

PARISH OF ASCOT VALE

ST MARY'S CHURCH, 123 ST LEONARDS ROAD, ASCOT VALE
ST MARGARET'S CHURCH, BARB STREET, MARIBYRNONG

Parish Priest:	Rev Fr Justin Ford
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Office Hours: [suspended during lockdown]	Tue – Fri, 10am – 3pm. Secretary: Carmen D'Rosario
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Mass

We are now permitted to celebrate daily Mass outdoors, with a congregation of five. This will be in the courtyard of St Mary's; scheduling will depend on weather forecasts. You can book to attend this on the parish website. Live streaming of our 10:30 Sunday Mass will continue, also accessible on the website.

Reconciliation (Confession)

By appointment - no name required. Arrangement will be made for the confession to be anonymous, not face-to-face, with suitable distancing.

Baptisms at St Mary's

Our normally scheduled Baptisms remain on hold. Baptism will be administered if there is urgent and grave need.

Baptism Information Sessions are also still on hold.

To discuss a future baptism, please ring the parish office during office hours.

Weddings at St Mary's

6 months' notice required. For information on weddings please ring the parish office during office hours.

Private prayer in our churches

Our churches are not currently open for private prayer.

Parish Bulletin

The Bulletin, containing the Sunday readings for your reflection, will be uploaded to the parish website the Saturday afternoon prior.

29th Sunday in Ordinary Time – 18 October 2020

'Give back to Caesar what belongs to Caesar – and to God what belongs to God'

These words of Jesus in today's gospel have always been a springboard for Christian reflection on the relationship between the Gospel and society, politics and religion, Church and State. These remain crucial topics for us today. 'Caesar' is Tiberius Caesar, the Roman Emperor to whom Palestine was subject, but in the deeper meaning of the gospel discussion, he represents the authority of secular governments. The distinction Jesus makes between the things which belong to Caesar and those which belong to God suggests the need for a certain 'balance' between secular and divine authority.

The twist is – ultimately everything 'belongs to God'. Yet it obviously wasn't God's will to reveal to humanity every detail of a 'perfect society', or the right political decision in every circumstance. And in setting up the Church, he didn't set up a 'theocracy' in which Pope and bishops also rule over civil society. He has given us reason and freedom, and he intends us to use them in governing ourselves. So in this sense, some things certainly 'belong to Caesar'. There isn't one perfect Christian answer to every political question which we all have to adhere to, and there is a rightful autonomy of secular affairs.

But Christians also reject the opposite extreme, of a government that totally dominates every aspect of life in a totalitarian way, interfering in the purely religious activities of the Church such as belief and worship, and even trying to coerce human consciences. Some things clearly do not 'belong to Caesar'. The early Christians faced this in a stark manner when they had to choose between worshipping the emperor – the grave sin of idolatry – or martyrdom. Faced with a conflict between human law and God's law, 'we must obey God rather than men', as St Peter says. (Acts 5:29) Obviously the state cannot overrule God – it's only because of God that the state exists in the first place, and the moral requirement to obey human governments also derives ultimately from God.

The hard questions come in the apparent 'overlap' between what is Caesar's and what is God's. It's true that God hasn't given the Church political rulership. But the State, as God's creation, still remains subject to God himself. Every politician is also a human being, who may never violate the moral law God has written in every human heart, even on the excuse of serving the people or the nation. Indeed, the moral requirement to serve people and nation is only one more aspect of the moral law coming from God, and can't be set in opposition to other parts of this moral law. In any case, true service of others never involves going against God, and his law is always the path for the true good of all.

The law of right and wrong written in the human heart from creation can be known to natural human reason and conscience even prior to supernatural faith, and so is called the 'natural law'. The Ten Commandments gave special expression to it when conscience had been darkened by sin, but in principle it binds all people, not just Jews and Christians. The Church has the special guidance of the Holy Spirit in proclaiming even natural moral law. But when the Church does teach these universal moral principles, it doesn't mean they're somehow reduced to 'private religious matters' which non-Catholics need not be concerned with – since the principles are still knowable by everyone's natural reason. So when the State, in view of these principles, acts to protect the natural rights and natural good of individuals and the common good of society from damage by others, it isn't 'imposing faith' on anyone (even if the Church happens to have taught about these same natural rights and goods). Politicians, Catholic or non-Catholic, fulfil their true civic duty in protecting these rights and goods, and so upholding the human dignity of every person.

From Church teaching – The State, and politicians, are not independent of God and his law

As Catholics we rightly hold - not only individuals but also societies must be subject to God. People are not independent of their Creator just because they act as a group rather than singly. Each group member must foster the true good.

