise. Keep doing all the things that
you learnt from me and have been taught by
me and have heard or seen that I do. Then the
God of peace will be with you.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!
I call you friends, says the Lord,
because I have made known to you
everything I have learnt from my Father.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Matthew 21:33-43

A reading from the holy Gospel according to
Matthew.

Jesus said to the chief priests and the elders
of the people, "Listen to another parable.
There was a man, a landowner, who planted a
vineyard; he fenced it round, dug a winepress in
it and built a tower; then he leased it to tenants
and went abroad. When vintage time drew near
he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his
produce. But the tenants seized his servants,
thrashed one, killed another and stoned a third.
Next he sent some more servants, this time
a larger number, and they dealt with them in
the same way. Finally he sent his son to them.
'They will respect my son,' he said. But when
the tenants saw the son, they said to each other,
'This is the heir. Come on, let us kill him and
take over his inheritance.' So they seized him
and threw him out of the vineyard and killed
him. Now when the owner of the vineyard

comes, what will he do to those tenants?" They
answered, "He will bring those wretches to a
wretched end and lease the vineyard to other
tenants who will deliver the produce to him
when the season arrives." Jesus said to them,
"Have you never read in the scriptures:
It was the stone rejected by the builders
that became the keystone.
This was the Lord's doing
and it is wonderful to see?
'I tell you, then, that the kingdom of God will
be taken from you and given to a people who
will produce its fruit.'"

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.
I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,

(all bow during the next three lines)

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the
Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church.
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness
of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the
dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Accept, O Lord, we pray,
the sacrifices instituted by your commands
and, through the sacred mysteries,
which we celebrate with dutiful service,
graciously complete the sanctifying work
by which you are pleased to redeem us.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

The Lord is good to those who hope in him,
to the soul that seeks him.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Grant us, almighty God,
that we may be refreshed and nourished
by the Sacrament which we have received,
so as to be transformed into what we consume.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE WORD

THE LORD'S VINEYARD

(MATTHEW 21:33-43)

Once again, we come across the symbol of the vineyard. In the Hebrew Bible, this image is often used in relation to Israel, and we found it in the parable of the generous owner who paid all his workers at the same rate.

Jesus tells this parable we hear today to the chief priests and elders, who have a position of authority among the people, and therefore one of responsibility for their wellbeing and care. The thrust of the parable concerns the Jewish leaders' plot to have Jesus killed: Matthew thus presents their treatment of Jesus as being in line with previous leaders' conduct towards the earlier prophets (although there is no evidence of any biblical prophets being murdered). We might remember that Matthew's community has a good proportion of Jewish members, so the rejection he speaks of is of the Jewish leaders, and not Israel as a whole. It is the tenants who are replaced, not the vineyard itself. Perhaps the better understanding of the expression that the kingdom of God will be "given to a people who will produce its fruit" is that it applies to the leaders of the Jewish-Christian community of which Matthew is a member. ■

REFLECT

A worrying phenomenon in recent times has been the rise of prejudice against all sorts of people. Suspicion of "foreigners", immigrants, people seeking asylum and refuge has become commonplace throughout the northern hemisphere. The return of antisemitism especially has been noticeable in many quarters. In the past, this has been fuelled especially by texts from the Gospels according to Matthew and John, which have been interpreted as laying the blame for the suffering and crucifixion of Jesus squarely at the feet of the Jewish people as a whole. The Christian Church was portrayed as the true Israel, replacing God's covenant with Israel.

Critical scholarship of the New Testament has called into question this blanket blaming of the entire Jewish people: the leaders, chiefly concerned with the political implications of Jesus' teaching being a threat to their social position, were the ones who brought about Jesus' death, and had him executed, not as the Son of God, but on the political charge of claiming to be "the King of the Jews". Given the fact that the early Church existed in the Roman Empire, it was diplomatic to shift the responsibility for the crucifixion away from the Roman authorities and onto the Jewish leaders.

We might remember that one of the ingredients which went into the writing of the Gospels was the situation of the community in which the evangelist, in this case, Matthew, was at work. So the hostility between Jesus and the leaders of his time reflects the later difficulties between the Church and the synagogue. Jesus was a Jew, and many of his teachings are in harmony with those of rabbis whose sayings have come down to us through the writings of their disciples. Pope Francis has shown by his actions the importance of respect for people of other faiths, especially Jews and Muslims, out of which genuine friendship can grow. ■

SAY

Jesus is the true vine:
we are his branches.
(see John 15:5)

LEARN

The vineyard is a symbol frequently used in the Bible to represent Israel.

