

**Fr Dispin John – Homily 29<sup>th</sup> Sunday Ordinary Time 18/10/2020 St John's Mitcham**

[www.stjohnsmitcham.com.au](http://www.stjohnsmitcham.com.au)

Just as we finished the 20th century, in Time magazine there was a very special edition. It mentioned the most powerful and influential hundred people that lived in the world. And we often talk about power in terms of money, military power, or even physical power. Technology is another power.

As we began to wear masks in Melbourne, a little niece asked me, “Why are you wearing a mask?” She couldn't understand why suddenly I began to wear a mask. And I said, “you know, there is a virus out there and that's why, and it's dangerous. And that's why we are wearing a mask”. And she said, “where is the virus?” And I said, “I wish I could tell you. We're all searching for the same. “

Over the past eight or so months, we realize that the most powerful thing amongst us is an invisible virus, an invisible virus that has locked us down, and in our homes and towns. Suddenly all our power of intelligence, technology, military, money, scientific advancement, medical research, everything, all this power seems to have been subjugated by one invisible virus.

So, who is the most powerful?

In the time of Jesus, the Romans were thought to be the most powerful. They had the most powerful army, great infrastructure, a great kingdom, an empire that spread across the universe and the people of Israel, Judaeans, were not exempt from this. At the time of Jesus, the Romans had subjugated the people of Judah. So Jerusalem was under siege. And what does that mean? What did that mean? Well, today's gospel gives us the perfect context.

The Jewish people did not believe in any image other than the image of God. To pay taxes they had to have a denarius which had the head of Tiberius on it. The King at the time was Tiberius. So, on one side, it was King Tiberius Caesar and also there was an inscription, which said “Son of Caesar Augustus, the divine”. And on the other side, it said “the high priest”. So, for a Jewish person who believed in God, holding that coin in the temple premises was an offence. And that is why they had money changers outside the temple because that image of Caesar, which was an offensive image, and the wording, could not be carried into the temple.

Now the annual poll tax was a constant reminder to the Jewish people as to under whose power and authority they were. So it was constantly offensive. And that's why were many uprisings against the Romans. In fact, some people believed that Jesus would do the same. But Jesus was on about another type of power. The power that comes from God, a God who is most powerful. That's why when he says, “Give to Caesar, what belongs to Caesar”, he doesn't say what belongs to Caesar because Caesar would not possess anything until it is granted by God. What belongs to God? Everything. God is the creator of this world. And God possesses everything.

That is why Jesus gives that answer to say, you need to know who is the most powerful. Eventually, the Roman empire fell. We are no longer under the Romans. But the presence of God and the power of God still continues to rule our lives, and rightfully so. It is the power of God that we depend on. Jesus in his

lifetime showed that power. Of course, he had control or power over nature, the devil. He cured people with illnesses. He even raised the dead to life, but the most powerful moment of his life was when he went to the cross.

What the Romans and the religious authorities of the time thought as the most parlous moment in his life became the most powerful because he went to the cross out of love for us. Jesus shows us that love is the most powerful, for which he chose to give his life for us.

The image that is more powerful is the image of God. And we see that image to perfection in Jesus Christ, who in turn gives his image for our sake. His image was disfigured so that we and our image will be able to shine.

Who do you belong to? What kind of power do you depend on? Is power in money sustainable? Is power in your good health sustainable? Is power in your own belief that you can do everything?

We as Christians believe that our power comes from God alone. Our faith in God, to some other people, might seem like weakness, but for us, submitting ourselves to the love and power of God is the most powerful moment because we choose like Jesus. We choose to entrust ourselves to the care of our God. And the God who has created us, the most powerful one, will look after us. It is not just wishful thinking. It is a faith based in action. Do you have the courage to place yourself to the care of our God who is most powerful?