

Three years ago when we reflected on this gospel passage, we were left with the unanswerable question: What belongs to Caesar and what belongs to God?

Jesus slipped out of the trap set for him by the Herodians and Pharisees, leaving us puzzling over his answer for 2000 years. You may recall that we looked at two traditional solutions to Jesus' puzzle that have proven unworkable over the years.

In the middle ages, the theory was that everything belonged to God. This only led to constant battles. After the Enlightenment, the theory has been that nothing belongs to God. This has led to acting as if faith is strictly a private concern.

We have seen all this week how faith isn't just a private concern, it affects how we interact with the state. The Church and State may differ essentially; they have different ends, but they are somehow related. Each claims the allegiance of the same people. The State promoting the common good of citizens; the Church promoting the ultimate good, the redemptive work of salvation.

All attempts to 'fix' the relationship between the Church and State are foredoomed. Church and State are in a living relationship with each other. This will play out in our lives over the next few weeks as we prepare to vote. Up and

down the ballot we must decide: how do we balance the common good and the ultimate good?

Each must come to their own conclusion. It is an exercise of our baptismal responsibility to help govern the earth. Voting is an act of stewardship. A steward is not an owner. A steward cares for the estate of another. We must govern our estate so as to pass it on to our children and grandchildren enhanced, not diminished.

Voting affects what state the estate will be in for the future. We must wrestle with the issues, listening to both sides of an argument, discerning who is trustworthy, choosing who will be good leaders. All with one eye on the common good, and the other on the ultimate good.

So what is the good news? God is at work in the world both with those who are willing and those who are unwilling, with those of faith and those of no faith. We work together with all people of good will to seek out the common good of our nation and the ultimate good of all people.

We are citizens both of the nation and citizens of the city of God.