The chief priests and elders were essentially political figures: their power base was the Jerusalem Temple.

Jesus was put to death on a political charge, which was published on the inscription on the cross: "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews".

DO

Find out if there is an ecumenical or interfaith group in your local area: consider going to a meeting to discover what members of other denominations or religions actually are like, and what they really believe.



ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities,
Lord, who could stand?
But with you is found forgiveness,
O God of Israel.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

May your grace, O Lord, we pray,
at all times go before us and follow after
and make us always determined
to carry out good works.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of
the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING Isaiah 25:6-10

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.
On this mountain,
the Lord of hosts will prepare for all people
a banquet of rich food, a banquet of fine
wines,
of food rich and juicy, of fine strained wines.
On this mountain he will remove
the mourning veil covering all peoples,
and the shroud enveloping all nations,
he will destroy Death for ever.
The Lord will wipe away
the tears from every cheek;
he will take away his people's shame
everywhere on earth,
for the Lord has said so.
That day, it will be said: See, this is our God
in whom we hoped for salvation;
the Lord is the one in whom we hoped.
We exult and we rejoice
that he has saved us;
for the hand of the Lord
rests on this mountain.
The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM Psalm 22

Response:
In the Lord's own house shall I dwell
for ever and ever.

- The Lord is my shepherd;
there is nothing I shall want.
Fresh and green are the pastures
where he gives me repose.

- Near restful waters he leads me,
to revive my drooping spirit. (R.)
- He guides me along the right path;
he is true to his name.
If I should walk in the valley of darkness
no evil would I fear.
You are there with your crook and your
staff;
with these you give me comfort. (R.)
- You have prepared a banquet for me
in the sight of my foes.
My head you have anointed with oil;
my cup is overflowing. (R.)
- Surely goodness and kindness shall
follow me
all the days of my life.
In the Lord's own house shall I dwell
for ever and ever. (R.)

SECOND READING Philippians 4:12-14,19-20

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the
Philippians.

I know how to be poor and I know how to be
rich too. I have been through my initiation
and now I am ready for anything anywhere:
full stomach or empty stomach, poverty or
plenty. There is nothing I cannot master with
the help of the One who gives me strength.
All the same, it was good of you to share
with me in my hardships. In return my God
will fulfil all your needs, in Christ Jesus, as
lavishly as only God can. Glory to God, our
Father, for ever and ever. Amen.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!
The Word was made flesh and lived among
us;
to all who did accept him
he gave power to become children of God.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL Matthew 22:1-14

(For shorter form, read between > <)
A reading from the holy Gospel according to
Matthew.
>Jesus said to the chief priests and elders
of the people: "The kingdom of heaven may
be compared to a king who gave a feast for
his son's wedding. He sent his servants to
call those who had been invited, but they
would not come. Next he sent some more
servants. 'Tell those who have been invited'
he said 'that I have my banquet all prepared,
my oxen and fattened cattle have been
slaughtered, everything is ready. Come to the
wedding.' But they were not interested: one
went off to his farm, another to his business,
and the rest seized his servants, maltreated
them and killed them. The king was furious.
He despatched his troops, destroyed those
murderers and burnt their town. Then he
said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready;
but as those who were invited proved to be
unworthy, go to the crossroads in the town
and invite everyone you can find to the
wedding.' So these servants went out on to
the roads and collected together everyone
they could find, bad and good alike; and
the wedding hall was filled with guests. <
When the king came in to look at the guests
he noticed one man who was not wearing a
wedding garment, and said to him, 'How did
you get in here, my friend, without a wedding

garment?' And the man was silent. Then the
king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand
and foot and throw him out into the dark,
where there will be weeping and grinding
of teeth.' For many are called, but few are
chosen."

>The Gospel of the Lord. <
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father;

through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,

(all bow during the next three lines)

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the
Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church.
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness
of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the
dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Accept, O Lord, the prayers of your faithful
with the sacrificial offerings,
that, through these acts of devotedness,
we may pass over to the glory of heaven.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

The rich suffer want and go hungry,
but those who seek the Lord lack no
blessing.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

We entreat your majesty most humbly,
O Lord,
that, as you feed us with the nourishment
which comes from the most holy Body and
Blood of your Son,
so you may make us sharers of his divine
nature.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.
Amen.

