

TWENTY-NINTH SUNDAY IN OT-A

"Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God."

These words take on special significance as we find ourselves three weeks away from our national elections.

Although the interpretation of this parable usually focuses on what we owe to God, which of course, is everything being in an election year calls for attention being paid to what we owe "Caesar" ... in other words, our responsibility as citizens.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops treats this topic beautifully in their document, "Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship."

I am now going to read a rather long quotation from it:

"In the Catholic Tradition, responsible citizenship is a virtue, and participation in political life is a moral obligation.

"People in every nation enhance the social dimension of their lives by acting as committed and responsible citizens" (Evangelii Gaudium, no. 220).

The obligation to participate in political life is rooted in our baptismal commitment to follow Jesus Christ and to bear Christian witness in all we do.

As the Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us, “It is necessary that all participate, each according to his or her position and role, in promoting the common good.

This obligation is inherent in the dignity of the human person. . . . As far as possible citizens should take an active part in public life” (nos. 1913-1915).

Unfortunately, politics in our country often can be a contest of powerful interests, partisan attacks, sound bites, and media hype.

The Church calls for a different kind of political engagement: one shaped by the moral convictions of well-formed consciences and focused on the dignity of every human being, the pursuit of the common good, and the protection of the weak and the vulnerable.

As Pope Francis reminds us, “Politics, though often denigrated, remains a lofty vocation and one of the highest forms of charity, inasmuch as it seeks the common good. . . . I beg the Lord to grant us more politicians who are genuinely disturbed by the state of society, the people, the lives of the poor!” (Evangelii Gaudium, no. 205).

The Catholic call to faithful citizenship affirms the importance of political participation and insists that public service is a worthy vocation.

As citizens, we should be guided more by our moral convictions than by our attachment to a political party or interest group.

When necessary, our participation should help transform the party to which we belong; we should not let the party transform us in such a way that we neglect or deny fundamental moral truths or approve intrinsically evil acts.

We are called to bring together our principles and our political choices, our values and our votes, to help build a civilization of truth and love."

End of quote

You and I are all called, as were the Thessalonians, to the "work of faith and labor of love and endurance in hope of our Lord Jesus Christ."

In his Apostolic Exhortation, "Rejoice and Be Glad," Pope Francis wrote:

"The call to holiness, he writes, requires a "firm and passionate" defense of "the innocent unborn."

"Equally sacred," he further states, are "the lives of the poor, those already born, the destitute, the abandoned and the underprivileged, the vulnerable infirm and elderly exposed to covert euthanasia, the victims of human trafficking, new forms of slavery, and every form of rejection."

Whoever our next President will be, we must continue to offer prayers for him as he leads our country.

We must also pray for peace within our nation after the election.

To "repay Caesar and God" requires the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

As a people constituted "e pluribus unum" ... "out of many, one ... " we are challenged to pursue unity and charity which will serve our national purpose of "justice for all."

As Christians you and I are called to promote and protect that justice for the poor, the marginalized and especially for those lives that are most vulnerable and defenseless.