Homily for the Feast of Saint Luke the Evangelist 2026 from Fr. Mike.

*Matthew 22:15–22 — **"Render unto Caesar… Render unto God"** Fr. Mike, 2026*

When we celebrate Saint Luke the Evangelist, we give thanks for a man who saw clearly what God was doing in the world. Luke is the Gospel writer who pays attention to the overlooked, who listens for the quiet stories, who notices the movements of grace in ordinary lives. He is the one who tells us of Mary's Magnificat, of the Good Samaritan, of the Prodigal Son, of the disciples on the road to Emmaus. Luke teaches us to see God's Kingdom breaking in through compassion, healing, mercy, and joy.

And so, it is striking that the Gospel set for today is not from Luke's own writing, but from Matthew — the moment when Jesus is confronted by a trap. The Pharisees and Herodians come together, an unlikely alliance, united only by their desire to silence Jesus. They ask a question designed to destroy him: *"Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?"*

If Jesus says "yes," he alienates his own people. If he says "no," he is a rebel against Rome. Either answer is fatal.

But Jesus does not accept the terms of the trap. He asks for a coin — the denarius stamped with Caesar's image — and he says, *"Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's."*

It is a brilliant reply, but it is *much* more than cleverness. It is **revelation**.

Because the coin bears Caesar's image. But **we** bear God's image. The coin belongs to the empire. But **we** belong to God.

Children often grasp this more instinctively than adults:

A child in Sunday School was once asked, "What does it mean to give something to God?" She thought for a moment and said, "Well… I suppose I could give Him my favourite teddy. But He already knows where it is, so He could just take it if He wanted." It's wonderfully innocent, but it contains a truth: God isn't after our objects — He's after *us*. The things stamped with Caesar's image belong to Caesar, but the ones stamped with God's image — *us* — belong to God.

Adults, meanwhile, often slip into thinking of faith as a transaction:

A churchwarden once told me that after a Sunday service, a parishioner pressed a £2 coin into his hand and said, "That's for the heating fund." He thanked her warmly. Then she added, "And if you could make sure it's warm next week, I'll consider giving another £2." It's a charming moment of parish realism, but it shows how easily we imagine our relationship with God as a bargain: a little something given here, a little something expected there. Jesus' teaching cuts through that. We don't *negotiate* with God; we *belong* to Him. Our offering is not a bargain struck, but a life lived in gratitude.

And sometimes, in our modern world, we reduce giving to a category in an app:

A friend told me recently that he tried to set up one of those budgeting tools. It asked him to categorise every transaction — groceries, utilities, entertainment. Then it asked him to create a category called "Giving."

He stared at the screen for ages and finally muttered, “Well… I suppose I do give something… I give my stress to God every morning.” It’s humorous, but it reveals something real. God isn’t looking for a category in our budgeting app. **He’s looking for our whole life — because His image is already stamped on us.**

And this is where Luke the Evangelist becomes our guide.

Luke shows us what it looks like to “render unto God” — not in theory, but in the lived texture of discipleship:

Luke shows us Jesus healing the sick, restoring dignity to the forgotten, lifting up the poor. Luke shows us the early Church sharing possessions, breaking bread, praying with boldness. Luke shows us the Spirit sending the Gospel to the ends of the earth. Luke shows us that to belong to God is to be drawn into a life of mercy, generosity, and courage.

Luke teaches us that rendering unto God is not a tax, neither is it a duty nor a burden. **It is the joyful offering of a life shaped by Christ**.

So, on this feast day, Matthew’s Gospel and Luke’s witness meet.

Matthew gives us the question: **Whose image do you bear?** Luke gives us the answer: **You bear the image of the God who heals, who welcomes, who saves.**

Matthew gives us the command: **Render unto God what is God’s.** Luke shows us how: **by living as people transformed by grace.**

And perhaps this is the heart of today's message.

We live in a world full of competing claims — political, economic, social. There are many "Caesars" who demand our attention. But Jesus reminds us that our true identity is not defined by any earthly power. We belong to the God whose image is upon us. We belong to the Kingdom Luke loved to describe — the Kingdom where the lost are found, the broken are healed, and the outsider becomes neighbour.

So today, as we honour Saint Luke, let us hear Christ's call again:

Give to Caesar what is his — the passing things of this world. But give to God what is His — your **heart**, your **hope**, your **life**, and ultimately, your **love**.

For you bear **His** image. You are **His** coin. You are **His** treasure.

Amen.