

29th Sunday in Ordinary Time

My beloved brothers and sisters: St. Paul reminds us that “Our citizenship is in heaven”; however, he also reminds us that we are to pray for those who govern us. The Pharisees in this gospel story, were not really concerned with the issue of paying their taxes. We know this, because they were plotting with the Herodians, looking for a way to destroy Jesus. They would not normally even associate with the Herodians.

Jesus, could see through their insincerity and their scheming; however, for Jesus, this became a teaching moment; and His lesson for them, is still a lesson for us as well: “Give to God what belongs to God, and to Caesar, what belongs to Caesar.”

We have the highest responsibility to our relationship with God and His just demands upon us; however, we also have obligations to the society in which we are born, to shape and mold the society by our knowledge and practice of the righteousness of God! Our citizenship in Heaven comes first, before our obligations to our country! Many people including Catholics get the order of responsibility backwards. Sometimes, these responsibilities will overlap; however, in the end, our earthly citizenship will end, while our heavenly citizenship continues forever! Therefore, it is obvious which is most important!

Jesus challenges us to live our citizenship in this world, out of our proper response to God: the Great Commandment and the Ten Commandments are our first Constitution which should inform our response as responsible citizens of this wonderful nation of ours. “You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart, mind and soul and all of your strength.”; is the first and primary commandment which governs us. Many Christian martyrs and saints remind us at the cost of their lives, we must ever be faithful to our God and His constitutions. St. Thomas Moore, one of my heroes, was murdered by King Henry the VIII when he refused to compromise this first principal of life!

We are called as the Citizens of Heaven, even while still on this earth, to exercise our citizenship in this nation, by calling our leaders to be truly Godly men and women, who shape and mold legislation, not according to expediency, according

to a party platform; but according to the universal law of God, the Natural Law, and the Commandments of God. This is the root of real justice, without which, there is no justice! St. Paul reminds us that we are exiles; strangers in a strange land, while in this world and our citizenship is in heaven; therefore, let us take a few moments to reflect upon this difficult question: Do the values of the Gospel and the Law of God form my political conscience and choices; or do the values of the society around us form my lived values?