‘All public power must proceed from God. For God alone is the true and supreme Lord of the world. Everything, without exception, must be subject to Him, and must serve him, so that whosoever holds the right to govern holds it from one sole and single source, namely, God, the sovereign Ruler of all. “There is no power but from God.” (Rom 13:1)’

Pope Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter *Immortale Dei* (On the Christian Constitution of States) (1885) 3

‘Men living together in society are under the power of God no less than individuals are, and society, no less than individuals, owes gratitude to God who gave it being... Since, then, no one is allowed to be remiss in the service due to God, and since the chief duty of all men is to cling to religion in both its teaching and practice – not such religion as they may have a preference for, but the religion which God enjoins, and which certain and most clear marks show to be the only one true religion – it is a public crime to act as though there were no God.’

Pope Leo XIII *Immortale Dei* 6

‘The duty of offering God genuine worship concerns man both individually and socially. This is “the traditional Catholic teaching on the moral duty of individuals and societies toward the true religion and the one Church of Christ.” (Vatican II, *Declaration on Religious Liberty*) By constantly evangelising men, the Church works toward enabling them “to infuse the Christian spirit into the mentality and mores, laws and structures of the communities in which [they] live.” (Vatican II, *Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People*) The social duty of Christians is to respect and awaken in each man the love of the true and the good. It requires them to make known the worship of the one true religion which subsists in the Catholic and apostolic Church (cf. Vatican II, *Declaration on Religious Liberty*). Christians are called to be the light of the world. Thus, the Church shows forth the kingship of Christ over all creation and in particular over human societies. (cf. Vatican II, *Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People* 13; Leo XIII, *Immortale Dei* 3, 17; Pius XI, *Quas Primas*)’

***Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1992) § 2105**

‘The right to religious liberty is neither a moral license to adhere to error, nor a supposed right to error, (Cf. Leo XIII, *Libertas praestantissimum* (1888) 18) but rather a natural right of the human person to civil liberty, i.e., immunity, within just limits, from external constraint in religious matters by political authorities.’

***Catechism of the Catholic Church* § 2108**

‘It is unlawful to follow one line of conduct in private life and another in public, respecting privately the authority of the Church, but publicly rejecting it; for this would amount to joining together good and evil, and to putting man in conflict with himself; whereas he ought always to be consistent, and never in the least point nor in any condition of life to swerve from Christian virtue.’

Pope Leo XIII *Immortale Dei* 47

The previous quotes give teaching based on faith in God, Christ and his Church, indicating that the true religion should also be in some manner the state religion (while keeping full equality and due liberty for all individuals). In 2016, after a parliamentary vote, Christ was officially crowned King of Poland. Australia is obviously unlikely any time soon to amend its constitution and follow suit.

But beyond questions of ‘state religion’ there are ethical principles and basic rights that can be recognised even by atheists – most fundamentally, the equal right to life of every human being. The fact that such rights are also taught by this or that religion cannot justify politicians (Catholic or non-Catholic) in authorising their violation, on the grounds of ‘not imposing religion’. In themselves these rights can be known simply by human reason, and no one can appeal to religious liberty so as to violate others’ rights. As all states must ban slavery, so all must protect life:

‘Legislative proposals are put forward which... attack the very inviolability of human life. Catholics, in this difficult situation, have the right and the duty to recall society to a deeper understanding of human life and to the responsibility of everyone in this regard... Those who are directly involved in lawmaking bodies have a grave and clear obligation to oppose any law that attacks human life. For them, as for every Catholic, it is impossible to promote such laws or to vote for them...’

‘No Catholic can appeal to the principle of pluralism or to the autonomy of lay involvement in political life to support policies affecting the common good which compromise or undermine fundamental ethical requirements. This is not a question of “confessional values” *per se*, because such ethical precepts are rooted in human nature itself and belong to the natural moral law. They do not require from those who defend them the profession of the Christian faith...’

‘The fact that some of these truths may also be taught by the Church does not lessen the political legitimacy or the rightful “autonomy” of the contribution of those citizens who are committed to them, irrespective of the role that reasoned inquiry or confirmation by the Christian faith may have played in recognising such truths...’

‘In democratic societies, all proposals are freely discussed and examined. Those who... would view the moral duty of Christians to act according to their conscience as something that disqualifies them from political life, denying the legitimacy of their political involvement following from their convictions about the common good, would be guilty of a form of intolerant secularism.’

Holy See, *Participation of Catholics in Political Life* (2002)

‘The inviolability of the person which is a reflection of the absolute inviolability of God, finds its primary and fundamental expression in the inviolability of human life. Above all, the common outcry, which is justly made on behalf of human rights – for example, the right to health, to home, to work, to family, to culture – is false and illusory if the right to life, the most basic and fundamental right and the condition for all other personal rights, is not defended with maximum determination.’

