

Exploring the Gospel

A Religious Education Resource for Parishes

22/10/17

Notes for Catechists

Nothing binds bad intentions like the common hatred of something or someone that is good. The Pharisees and the Herodians had a deep dislike for each other– but a deeper seated dislike of Jesus. The Pharisees were legalists who looked down upon anyone who might compromise their version of the faith. The Herodians were pragmatics who regarded the Pharisees as simpletons. The Pharisees were against the Roman occupation of Israel while the Herodians supported Herod, who was a puppet king of the Roman Emperor.

One of their primary disagreements centred around paying taxes to Rome. The Pharisees held the populist opinion that paying taxes was religious hypocrisy while the Herodians benefited from the tax system of Rome.

It was not difficult to see that both groups felt that by corroborating they could trap Jesus. If Jesus said, “don’t pay taxes,” the Herodians could have him arrested for sedition. If he said, “Pay taxes” then the Pharisees could denounce him as a traitor to God’s people!

In today’s gospel Jesus tells us not to be distracted from the essentials of life.

Though different groups desire to trick him, Jesus answers masterfully when questioned on whether or not one should pay tribute through taxes to the Roman ruler.

Jesus says that if you use Caesar’s money, then you must expect to pay for it.

It is interesting to note that he did not have a coin on him but had to ask for one to be shown to him.

We must also not be distracted from the essentials of life, from the heart of the matter:

Give back to God what belongs to God. Give God your mind and understanding, your knowledge. All these things belong to God. Give God the joy you experience, the peace you experience, the calm you experience. All these belong to God. Give God the work you have done, the recognition you have received, the honour you have received. All these things belong to God. Give God the moments of family living, the days of hoping and dreaming, the years of faithfulness and promise. All these things belong to God.

- *I/we (as parish catechists) show we belong to God by*
- *How do we encourage the young people we engage with...*
- *For me/us the heart of the matter is....*

Give to the Lord you families of nations, give to the Lord glory and praise

-Ps 96: 7~8

Catechist Reflection....

Double Loyalties

*an extract from **The Peace of Jesus***

by Joseph G Donders



mscperu



*“Kia inu kau ahau,
If I could just drink”*

Te Pu Akonga Whakapono Katorika ki Tamaki
Religious Education Team
Catholic Diocese of Auckland
www.aucklandcatholic.org.nz/religious-education

Suggested Approach with Children

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Aim to encourage the children in their understanding of their need for God

Welcome the children

Feeling into....



theantiquehunter

Invite the children to reflect upon and share their understanding of the word **tax** (*briefly explain*)

- *have you ever heard adults complain about having to pay taxes?*
- *do children pay taxes?*
- *do any of you get pocket money, receive money as a birthday gift/Christmas present?*
- *have any of you ever been into a shop and bought something
lollies, books, games?*
then you probably **have** paid tax.
Every time you buy something you pay GST (Goods and Services Tax)

Digging Deeper...

- *what do you think Jesus would say if we asked him if we should pay taxes?*

If he said yes, we might be angry ... if he said no, the government would be angry, so, no matter what he might say, people would get angry.

Meeting with....

In Jesus' day the people were required to pay a poll tax to the Romans. It wasn't very popular with the people!
One day some people who were trying to trick Jesus asked him about paying taxes. Listen to what happened....

Read Matthew 22:15-21

Prayer....

Loving God,
we give you today,
all that we think and do and say.
Fill us with love and make us strong,
stay with us Lord, our whole lives long.

A reading from the Gospel of Matthew.....

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adapted for children

The Pharisees wanted to trick Jesus into saying something which would get him into trouble. So they went to him and said,
"We know that you are honest and are not afraid to speak the truth. Tell us then, should we give our money to the Romans or to God?"
Jesus replied,
"Why do you want to trick me? Show me your money?"
The Pharisees gave him a Roman denarius and he asked them:
"Who is the person on this coin?"
They answered,
"Caesar."
Then Jesus said,
"Give back to Caesar what belongs to him, and give to God what is God's."



Responding to....

The Pharisees were jealous of Jesus because he was so popular with the people (and he often criticised the Pharisees) They thought he would tell the people to give their money to God, and they knew that anyone who didn't pay their taxes would be arrested and punished.

- *what did Jesus ask them?*
- *how did Jesus respond to their question?*

Jesus did a very wise thing ... he told the people to give to Caesar what belongs to him, but at the same time give back to God what belongs to God.

- *what do YOU think Jesus meant by that?*

Jesus wants us to return the love which God has given to us.
We too can share everything with God by giving the gift of ourselves:
all that we are and all that we have.

We know that we were created by God and in the image of God.
We are children of God ... and we belong to God.

Double Loyalties

an extract from **The Peace of Jesus**
by Joseph G Donders

The Pharisees wanted to trap Jesus.
They wanted to find a reason
to get him out of the way.
They did not risk to go themselves,
they wanted to remain behind the scenes:
if their trap succeeded,
they could not be blamed;
if their trap failed,
they would not be laughed at.

