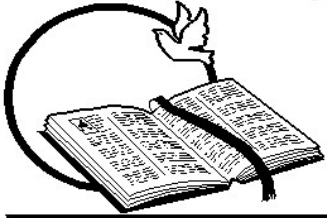


Living the Gospel in Everyday Life....



29th Sunday in Ordinary Time
October 16, 2011
Matthew 22:15-21



What's Going On Here?

GOSPEL: The Pharisees went off and plotted how they might entrap Jesus in speech. They sent their disciples to him, with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that you are a truthful man and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. And you are not concerned with anyone's opinion, for you do not regard a person's status. Tell us, then, what is your opinion: Is it lawful to pay the census tax to Caesar or not?" Knowing their malice, Jesus said, "Why are you testing me, you hypocrites? Show me the coin that pays the census tax." Then they handed him the Roman coin. He said to them, "Whose image is this and whose inscription?" They replied, "Caesar's." At that he said to them, "Then repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God."

Are you In? The Pharisees are trying to trap Jesus with their language. Jesus realized this and instead of choosing one side or the other, He draws a clear separation between what is earthly and what belongs to God. As inhabitants of the earth, we are obligated to operate within the structures that are set in place; however, as people of faith, we are called by God to a higher moral ground.

In His statement, Jesus draws a boundary between what is now known as "church and state" within the US. Boundaries and what creates them play a huge role in the world today. Whether it's boundaries of country, class, race, or community- there are lines drawn which state that someone, or something in either inside or outside. The question becomes, "who gets to decide?" For countries, there is a general consensus among nations to recognize other nations. For one country to offer the support of recognition to another is a huge step in autonomy and independence for a group of people. This is why when a new nation is formed; it is such a unanimous achievement for the people in the country.

On a personal level, it is possible that the group has a written set of criteria for allowing others into the organization. Maybe it is an unspoken understanding among the members. Regardless of how it is decided, groups by their nature perpetuate the notion of "you are in, or you are out." Every person- admittedly or not- has the desire to a part of something. What is it that urges us to chose some over another?

With God's love, there are no criteria. By virtue of our existence, we are all invited into His holy embrace. As a result, we are called to embrace others in the same way.

Questions For Reflection

- Have you ever had to go through an application process to be a part of a group, or to be admitted into a community? What did that feel like? Did you think you might not get in?
- Do I feel like I am a part of a specific group or community that supports my goals and dreams?
- How might seek to break down boundaries in my own life?