Pope St. John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici* (1988) 38

SAINT OF THE WEEK

15 October – St Teresa of Jesus (of Ávila)

St Teresa (1515-1582), the 'Doctor of Prayer', was born at Ávila in central Spain, and joined the Carmelite Order in 1536. After some years of mediocre religious life, about 1556 she had a profound conversion and made great progress in the way of perfection. The laxity of her convent led her to undertake a reform of the Carmelite Order, and the seventeen convents of stricter life that Teresa established around Spain from 1562 onwards were the beginning of the Discalced [shoeless] Carmelites. (The other great Spanish mystical Doctor, her friend St John of the Cross (1542-91), collaborated with her in reforming the male Carmelites, establishing Discalced Carmelite monasteries from 1568.) The reform brought Teresa great trials, and persecutions from unreformed Carmelites, but she overcame all by her indomitable spirit. She appealed to King Philip II, and the reform resumed, formalised by the Pope in 1580. St Teresa was the first to give a science of mysticism, and her works – her *Life*; *The Way of Perfection*; and her masterpiece *The Interior Castle* – remain unique at the pinnacle of mystical theology, with their depth of doctrine and account of her own experiences. These seem to include every mystical phenomenon – visions, levitation, the spiritual events of the transverberation of her heart, spiritual espousals and mystical marriage. Yet she was also a highly practical foundress and administrator. Always in poor health, she died at Alba de Tormes during the night of 4-15 October 1582. (The change to the Gregorian calendar took place that night in Spain, removing ten days.) Her body remains incorrupt – including her transverberated heart, examined by doctors in 1872. Teresa was canonised by Pope Gregory XV in 1622 in the same ceremony as St Ignatius Loyola, St Francis Xavier and St Philip Neri. Pope St Paul VI proclaimed St Teresa a Doctor of the Church in 1970 along with St Catherine of Siena – the first women to receive the title.



**Bernini's *Ecstasy of St Teresa*
Santa Maria della Vittoria, Rome**

'I saw an angel close by me, on my left side, in bodily form. This I am not accustomed to see, unless very rarely. Though I have visions of angels frequently, yet I see them only by an intellectual vision...He was not large, but small of stature, and most beautiful – his face burning, as if he were one of the highest angels, who seem to be all of fire: they must be those whom we call cherubim. Their names they never tell me; but I see very well that there is in heaven so great a difference between one angel and another, and between these and the others, that I cannot explain it. I saw in his hand a long spear of gold, and at the iron's point there seemed to be a little fire. He appeared to me to be thrusting it at times into my heart, and to pierce my very entrails; when he drew it out, he seemed to draw them out also, and to leave me all on fire with a great love of God. The pain was so great, that it made me moan; and yet so surpassing was the sweetness of this excessive pain, that I could not wish to be rid of it. The soul is satisfied now with nothing less than God. The pain is not bodily, but spiritual; though the body has its share in it, even a large one. It is a caressing of love so sweet which now takes place between the soul and God, that I pray God of His goodness to make him experience it who may think that I am lying.'

The transverberation of St Teresa, ch. 29 of *The Book of Her Life* (written by order of her superiors)

'Perfection consists not in consolations, but in the increase of love.' **St Teresa, *The Interior Castle*, 3rd Mansion Chapter 2**

'My soul has been borne away, and indeed as a rule my head also, without my being able to prevent it: sometimes my whole body has been affected, to the point of being raised up from the ground. This has happened only rarely; but once, when we were together in choir, and I was on my knees and about to communicate, it caused me the greatest distress. It seemed to me a most extraordinary thing and I thought there would be a great deal of talk about it; so I ordered the nuns (for it happened after I was appointed Prioress) not to speak of it. On other occasions, when I have felt that the Lord was going to enrapture me (once it happened during a sermon, on our patronal festival, when some great ladies were present), I have lain on the ground and the sisters have come and held me down, but none the less the rapture has been observed.'

St Teresa's reluctant levitation, *The Book of Her Life*, ch. 20

'You may be sure that anyone who cannot set out the pieces in a game of chess will never be able to play well, and, if he does not know how to give check, he will not be able to bring about a checkmate. Now you will reprove me for talking about games, as we do not play them in this house and are forbidden to do so. That will show you what kind of a mother God has given you – she even knows about vanities like this! However, they say that the game is sometimes legitimate. How legitimate it will be for us to play it in this way, and, if we play it frequently, how quickly we shall give checkmate to this Divine King! He will not be able to move out of our check nor will He desire to do so. It is the queen which gives the king most trouble in this game and all the other pieces support her. There is no queen who can beat this King as well as humility can; for humility brought Him down from Heaven into the Virgin's womb and with humility we can draw Him into our souls by a single hair.'