THE WORD



COME TO THE WEDDING!

(MATTHEW 22:1-14)

Jesus' audience is once again the chief priests and elders, so we are aware that this is a hostile encounter. The wedding banquet is a common symbol in the Bible for the kingdom of God.

Matthew's parable traces the offer of a place at the wedding feast, and the way in which those who were first invited treat the invitation with contempt and actively reject it. The king then sends his servants on an arduous search to find people who will fill the banqueting hall. The destruction of the city represents Matthew's later reflection on the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in AD 70. The idea of a Gentile nation being the instrument of God's punishing the people of Israel would be familiar to Matthew's community of Jewish Christians, from their knowledge of the Hebrew scriptures. The guest who turns up without the proper garment is more difficult to understand, especially if we imagine him being rounded up unexpectedly to come to the feast. Perhaps it is a warning that it is not enough simply to turn up: the person must be prepared to enter fully into the kingdom and take part in its life.

The emphasis in the parable is on the idea of invitation. Some reject, some accept. The leaders, who should have known better, rejected the invitation presented through the prophets and especially Jesus, whom they killed. It is they, according to Matthew's reading of history, who are thus really responsible for the destruction of Jerusalem and the loss of the Temple. It is the despised people, tax collectors and the like, who accept the invitation and crowd into the banquet. ■

SAY

For how could he deny me heaven, who here on earth himself has given?

(St Alphonsus Liguori)

REFLECT

We find that the image of the wedding feast as representing the kingdom of God is frequently used in both the Hebrew and Christian scriptures. In the Synoptic Gospel narratives, the feeding of the five thousand anticipates the Last Supper and the institution of the Eucharist, which in turn foresees the banquet in the kingdom of God. One of the aspects of our celebration of the Eucharist, the Mass, is that it is the pledge of future glory, when God's people will be finally gathered into the divine presence in the heavenly kingdom.

As we saw with the person who turned up not properly dressed for the occasion, getting inside is no guarantee of being allowed to remain. We are expected to take a full part in the proceedings. One feature of the preaching of the biblical prophets is that they stress the idea of election, of Israel being the "chosen people". This may well be an undeserved privilege, but it also brings responsibilities with it. Other nations should be able to look at Israel and see the God they believe in reflected in the way in which the people of the Lord conduct themselves, the values by which they live. The same goes for those who claim to be disciples of Jesus. If we accept the invitation, then we should wear our wedding garment – figuratively speaking! ■

DO

When you next wash your clothes, think of the unfortunate wedding guest. Make a resolution not to take your relationship with Jesus for granted.

LEARN

Roman soldiers are shown carrying off the *menorah*, the seven-branched candlestick, from the Temple, in a carving on the triumphant Arch of Titus: this monument stands in the Forum in Rome.

The Synoptic Gospels are the accounts of Mark, Matthew and Luke.

The word "synoptic" originally means "seeing all together": the three accounts can be arranged in parallel columns and so easily compared.

18 OCTOBER 2020 Sunday Message 29TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

THE WORD

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

To you I call; for you will surely heed me,
O God;
Turn your ear to me; hear my words.
Guard me as the apple of your eye;
in the shadow of your wings protect me.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

Almighty ever-living God,
grant that we may always conform our will
to yours
and serve your majesty in sincerity of heart.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of
the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

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 am you
that men may know from the rising to the
setting of the sun
that, apart from me, all is nothing.
The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM Psalms 95

Response:
Give the Lord glory and power.

1. 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.
(R.)

- 2. 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.
(R.)
- 3. 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. (R.)
- 4. 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. (R.)

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.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!
Your word is truth, O Lord,
consecrate us in the truth.
Alleluia!

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 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.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.
I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,

born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
(all bow during the next three lines)
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the
Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church.
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness
of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the
dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Grant us, Lord, we pray,
a sincere respect for your gifts,
that, through the purifying action of your
grace,
we may be cleansed by the very mysteries we
serve.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Behold, the eyes of the Lord
are on those who fear him,
who hope in his merciful love,
to rescue their souls from death,
to keep them alive in famine.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Grant, O Lord, we pray,
that, benefiting from participation in heavenly
things,
we may be helped by what you give in this
present age
and prepared for the gifts that are eternal.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

It is the saying of holy men that, if we wish
to be perfect, we have nothing more to do
than to perform the ordinary duties of the
day well. A short road to perfection—short,
not because easy, but because pertinent
and intelligible. There are no short ways to
perfection, but there are sure ones.