They sent their students
and they instructed them
what to ask.

The question was a difficult one.
It was not a normal question.
From the technical classical logical
point of view,
their question was a *dilemma*.
Whatever answer you gave,
you would be caught by one of the horns
of that dilemma.
They went to him,
they had been repeating the question
all the time for themselves on their way,
just like a child does
who is sent to a shop
and who is afraid to forget
the message.

They found him
and they asked exactly
what they had been told to ask:
"Master,
you are honest.
Master,
you teach the way of God
sincerely.
Master,
you are not afraid of anyone.
Master,
all people are the same in your eye.
Master,
give us your opinion:
should we pay tax
to the Roman Emperor
or shouldn't we?"

To understand the difficulty of that question
we must remember Jesus' situation
in the Palestine of those days.
Palestine had been ruled by that time
by Roman colonizers
for about a century.
Those Romans had been occupying
and plundering that country
for all those years.

They did not do that by themselves;
they used foreign troops
and there were even some Jewish
collaborating and very much hated
garrisons.

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A strong liberation movement
had been growing over those years,
and the Jews were looking for a revolution
to free their country.

That is why that question
was so difficult.

The issue was:

"Should we pay tax
to the Romans or
should we assist
the freedom fighters?"

Whatever answer Jesus gave,
he would be caught.
If he said: pay tax,
he would be denounced to the
freedom fighters.
If he said: don't pay tax,
they would denounce him
to the next police-station
or military roadblock.

Do you realize
that this situation
is not as unusual as it seems to be?

Do you realize
that this ambiguity in loyalties
is something in our, in your
everyday lives?

Do you realize
that his story,
like all those stories about Jesus,
is a story about you?

Don't we all live
in that type of
ambiguous situation?

When you are a Kenyan,
you belong to the Kenyan nation.
Within that Kenyan nation
you belong to a family
and to a people.
As a Kenyan you should be faithful
to the nation,
as a family member you should be faithful
to your family.

And now you are the chairperson
of an appointments committee
one of your family members
is interviewed together with others.

If you choose him
because of your family ties
you are corrupt in the eyes of the nation,
if you don't select him
you are a traitor in the eyes of your family.

You are an American.
You should be faithful
to your nation.
You should pay tax,

Catechist Reflection....

that tax is used in ever-growing proportion
for weapons,
for instruments of death.
You are a Christian
and you don't believe in killing,
in violence and that kind of power.
If you pay tax
you have to go against
your conscience,
you are in a way a traitor
to Jesus' cause;
if you don't pay tax
you are not faithful to your national
allegiance
and in the eyes of the State
you are a traitor
too.

I would be able to give you
an endless row
of examples of this kind,
within our family context,
within our national context,
within our political context,
within our church context.

Examples that are painfully clear.
How was it possible
during the First World War,
during the Second World War
during so many consequent wars
that Christian nations fought
against each other?

Marxists had expected
that the workmen of those nations
would not fight against each other
as all proletarians had formed
the "Internationale,"
but they did fight
betraying their new ideals
in view of the older bonds.

Jesus was not in an exceptional situation
that morning,
he was in the usual position
in which we happen to be,
a situation due to the nature of the world
we live in now.

He did not answer their question.

He answered another question.
He did not enter into that, their world.
He spoke about an alternative in this world.
He said to them:
Why do you ask me this question?
Why do you try to catch me?
You hypocrites,
you know what answer
you are going to give.

You have the money you bought
to pay that tax to the emperor
in your own pockets,
haven't you?

And not being so very clever
—they were not Pharisees as yet,
only students—

they said:
"You are right, Sir."
"Show me that money,"
he said
and they showed him their tax coins
with the face of Tiberius on it.

He said:
"You see that face?
It is his,
give it back to him."
And then
after having overlooked the issue really,
he said:
"Give to God,
what belongs to God!"

And in those words
he spoke about his alternative
to the world we live in,
an alternative
where people do not use
power and violence,
intrigues and traps
to rule.

He spoke about his alternative,
where all people form
the one family of God,
whose image they are all carrying.

This gospel
is not so much of an answer
to the questions
about our loyalties in this world.
It is about our loyalty
to that new world,
he is thinking of,
a world to which we are called
not only over *there*,
but already over *here*.

A world
to which we should contribute
in our decisions and
in our prayers,
playing our role
in our human history
here and now
in all we do
and omit
living the ambiguities
in which we are still living
now.
Thy kingdom
come!

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For personal / group reflection....

Do you realize
that this situation
is not as unusual as it seems to be?
Do you realize
that this ambiguity in loyalties
is something in our, in your
everyday lives?
Do you realize
that his story,
like all those stories about Jesus,
is a story about you?
Don't we all live
in that type of
ambiguous situation?

Share any thoughts, insights etc

My / our prayer today is