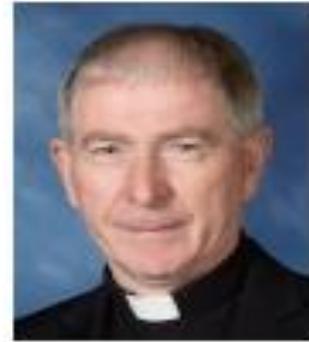


# Father Martin's Pen

February 10, 2019

## The Economics of Religion



Most people are familiar with the First Amendment and the separation of Church and State. We also have the words of Jesus “render to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God.” Mt. 22.21.

Before John F. Kennedy was elected President, there was some anxiety about how his faith would relate to the office of President. Would Kennedy as President be taking orders from the Pope? Kennedy’s own response apparently was that religion was a private matter, while the Presidency was a public one.

In the famous Roe versus Wade case the Supreme Court found a way to side-step the issue of unborn life by saying that it was a private matter. The implication was that the Supreme Court dealt only in the public domain. While the theory may be in favor of separation of Church and State, the reality points to a significant interaction between public and private, State and Church, economics and religion.

Traditionally economics used to be broken down into three areas, agriculture, manufacture and underground resources. I would like to add a fourth, service.

Across the United States, look at all the services provided by the Church which have a major **economic** impact on society, food banks, St. Vincent de Paul, shelters, refugee support, health care, education, parish volunteer services, catholic community services etc.

Surely all of the above have a huge **economic** value to the wider society and must not be thought of as of no value. If the State had to directly take on all of these services, the budget and tax collection would rise to unbearable levels.

Recently we have watched riots take place in France over pay levels and the cost of living. Religious organizations have played an important role in easing the pressures on the poor by distributing essentials to those in need. Even in advanced economies, religion continues to play a major role in catering to those not making it in a Market economy. Competition works well in providing wealth to the general economy, but there will always be a section of society that fails to keep up.

The present homeless crisis is testament to the failure of Liberalism as a philosophy and its refusal to consider the Common Good of all people.

Life is not a solo run (Liberalism), it is a team event. We are social beings.

In the book of Genesis God asks Cain “where is your brother?” Cain responds “I do not know. Am I my brother’s keeper?” Gen 4.9

Yes, we are our brother’s keeper.

*Father Martin*

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