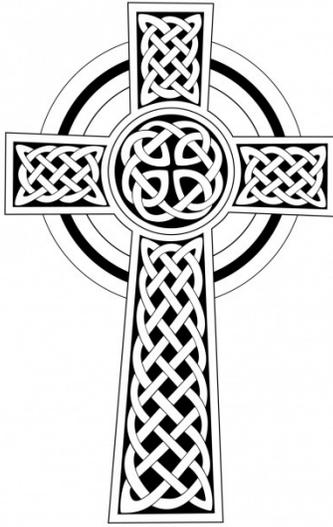


# Gotcha! Well, Almost

4<sup>th</sup> Saturday of Lent



## Mark 12:13-17

*Then they sent to him some Pharisees and some Herodians to trap him in what he said. And they came and said to him, ‘Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality, but teach the way of God in accordance with truth. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not? Should we pay them, or should we not?’ But knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, ‘Why are you putting me to the test? Bring me a denarius and let me see it.’ And they brought one. Then he said to them, ‘Whose head is this, and whose title?’ They answered, ‘The emperor’s.’ Jesus said to them, ‘Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s.’ And they were utterly amazed at him.*

**T**he effort to entrap Jesus in some statement or declaration that would justify arresting him continues in the scene reported in today’s reading. This delegation sent by the chief priests, scribes, and elders feigns respect for Jesus and his teaching and an eagerness truly to understand a question that had been hotly debated. “Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor [the enemy], and, if so, *should we pay them or should we not?* It sounds like a simple enough question to answer—yes or no. Holding up a coin, Jesus asked: *Whose head is this, and whose title?* Well, that was obvious— *the emperor’s*. Well then: *Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s*. The answer implies that Jews ought to pay the tax to Caesar, but what is Caesar’s is left for them to decide.

It would seem simple enough to divide things into two worlds—Caesar’s and God’s—so that in one realm you obey Caesar and in the other God. However, even though he may not recognize it, even Caesar and his realm fall under the authority of God. We are citizens of the world and of our country, but we are also citizens of the kingdom of God, and ultimately the primary authority in our lives is God’s and that authority not only informs but transcends all others. Jesus lived that all the way to the cross, and so he calls us to follow.

### Prayer

Jesus, Lord of all Creation, help me to follow in your steps and to live under your authority day by day. Amen.