

# Death and Taxes

Daily Gospel / Liturgical Cycle C

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Holy Gospel of Jesus Christ according to Saint Matthew 17: 22-27.

As Jesus and his disciples were gathering in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is to be handed over to men, and they will kill him, and he will be raised on the third day." And they were overwhelmed with grief. When they came to Capernaum, the collectors of the temple tax approached Peter and said, "Does not your teacher pay the temple tax?" "Yes," he said. When he came into the house, before he had time to speak, Jesus asked him, "What is your opinion, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth take tolls or census tax? From their subjects or from foreigners?" When he said, "From foreigners," Jesus said to him, "Then the subjects are exempt. But that we may not offend them, go to the sea, drop in a hook, and take the first fish that comes up. Open its mouth and you will find a coin worth twice the temple tax. Give that to them for me and for you."

Matthew 17:22-27

Introductory Prayer:

Lord God, I believe in your presence here with me as I begin this moment of prayer. I hope in you. I know that you will always take care of me. I want this time with you to be a sign of my love for you. I seek only to please you, without desiring any spiritual consolation for myself.

Petition:

Lord, help me to acknowledge your greatness with my words and actions.

1. No Tax Loopholes, Not Even for Jesus:

Jesus draws from Peter the admission that collectors of the Temple Tax did not consider him the Son of God, and that they did not consider the Temple the house of his Father. They therefore thought he was subject to the tax. In effect, by obliging him to pay the tax they implied that they considered him a subject or a foreigner. Joined with Jesus' prediction of his Passion, the scene harkens back to the line from the opening of John's Gospel, "He was in the world and the world came to be through him, but the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, but his own people did not accept him" (John 1:10-11). How this must have broken the heart of Christ to find himself unwelcome among those he came to save. And how often we leave Christ alone in our churches and chapels, with no one to visit him or acknowledge his presence there.

2. A Place Where Christ Is Welcome:

What does it mean for us to welcome Christ into our life? It must be more than a warm emotion. Rather it must be opening ourselves to the presence of him who comes to make his home among us and share our lives. We have a God who is so close to us and wants a relationship with us. He wants our time and our attention. Welcoming Christ into our life means recognizing him not as a foreigner who comes from afar to impose himself, but as our personal Lord -- as our master, and our savior. It is his will that must rule in our life and direct our behavior. We must acknowledge that only he has the word of life and we must turn our lives to him in loving obedience. The fruit of this will be interior peace and profound joy.

3. A Society Without Christ Is Empty and Confused:

Today we see how frequently Christ is refused entry into the world, and how frequently he is marginalized by so many of those who have great influence in society and in our culture. He is deliberately excluded from the world of politics, from the world of science, the arts, of business, law, and medicine. Often he is treated in the media only when it chooses to ridicule him. As followers of Christ, we must bring him and his word of life back into every sphere of human activity, for a world without Christ is a world that knows neither its origin nor its destiny and will turn against man himself.

Conversation with Christ:

Jesus, give me courage to make your presence felt in the world around me. Let me not be afraid to show that my faith in you is the center of my life and gives meaning to all I do. Let me give witness of the joy I experience in living by your law in my life.

Resolution:

I will find time to spend with Christ in the Blessed Sacrament today or find a way to give witness to Christ in the midst of my daily occupations, manifesting my faith publicly.