

Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time - Year A

Isaiah 45:1, 4-6; 1 Thessalonians. 1:1-5b; Matthew 22:15-21

World Mission Day 2026

by Father Charles Fillion

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On this World Mission Sunday, as we pray for missionaries across the globe and for all those who are striving to bring Jesus and his saving work, we have in the Gospel a reminder of the heart of the Gospel: that God has made us out of love in his image and likeness, that we are his, and he calls us to live with him. These truths are revealed in Jesus' controversial conversation with the Pharisees and Herodians. These two groups — rigorists and laxists respectively, and therefore generally opposed to each another— co-conspire to trap Jesus.

Their question seems simple, but it's maliciously calculated: "Is it lawful to pay taxes to emperor, or not?" If Jesus said yes, he risked separating the people. If he said no, he could be accused of inciting rebellion against Rome. But Jesus didn't allow himself to be trapped. Instead, he asked for a coin and asks a deeper question: "Whose image is this and whose inscription?" When they replied, "Caesar," he responded, "Then repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God." Jesus' response is more than (...) political. He led us beyond a question about taxes to the truth of our identity. If the coin bears Caesar's image and belongs to Caesar, then what carries God's image belongs to God.

As the first chapter of the Bible attests, we have been created in God's image and likeness. Through baptism, that created reality has been intensified: we have been united to Christ, made children of the Father, and temples of the Holy Spirit. We don't belong partially to God. We belong entirely to him. He claims us lovingly as his own. This is the foundation of our Christian lives and our Christian mission. Mission doesn't begin with what we say or do, but with whom we are. When we recognize that our life is a gift from God and ultimately belongs to him, everything changes. Our time, our relationships, our work, and our resources—all become part of a self-offering back to him with gratitude and love.

Pope Leo XIV, in his message for World Mission Sunday 2026, wrote that, "The more united we're in Christ, the better we will be able to carry out together the mission that he entrusts to us." From that union with God, and in him with each other, flows all missionary fruitfulness. This is why the Gospel challenges us today. Many of us try to live divided lives. Perhaps we give something to God, or even a lot to God, but we hold things back for ourselves.

Jesus, however, calls us to a total gift, to love God not just with some, or even most, of our mind, heart, soul and strength, but all. To "render to God what is God's" means to give him what he has given us — and he has given us our lives, our time, our talents, our relationships, our material resources, all that we are and have.

It means treating him not just as part of our life but as its source, summit, root and centre. It likewise means living in the image of the Trinity, in a loving communion of people with our brothers and sisters. This is the heart of mission, as we and the whole Church seek to proclaim to the world in whose image they've been made and seek to bring them to have true communion with God and with us.

Today, (...) the Lord invites us to look again at our lives, not as something we possess or own, but as something we have received as a gift and for which we are stewards. He asks us to return that gift to him, freely and fully, especially by the way we use the gift of life to help bring others to him. The way we most reflect the divine image is by imitating the missions of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and cooperating with God the Father's plan of saving love, so that none of his children perish but come to eternal life.

I now invite you all to pray with me this prayer of Pope Leo XIV from his message for the 100th World Mission Sunday:

Holy Father, make us one in Christ, rooted in his love that unites and renews. May all members of the Church be united in mission, docile to the Holy Spirit, courageous in bearing witness to the Gospel, proclaiming and daily embodying your faithful love for all creatures. Bless all missionary men and women, support them in their efforts, and watch over them in hope!

Mary, Queen of Missions, accompany our work of evangelization in every corner of the earth: make us instruments of peace, and grant that the whole world may recognize in Christ the light that saves. Amen.