

**10/22/17 ..... 29 A**

*He asked them, "Whose image is this, and whose inscription?"*

-- Jesus' question to the Scribes and Pharisees in the temple area is an important one, and not just for the argument he's making. It is true, he had set a trap by getting them to produce a coin with the Emperor's image and inscription.

-- Jews were forbidden to bring those coins into the temple area. The inscription on the coin is to Caesar, the son of God. That was blasphemy in the eyes of good Jews, who couldn't have an image of God on them.

-- But it was also a question all people of all times need to contemplate. And it's a question that is relevant to this Sunday, which we celebrate as World Mission Sunday.

-- Each of us needs to ask, *Whose image do **we** bear?* After all, that's what our faith is all about. We proclaim, as followers of Christ, that we are all born in the image and likeness of God. God's image is imprinted on us from birth.

-- And, at our baptism, each of us is conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. Our faith is, over and above all, about a person.

-- Pope Benedict, in his first major letter as Pope, said that being Christian is not a result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea. It's an encounter with a Person who gives us new direction in life.

-- In his message for this Sunday, Pope Francis reinforced that idea. He said that the Church's mission is not to spread a religious ideology or propose an ethical teaching. Others have done that well enough. We are to make Jesus Christ real to our world today.

-- That is what mission is all about. That is why we send missionaries to the ends of the earth. The whole world, as Pope Francis reminds us, vitally needs the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

-- The goal of missionaries is not primarily to establish religious institutions. It is to show people all around the world the image of God

in which they were created. After all, if the prophet saw that image in Cyrus, a pagan Persian king, that image is in all people.

-- And the second goal of missionaries is to proclaim the person of Jesus Christ, who was the perfect image of God sent into this world to save us.

-- Each of us is challenged to carry on this mission in our own life situations. Most of us will not go to foreign lands to do this. We carry out our mission in our families, workplaces, neighborhoods and communities.

-- We should, however, support the mission work of the Church around the world. The Society for the Propagation of the Faith does that work, and you will find the traditional yellow envelopes in the pews to use to support this work.

-- My own experience in foreign missions is limited to two visits to the mission in Zimbabwe which our diocese supported for about 20 years. In those short visits I was able to witness the great faith of people who had very few physical resources but were generous with the little they had.

-- May we be generous in supporting the work that continues in the Church to bring Christ to all areas of the world.

-- And, as we do so, may we be more willing to see the image and likeness of God within ourselves and within the people we see, live, and work with each day.

-- For, when we see that image within ourselves and in them, we are more likely to help them to see God's image within themselves. Then all of us will have a more intense encounter with Jesus Christ.

-- And, in the end, that is what our faith is all about.