

29th Ordinary Sunday A

Is 45: 4-6, I Thes 1:1-5b, Mt 22:15-21

There once was a wealthy man who was determined to take his wealth with him when he died. He prayed and prayed until he convinced the Lord to let him bring his wealth inside the Pearly Gates. There was one condition: He could only bring one suitcase of his wealth with him. Therefore, the rich man filled his suitcase with gold. Then one day, he died. St. Peter greeted him at the gate and told him he could come in, but his suitcase would have to be left behind. “But I have an agreement with God,” said the man, “To bring one suitcase into heaven.” “That’s very unusual,” replied St. Peter. “Let me look inside that suitcase.” The man opened the suitcase to reveal the shining gold bullion. St. Peter was amazed. He asked, “Why in the world did you bring more paving stones to heaven?” What we consider important may not be important to God.

It is God who created the world and everything in it. Therefore, he has the supreme authority. All power and authority belong to him. Hence, every authority on earth is subject to his authority. The first reading of today tells us how God chose Cyrus, a pagan king, as his instrument of salvation to bring the chosen people out of exile. God uses political authority to do good. There is nothing that lies outside the authority of God. Today, when more and more people are losing their trust in political authority, Jesus reminds us in the Gospel of our duty toward God and toward civil authority. The Pharisees and Herodians attempted to trap Jesus with their question. They asked Him: “Is it lawful to pay the census tax to Caesar or not?” If He answered “yes,” he would be accused of collaborating with the Romans. If he answered “no,” he could be reported to the Romans as a rebel. So Jesus gave his enemies a profound response that went far beyond their expectations. He said, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things that are God’s.”

As good Christians, we have the obligation to render to the state the material and personal services required for common good. The civil authorities, on their part, are obliged to act with equity and justice. They have to serve the common good without looking for personal gain. They have to legislate and govern with great respect for natural law and the rights of people. This includes defense of family, religious liberty, and the rights of parents regarding the education of their children. Parents, do not leave to the state the task of bringing up your children. Children were not born to the state but to you. Therefore, God gave you the responsibility to bring up children in God’s ways. The task of the state is to assist you in this. Civil authorities have to constantly remind themselves that they are subject to God’s authority. God has placed certain limits, and they cannot go beyond those limits.

A nation that is built solely on military power will one day break up and collapse, as history has proved. A strong nation can be built only on sound moral principles. Whenever a Christian is called to play a part in public affairs, he/she should not hide the faith. Their Christian faith should serve as a powerful light illuminating the whole area of their influence. The teachings of God and his Church are not obstacles to human welfare. They are sure guides for the realization of worthy goals. Jesus has not taught anything that harms human welfare. Instead, his teaching only elevates human dignity and promotes true human welfare.

When you get back home, write a list of all the things you have—the material things—and all the blessings you have received, and all your talents. Then place a checkmark on those things that you give to God through the Church. Render to God the things that are God’s. Everything belongs to him. All are his blessings. Still, we are very tight when it comes to giving to God. When we live our faith well, giving to God becomes easy. God is not a distant star out of touch with reality. He is the most powerful light who gives meaning and significance to all human affairs. As Christians, we are called to be the salt and light of the world. Let us not hide the light that we have received. **Let us live as children of God in the public square, as well as in our living rooms.** Let us live a coherent life of faith, rendering to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things that are God’s.