St John Henry Newman



THE CANNY REPLY

(MATTHEW 22:15-21)

Jesus' quarrels with the religious authorities continue, this time involving the Pharisees and the Herodians, supporters of the puppet rulers of the Romans.

They put Jesus on the spot with a question about paying what was basically a poll tax. Jesus cannot give a straight answer without seriously offending someone: "Yes" will get him into trouble with his fellow countrypeople of strong nationalist feelings; the Roman administrators are certain to take a dim view if he replies "No". Jesus knows that their challenge is motivated by malice, and he calls them "hypocrites". He points out that the coin by which the tax must be paid belongs to Caesar anyway, so it ought to be returned to its owner: this allows him to avoid offending the Romans without (necessarily) falling foul of the Palestinian zealots. He then changes the tone by reminding his audience of their duties towards God, thereby bringing the confrontation to an end. His opponents realise that Jesus has outwitted them and leave the scene. ■

REFLECT

Discussions often take place about the relationship which should exist between the bodies we usually call Church and State, and this text is pressed into service to separate the two. Thus, people can argue the Church should keep out of politics, that it should confine its activities to spiritual matters and leave politicians to run the country.

When we consider those situations where the Church has, effectively, become part of the government, or at least a close collaborator, we could conclude that there is something to be said for this argument. The history of the twentieth century testifies to the Church being allied to repressive dictatorships and suffering from a lack of credibility as

a result. But while the "official Church" may have been in large part involved in this way, there were bishops, priests and religious who saw that Gospel values, the teaching of Jesus, compelled them to become involved in what were political issues. Liberation theology arose, based on the book of Exodus, which presents a God who abhors slavery of any kind; and on the prophets, whose target was the political and spiritual leaders of the nation, for failing in their duty and responsibilities.

A Church which confines itself to "spiritual" matters soon becomes a Church of the sacristy, largely irrelevant to the wider community. The mission of Jesus' disciples is to preach the Gospel,

SAY
I can make a difference.



DO

What pressing issues are there in your local or national community? Find a way to help to resolve them.

LEARN

The Herodians were supporters of the puppet rulers of the Romans, the house of Herod.

The Herodian kings were not of the line of King David, and therefore not regarded with any great respect by the local population.

The poll (census) tax had to be paid in a Roman coin which bore the image of the emperor: this was a further insult to Jewish sensibilities.

which involves promoting human values such as dignity, respect, proper wages and so on. How this is done is another matter: we find Christians in every political movement, with different opinions on how these principles should be established, and attempts to found explicitly Christian parties have run into all sorts of human problems. Perhaps the parable of the leaven in the dough is appropriate in this context, where Christians, motivated by the teachings of Jesus, involve themselves in the life of their local and national community and thus, simultaneously, "give back to Caesar what belongs to Caesar – and to God what belongs to God". ■

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Let the hearts that seek the Lord rejoice;
turn to the Lord and his strength;
constantly seek his face.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

Almighty ever-living God,
increase our faith, hope and charity,
and make us love what you command,
so that we may merit what you promise.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of
the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING Exodus 22:20-26

A reading from the book of Exodus.

The Lord said to Moses, "Tell the sons of Israel this, 'You must not molest the stranger or oppress him, for you lived as strangers in the land of Egypt. You must not be harsh with the widow, or with the orphan; if you are harsh with them, they will surely cry out to me, and be sure I shall hear their cry: my anger will flare and I shall kill you with the sword, your own wives will be widows, your own children orphans.

'If you lend money to any of my people, to any poor man among you, you must not play the usurer with him: you must not demand interest from him.

'If you take another's cloak as a pledge, you must give it back to him before sunset. It is all the covering he has; it is the cloak he wraps his body in; what else would he sleep in? If he cries to me, I will listen, for I am full of pity.'

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM Psalm 17

Response:

I love you, Lord, my strength.

- I love you, Lord, my strength,
my rock, my fortress, my saviour;
My God is the rock where I take refuge;
my shield, my mighty help, my
stronghold.

The Lord is worthy of all praise:
when I call I am saved from my foes. (R.)

