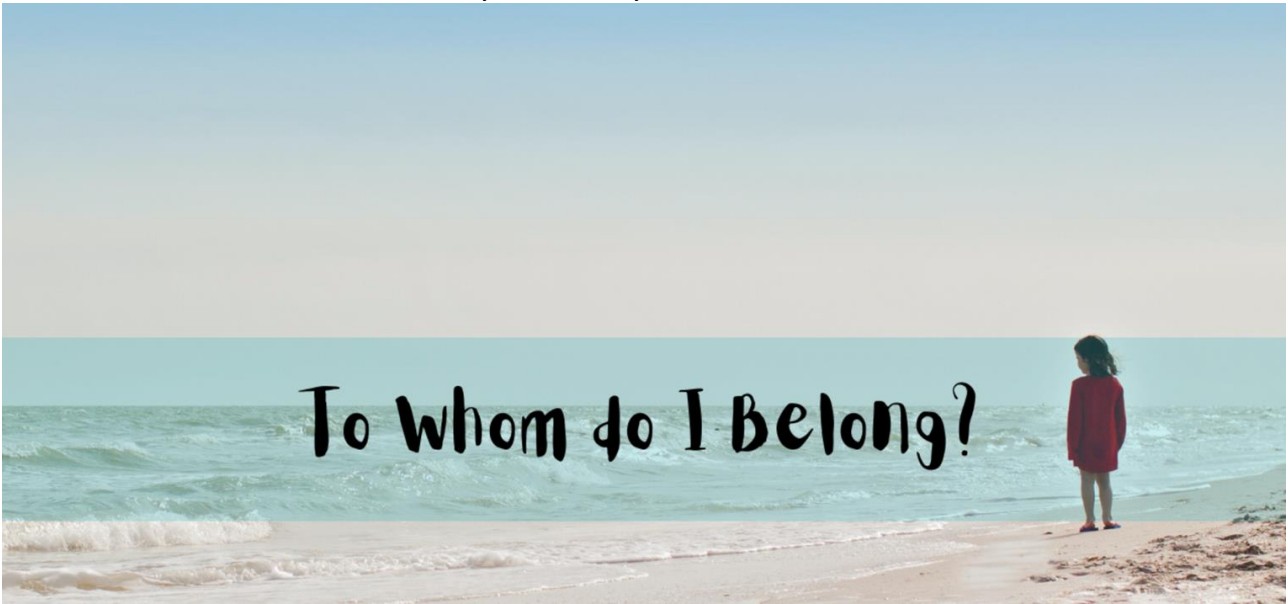


TO WHOM DO I BELONG?

29th Sunday in Ordinary time ~ 18 October 2020



WE CELEBRATE OUR BELONGING TO JESUS

This weekend we celebrate our belonging to Jesus.

We celebrate this World Mission Sunday with church families around the world, and welcome speakers from [St John Fisher College](#) and [Catholic Mission](#).

WE WELCOME | WE CONGRATULATE | WE JOIN IN PRAYERFUL SOLIDARITY

- + We welcome new members baptised into the community over this weekend.
- + We congratulate Douglas and Rosy as they celebrate with God and their family, their 50th wedding anniversary.
- + We join in prayerful solidarity with parish members from Qaraqosh, remembering family members who died recently from COVID-19.

INTRODUCING TODAY'S GOSPEL PASSAGE

In the Gospel we hear of the trap that was set for Jesus by the Pharisees and Herodians.

He is asked a trick question with two answers possible.

'Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?'

Either response would condemn him.

But Jesus does not respond with either expected reply.

Calmly Jesus teaches by asking them a question:

'Whose head is this, and whose title?'

They answer, *'The emperor's.'*

Now we come to this important teaching.

Jesus instructs them:

'Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's.'

IMAGE & BELONGING

In understanding this passage, we reflect on *'image'* and *'belonging'*.

After reading the Gospel, we will listen to a reflection by Pope Francis on this passage.

GOSPEL OF MATHEW 22:15 - 21

'Then the Pharisees went and plotted to entrap him in what he said.

So they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying,

'Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God

in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one;

for you do not regard people with partiality.

Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?'

But Jesus, aware of their malice, said,

'Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites?

Show me the coin used for the tax.'

And they brought him a denarius.

Then he said to them, **'Whose head is this, and whose title?'**

They answered, *'The emperor's.'*

Then he said to them,

'Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's,

and to God the things that are God's.'

When they heard this, they were amazed;

and they left him and went away.'

POPE FRANCIS

Pope Francis at [the Angelus on Sunday, 22 October 2017](#) taught,

'On the one hand, suggesting they return to the emperor what belongs to him, Jesus declares that paying tax is not an act of idolatry,

but a legal obligation to the earthly authority; on the other —

and it is here that Jesus presents the "thrust" of his response:

recalling the primacy of God, he asks them to render to Him

that which is His due as the Lord of the life and history of mankind.'

'The reference to Caesar's image engraved on the coin

says that it is right that they feel fully —

with rights and duties — citizens of the State;

but symbolically it makes them think about the other image

that is imprinted on every man and woman: the image of God.

He is the Lord of all, and we, who were created "in his image"

belong to Him first and foremost.'

'From the question posed to him by the Pharisees,

Jesus draws a more radical and vital question for each of us,

a question we can ask ourselves: to whom do I belong?

To family, to the city, to friends, to work, to politics, to the State?

Yes, of course. But first and foremost —

Jesus reminds us — you belong to God.

This is the fundamental belonging.

It is He who has given you all that you are and have.
And therefore, day by day, we can and must live our life
in recognition of this fundamental belonging
and in heartfelt gratitude toward our Father,
who creates each one of us individually, unrepeatable,
but always according to the image of his beloved Son, Jesus.
It is a wondrous mystery.'

WE BELONG TO GOD

We belong to God.

We belong to the family of God.

The Second Reading invites us into St Paul's relationship
with the Christian community of Thessalonika.

Let us discover some of the highlights
in being a community that belongs to God.

THESSALONIANS 1: 1-5

*'Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,
To the church of the Thessalonians
in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:
Grace to you and peace.*

*We always give thanks to God for all of you
and mention you in our prayers,
constantly remembering before our God and Father
your work of faith
and labour of love
and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*For we know, brothers and sisters beloved by God,
that he has chosen you,
because our message of the gospel came to you
not in word only,
but also in power
and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction'*

To be genuine and welcoming in
our work of faith,
our labour of love,
our steadfastness of hope,
not for ourselves, but in our Lord Jesus Christ.

We are created in God's image.
We are invited by Jesus to belong to God,
to live out our faith, hope and love in Jesus.
to live as *Beloved of God*.

Paul's 1st Letter to the Thessalonians is the earliest written book of the New Testament, around 50AD. Written by Paul some months after his time in Thessalonica in Greece. Possibly written while he was in Corinth.

WAS IT EASY TO BE A CHRISTIAN IN THESSALONIKA?

Let us continue on from today's reading by reading verses 6 to 8.

*“And you became imitators of us and of the Lord,
for in spite of persecution
you received the word with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit,
so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.
For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you
not only in Macedonia and Achaia,
but in every place where your faith in God has become known,
so that we have no need to speak about it.”*

*In spite of hardship and persecution,
they lived God's Word 'with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit'*

May we in 2020 live God's Word *'with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit'*.

We belong to God.

May we live each day as Beloved of God.

Let us pray.

Fr Gerry

Readings: <https://universalis.com/Australia/20201018/mass.htm>

