

29th Sunday per Annum - A
Isaiah 45:1, 4-6;
I Thessalonians 1:1-5b;
Matthew 22:15-21
Little Flower - 10/19/14

My Brothers and Sisters,

In today's Gospel, we hear the oft-quoted saying of Jesus, "...give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and give to God what belongs to God." Unfortunately, this verse is often understood to refer primarily to our obligation to pay taxes. The reality is that we owe more to Caesar than simply the payment of taxes.

Tuesday, November 4, is election day. Because this is not a presidential election year, voter turnout is expected to be low. However, for us as Catholic Christians, voting is not only a right but a moral imperative. Elections matter. Those who are elected make or affect public policy. Elections can make a real difference for the nation, the state, and the city. Therefore, I want to encourage all registered voters to vote on November 4.

To be good citizens, we need to familiarize ourselves with the issues and the candidates. As Catholics, we should support candidates whose positions on issues are aligned most closely to authentic human and Christian values. Likewise, we should never support candidates simply on the basis of self-interest. Rather, we should support candidates who will work for the common good of all people.

In reality, we will never find a perfect candidate. Therefore, it is important to choose the best candidate available. In an e-mail, the Indiana Catholic Conference stated it this way, "vote based on your best judgment of which candidate will do the best job of protecting from evil and promoting the common good."¹ That said, voting is a very personal act. No one can tell you for whom you should vote. Your vote is between yourself and God.

We are living in challenging times. Our country, like our Church, is very divided. I have to believe that both traditional and social media play a major part in the divisions within our country. Likewise, there are those who would limit freedom of religion to freedom of worship. In other words, they would argue that faith should be something completely private. They would not allow us as individuals of faith or as communities of faith to influence public policy. At the same time, our country is facing many crises from ISIS to Ebola. In Paul's Letter to the Thessalonians, we are told the Gospel was presented to the Thessalonians with much conviction. For us to respond well to the challenges of today, we have to be men and women of principle and conviction.

At the same time, as Christians and Catholics, we also have to understand that we live in a pluralistic society. Not everyone believes as we do. In reality, not all Christians or Catholics agree. Therefore, we have to understand that the candidates we believe will do the best protecting us from evil and promoting the common good will not always be elected. Likewise, we have to understand that laws and policies will sometimes be enacted that we do not believe are moral and/or prudent. What we must not do is give up on the political process. We must continue to try to influence public policy according to authentic human and Christian values.

My brothers and sisters, if you are registered, please vote on November 4. Even if your preferred candidates are not elected, please remember that God works in his own ways and can influence elected officials who may not believe as we do, who may not even believe in God. This was the lesson of today's first reading. Remember that God chose Cyrus, a pagan king, who did not even know God, to return the Israelites from exile and to rebuild Israel.

¹"How Catholics Should Prepare to Vote," Election 2014 / Glenn Tebbe - Executive Director - Indiana Catholic Conference, e-mail dated 9/22/14.