- Long life to the Lord, my rock!
Praised be the God who saves me.
He has given great victories to his king
and shown his love for his anointed. (R.)

SECOND READING 1 Thessalonians 1:5-10

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

You observed the sort of life we lived when we were with you, which was for your instruction, and you were led to become imitators of us, and of the Lord; and it was with the joy of the Holy Spirit that you took to the gospel, in spite of the great opposition all round you. This has made you the great example to all believers in Macedonia and Achaia since it was from you that the word of the Lord started to spread – and not only throughout Macedonia and Achaia, for the news of your faith in God has spread everywhere. We do not need to tell other people about it: other people tell us how we started the work among you, how you broke with idolatry when you were converted to God and became servants of the real, living God; and how you are now waiting for Jesus, his Son, whom he raised from the dead, to come from heaven to save us from the retribution which is coming.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!
Open our heart, O Lord,
to accept the words of your Son.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL Matthew 22:34-40

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees they got together and, to disconcert him, one of them put a question, "Master, which is the greatest commandment of the Law?" Jesus said, "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second resembles it: you must love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments hang the whole Law, and the Prophets also."

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

**I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.**

**I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,**

(all bow during the next three lines)

**and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the
Virgin Mary,
and became man.**

**For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.**

**I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church.
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness
of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the
dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Look, we pray, O Lord,
on the offerings we make to your majesty,
that whatever is done by us in your service
may be directed above all to your glory.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

**We will ring out our joy at your saving help
and exult in the name of our God.**

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

May your Sacraments, O Lord, we pray,
perfect in us what lies within them,
that what we now celebrate in signs
we may one day possess in truth.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

You say grace before meals. All right. But I say grace before the concert and the opera, and grace before the play and pantomime, and grace before I open a book, and grace before sketching, painting, swimming, fencing, boxing, walking, playing, dancing and grace before I dip the pen in the ink.

G.K. Chesterton



In today's Gospel reading, we find another discussion between Jesus and his opponents, this time the Pharisees. It centres on which of the commandments is the greatest.

Matthew agrees with Mark that love of God and love of neighbour constitute the chief and basic commandment; that this is, in a way, a summary of the entire Torah. But Matthew goes further: he puts these two commandments on an equal footing, and presents them as supporting the rest. He uses the verb "hang" to express the idea of these two being the ropes which hold up the rest. His reply is perfectly orthodox, and Jewish Christians would be able to defend themselves on this basis.

Matthew shows that permeating religious practice must be love: love of God and our fellow human beings, and that both are equally important. In a sense, this is his version of the Golden Rule. ■

REFLECT

Matthew the evangelist is usually understood as being a tax collector, called by Jesus to leave his profession and become one of Jesus' disciples. This traditional view has been expressed in art down the centuries. It may well be the historical fact, but it is unlikely that someone from such a background could have produced such a scholarly work, which we know as the Gospel according to Matthew: it betrays too deep a knowledge of the Jewish scriptures. There is another possibility about his identity, that he was, in fact, a convert Jewish scribe, "who brings out from his storeroom things both new and old" (Matthew 13:52 may offer this description of the author of the Gospel).

To Jewish converts, the place of the Law, which they had regarded as their way of responding to the Lord's covenant with Israel, must have been a question of the highest importance. By the time Matthew is writing, the Temple has been destroyed, the political influence of the Jewish people in the land has disappeared, and the Law has provided the core of their sense of identity. Does this have to be, at best, abandoned, or, at worst, repudiated because they have accepted Jesus and his message? The answer of the earliest disciples seems to have been "No", as they continued to frequent the Temple. Although there was eventually an official excommunication of Jewish Christians from the synagogue, it is likely that Jewish traditions continued to influence communities such as Matthew's. The lesson that love of God and neighbour should be the force which informs all the outward observing of our own traditions today, that there is no essential conflict between law and love, is as valid today as it was when Matthew wrote his Gospel. ■

SAY

**The greatest
commandment is to love
God and my neighbour.**

LEARN

The rabbis calculated 613 commandments in the Torah: 248 positive and 365 negative.

After the destruction of the Temple and the end of animal sacrifice, observing the Law took on even greater significance in Jewish life than before.

Not all the commandments were of equal weight: some were classified as "heavy" (more important), others as "light" (less so).

DO

Reflect that when you come to celebrate the Eucharist, you are supporting your fellow parishioners as well as expressing your commitment to the Lord.