The chess allegory, St Teresa, *The Way of Perfection*, ch. 16

'I knew quite well that in matters of faith no one would ever find me transgressing even the smallest ceremony of the Church, and that for the Church or for any truth of Holy Scripture I would undertake to die a thousand deaths. So I told them not to be afraid, for my soul would be in a very bad way if there were anything about it which could make me fear the Inquisition. If ever I thought there might be, I would go and pay it a visit of my own accord; and if anything were alleged against me the Lord would deliver me and I should be very much the gainer.'

St Teresa, *Life*, ch. 33

'Let nothing trouble you / Let nothing frighten you / Everything passes / God never changes /
Patience / Obtains all / Whoever has God / Wants for nothing / God alone is enough.'

Poems

29TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, YEAR A – READINGS

FIRST READING

Is 45:1, 4-6

A reading from the prophet Isaiah

Thus says the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whom he has taken by his right hand to subdue nations before him and strip the loins of kings, to force gateways before him that their gates be closed no more: It is for the sake of my servant Jacob, of Israel my chosen one, that I have called you by your name, conferring a title though you do not know me. I am the Lord, unrivalled; there is no other God besides me. Though you do not know me, I arm you that men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun that, apart from me, all is nothing.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Ps 95

R. Give the Lord glory and honour.

1. O sing a new song to the Lord,
sing to the Lord all the earth.
Tell among the nations his glory
and his wonders among all the peoples. (R.)

2. The Lord is great and worthy of praise,
to be feared above all gods;
the gods of the heathens are naught.
It was the Lord who made the heavens. (R.)

3. Give the Lord, you families of peoples,
give the Lord glory and power,
give the Lord the glory of his name.
Bring an offering and enter his courts. (R.)

4. Worship the Lord in his temple.
O earth, tremble before him.
Proclaim to the nations: 'God is king.'
He will judge the peoples in fairness. (R.)

SECOND READING

1 Thess 1:1-5

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Thessalonians

From Paul, Silvanus and Timothy, to the Church in Thessalonika which is in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ; wishing you grace and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We always mention you in our prayers and thank God for you all, and

constantly remember before God our Father how you have shown your faith in action, worked for love and persevered through hope, in our Lord Jesus Christ. We know, brothers, that God loves you and that you have been chosen, because when we brought the Good News to you, it came to you not only as words, but as power and as the Holy Spirit and as utter conviction.

The word of the Lord.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Phil 2:15-16

Alleluia, alleluia! Shine on the world like bright stars; you are offering it the word of life. Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Mt 22:15-21

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

The Pharisees went away to work out between them how to trap Jesus in what he said. And they sent their disciples to him, together with the Herodians, to say, 'Master, we know that you are an honest man and teach the way of God in an honest way, and that you are not afraid of anyone, because a man's rank means nothing to you. Tell us your opinion, then. Is it permissible to pay taxes to Caesar or not?' But Jesus was aware of their malice and replied, 'You hypocrites! Why do you set this trap for me? Let me see the money you pay the tax with.' They handed him a denarius, and he said, 'Whose head is this? Whose name?' 'Caesar's' they replied. He then said to them, 'Very well, give back to Caesar what belongs to Caesar – and to God what belongs to God.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

Memorial Acclamation

When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup,
we proclaim your Death, O Lord, until you come again.

Spiritual Communion

My Jesus, I believe that you are present in the Most Holy Sacrament. I love you above all things, and I desire to receive you into my soul. Since I cannot at this moment receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace you as if you were already there and unite myself wholly to you. Never permit me to be separated from you. Amen.

Hymns:

Entrance – CWB 586 (*ps 1, 2, 4*)

Offertory – CWB 399

Communion –

Recessional – CWB 494

Praise to the Lord

Christ our Lord the Prince of Ages

Mary, crowned with living light

Go now, you are sent forth

Feast Days:

19 October: Sts John Brébeuf, Isaac Jogues & companions; St Paul of the Cross

22 October: St John Paul II, pope

23 October: St John of Capistrano

24 October: St Anthony Mary Claret

Recently Deceased:

Hernani Mateo

Readings Next Week:

30th Sunday in Ordinary Time: Ex 22:20-26; 1 Thess 1:5-10; Mt 22:34-40

Remember to pray a decade of the Rosary every day for the parishioners of St Patrick's, Bega, who are especially praying for our parish at this time of lockdown

'Spiritual progress tends toward ever more intimate union with Christ. This union is called "mystical" because it participates in the mystery of Christ through the sacraments – "the holy mysteries" – and, in him, in the mystery of the Holy Trinity. God calls us all to this intimate union with him, even if the special graces or extraordinary signs of this mystical life are granted only to some for the sake of manifesting the gratuitous gift given to all.'

Catechism of the Catholic Church § 2014