

Homily notes:

18th October 2020 - 29th Sunday in OT Year A 2020

(1st: Isaiah 45:1.4-6; 2nd: 1 Thess 1:1-5; Gospel: Matthew 22:15-21)

There was a time when religion and politics were thought not right to be discussed in polite society. Today now many other subjects are off limits, and if not PC are not to be discussed. It can appear that no healthy debate in so many fields is possible, for fear of insulting, or offending others.

I've spoken recently about the **politics of anger** that Rabbi Jonathan Sacks wrote of a few years ago, which is more than just under the surface, well bubbling up esp. in the last few months, which have been challenging for all people and will remain so for the foreseeable future too, as we strive to live our lives in the shadow of the pandemic, and at the same time to care for the weakest. What this experience is showing is that we are all the world over in the same boat. We are all vulnerable. We know more deeply now that life is precious. Human life is to be treasured.

We share a common humanity. All of us are brothers and sisters. St Matthew stresses again and again that we are all equal. He urges us to practise and realise that equality, forming here on earth the one family of God.

The opponents of Jesus knew that when politics and religion overlap, the mixture is potentially explosive, and clever minds can exploit the tension. But Jesus uses the occasion to reaffirm the absolute dominion of God in all areas of life. In today's world this dominion of God is obscured by the concerted efforts to have the secular area of life stand on its own without any recognition of the sacred: it wants politics with no religious dimension; the state as an entity totally separate from God.

Secularism is a movement of thought, attitude and behaviour which seeks to render God irrelevant to the way we live as individuals or in society. It spawns a type of humanism which is not fully human since it disregards the restless thirsting of the soul for God. It sets human life as the centre of the universe. Thus repeating the mistake of Adam, who was beguiled by the tempter's promise of moral autonomy and divine status.

The secular and sacred dimensions of life necessarily overlap because they are part of **one life**.

True religion cannot be confined to a sort of prayer that is separated from what goes on in the rest of life. Jesus in the gospel reading deals with his opponents with open honesty and gentle firmness.

World Mission Sunday provides us with a moment of grace to challenge people to think deeply about what in truth belongs to God. The question is 'Whose image do we bear?'

We, the baptised bear the mark of Christ. This does not mean that we live avoiding the things which the world places on us, like the paying of taxes to Caesar. But it does mean reflecting on the way in which our lives need to change so that we render to God what belongs to Him: our heart, our will, our very self. And when we have 'given back to Caesar' can we say 'Here am I send me, and mean it from the depth of our being.