47A Homily for the Twenty-Ninth Sunday of the Ordinary Time Year A

Let me place before you today a very stimulating and an absolutely relevant thought to the modern times that we live in. “Once upon a time, when window was just a square hole in a room and an application was something written on a paper, when key board was only a piano and a mouse just an animal, when file was an important office material and a hard drive just an uncomfortable road trip to a distant friend’s place, when cut and paste were done with a knife and glue, when face was understood as a book that mirrors a person’s moods and emotions, when web meant only a spider’s home and virus was flu, when apple and blackberry were just fruits, when birthday greetings and mails delivered by a postie… That’s when we had a lot of time for God, church, family and friends. That’s when we had a lot of time to give God and his church what belongs to God and his church, to give family and friends what belong to family and friends.”

Today’s Gospel asks a very important question from all of us? What is the image engraved and carved in our souls? Whose would it be? Caesar’s or God’s? Depending on whose image is engraved, our thoughts, words, mannerisms and way of life is shaped and fashioned. Defiant Pharisees today in the Gospel make another attempt to entrap him. They think that they have got a crafty scheme and surely they can outwit Jesus. So they ask: “Master, Is it against the law to pay taxes to Caesar or not?” Jesus knew their malicious intent and he knows that they are to get him. The question itself is a conundrum, catch 22. He asks for a silver coin with an engraved image of Caesar and tells them “So give to Caesar what Caesar’s and give to God what is God’s?” They would never have expected such ingenuity and wittiness from Jesus. Jesus indirectly embarrasses them and put them to shame and indicates to them that in their souls, image of God is not engraved.

If you buy a branded item from a shopping mall or when you buy grocery items from Woollies or Coles, you find the trade mark. It is part of the good or item. It tells us by which company originally it is produced and therefore to whom it belongs before it is purchased by the customer. Christ tells us today that on our immortal soul there is an indelible mark that is the image of the Father’s infinite love. He reminds us that each one of us is the inheritance of God (Ephesians 1:18). We belong to him, we the sheep of his flock. God reminds people of Israel through prophet Isiah: “I have carved/inscribed you on the palms of my hands” (Is 49:16). Anthropomorphically-speaking, how can He forget us and abandon us? God tries to place this idea in our psyche through the psalmist, “If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither. Let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth.” (Psalm 137:5-6).

Early Christians a very distinct trade mark, I think it is high time we readapt it. They were called the people of the Way. Obviously, they were pointing to Christ as their Way, the Way to life eternal. Dear friends, we too live in a time, where we simple be continuously conscious about God’s mark in the recesses of our souls and simply be faithful to the Gospel. Amidst the misleading paths and attracting highways of the world, we as the people of the Way, all we need to do is to consciously take the path of Christ. In doing so, we conform our lives totally to the Gospel in spite of ridicule and being considered out of fashion religious minority. Because at the end of the day, no one can erase or wipe away that indelible mark through which God claims each one of as his treasure.

Let me wind up this reflection by quoting the words of Cardinal Angelo Bagnasco, the Archbishop of Genoa, and the President of Italian Episcopal Conference: “The various emperors and leaders of the world can strip the Church of every resource, discredit it in every way, make it powerless to do the works of the Gospel away, the joy of its Lord… No earthly authority will be able to possess the heart of man forever through the propaganda of lies, with masked promises and apparent democracies. The conscience can remain dazed for a long time, but sooner or later, something happens that reawakens and regenerates it, since its root there is an indestructible core: the desire for truth and the need for good. Let no one be deceived: Christianity can be reduced to a visible minority, but it can never be eliminated, because the Lord said, “Don not be afraid, I am with you until the end of the world,” and because the human soul is made for God.