

# Homily For Tuesday of the 9th Week of Ordinary Time - Year I

## St Peter's 8:30am Mass - June 6, 2023

**Tobit 2:9-14,3:1+**

**Psalm 112:1-9**

**Mark 12:13-17**

### **Give To God**

#### **Introduction**

Stories of conversion are so wonderful to hear of. We really should expose ourselves to those stories when they are told in books or movies. They make it possible for us to truly be converted to Christ, no matter how we are tempted otherwise. Not only our own hearts, but those who we pray for, that they may experience the joy of knowing God who loves us without measure.

St Augustine's conversion is celebrated because he wrote so dramatically of his own conversion in his autobiography, Confessions. Augustine lived at a time when it was very popular to become skilled at public persuasion. This skill was used to convince audiences of certain points of view, regardless of whether they had redeeming value or even regardless of whether they were true.

When he was converted to Christ, Augustine declared that it was the techniques of oratory used by the sophists, as they were called, should not be rejected, but should be used, instead of for evil purposes, in defense of the Good News and to explain the bible and the truth about God.

#### **Mark**

Jesus himself used many examples of how the wisdom of the world should be applied to God. If the desire to achieve success was applied only to worldly goods, it would lead to spiritual destruction. But, applied to Godly things, that same desire could be applied to success in entering the kingdom of heaven. "Where your treasure is, there also your heart will be."

The Pharisees and the Herodians hate each other. But when they come to Jesus, they join forces, pretending that their hearts are with God. They use a technique of the sophists, which is to flatter Jesus before trying to trick him with a question about paying taxes. They think that they will confuse Jesus about the relationship between worldly things and heavenly things. Of course, Jesus knows their hearts and is not confused. His answer to the question about whether taxes should be paid to a foreign ruler astounds them because their hearts are jealous and full of hatred.

St. Jerome understood the proper priority Jesus was teaching. He said, "You must necessarily render unto Caesar the coin in his image; but you willingly give your best to God, because it is his image, not Caesar's, that is on us." This is a profound truth. Through baptism and Confirmation we have been marked with an indelible seal, a tattoo on our souls, explaining to whom we belong. Worldly things belong to worldly rulers. But we who live in this world, are not of this world. We belong to God. We have been marked.

The Catechism beautifully explains, "From the beginning of Christian history, the assertion of Christ's lordship over the world and over history has implicitly recognized that man should not submit his personal freedom in an absolute manner to any earthly power, but only to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Caesar is not the Lord." (CCC # 450)

## **Tobit**

There is not much time to enter into today's first reading. We are so fortunate to have the Book of Tobit in our bibles. If you have a non Catholic bible, you won't find it there. Historically, it gives us some insight into just how terrible things were for the ten tribes of northern Israel under Assyrian rule. They were ruthless and vicious in destroying the culture and the identity of the nations they conquered.

Tobit does great acts of mercy. Burying the dead was especially important because of the reverence paid to the body. This has been maintained in the Christian understanding. That is why the proper care of the earthly remains must be treated respectfully, not thrown to the wind from the top of a mountain or a

boat. I am told that, when the Jews were killed in the ovens, it was seen as a double death: that they were killed, but also that there would be no physical remains to be resurrected.

Tobit is struck with blindness because he is not wise in the way of birds. He gets cataracts and goes blind. Why does that happen to a man of God like Tobit? We might ask why bad things happen to good people. Well, the truth is that even the best among us are subject to pride. Tobit goes to doctors and, like the woman with the 12 year bleeding illness, gets worse. He becomes severely depressed. Do we see the pattern. Unwise worldly behaviour leads him to physical blindness. But he also is unwise spiritually, leading to a kind of spiritual blindness.

He accuses his wife of stealing a goat and of lying about it. Here is where truth and lies are revealed. Tobit seems to think that God should give him only good things for his good deeds. But his wife is the voice of God, who tells him essentially that his own pride has fooled him. "Where are your good deeds now?" she challenges him. Tobit immediately recognizes the falseness in his own heart: "Then with much grief and anguish of heart, he wept and, with groaning, began to pray. "

### **Call To Conversion**

The truth of God must turn us towards him in our prayer and grief at our own wrongdoing. Our lives must be evidence of Jesus Christ crucified and raised again on the third day. God allows our hearts to be tested and purified for love.

Shall we give to the emperors of this world what belongs to them, but give to God what is God's? Yes, of course. And what do we have that belongs to God? All the love songs tell us over and over again: It's our hearts. That's the truth.

## Key Scripture Passages

**Collect:** *O God, who through the folly of the cross wondrously taught St Justin the Martyr the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ, grant that we may become steadfast in the faith.*

**Tobit:** *I, Tobit, tired from burying the dead, slept by the wall with my face uncovered. Sparrows' droppings fell into my eyes and produced white films. I went to physicians to be healed, but the more they treated me with ointments the more my vision was obscured until I became completely blind. My wife, Anna, earned money as a weaver. She cut off a piece she had woven and sent it to the owners. They paid her full wages and also gave her a young goat for a meal. I called her and said, "Where did you get this goat?" She said to me, "It was given to me as a gift in addition to my wages." But I did not believe her, and told her to return it to the owners. I became flushed with anger against her over this. Then she replied to me, "Where are your acts of charity? Where are your righteous deeds that you are known for?" Then with much grief and anguish of heart, I wept and, with groaning, began to pray.*

**Psalm:** *Happy are those who fear the Lord, who greatly delight in his commandments ... They have distributed freely. They have given to the poor. Their righteousness endures.*

**Gospel Acclamation:** *May the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ enlighten the eyes of our heart, that we might see how great is the hope to which we are called.*

**Mark:** *Some Pharisees and Herodians were sent to Jesus to trap him in what he said. "Teacher, we know that you teach the way of God in accordance with truth. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor or not?" But, knowing their hypocrisy, Jesus said to them, "Why are you putting me to the test? Bring me a denarius ... 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.*