

Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and to God what belongs to God! Dear brothers and sisters, thank you for joining us this Sunday to give to God what belongs to God. Give to God honor and glory! Today the Church celebrates World Mission Sunday, and the fact that all of us are called to be missionaries and make known the Good News of Jesus Christ to all. I will say something about this later. For now, let us reflect on the readings of today.

The First Reading announces that God would bring his people back home from exile, but that he would do so through a very unexpected instrument. He uses a Gentile who doesn't even know him. God addresses the leader of Persia Cyrus: "For the sake of Jacob, my servant, of Israel, my Chosen One, I have called you by your name, giving you a title, though you knew me not." God is grasping his right hand, helping him subdue the nations and set people free from the authoritarian rule of the Babylonians. "It is I who arm you, though you know me not, so that toward the rising and the setting of the sun, people may know that there is none besides me"(cf.Is.45:4-6). This shows us that God is loving, is active in the lives of everyone, and can speak to us through anyone he chooses, but to him alone we should give glory and honor. Let's think of all the missionaries and the people who led us to embrace the life of faith; they were just God's instruments like Cyrus.

In the Gospel, Jesus reminds us that we need to honor our civic leaders and civic authority. We need to know how to work with them to promote freedom and dignity of the people of God, and God alone should we adore, not other gods. Herodians in the

Gospel had deep devotion to Caesar, and so they tested Jesus to see if he could go against the authority. This would give them an excuse to arrest him. Remember, this is the period of his last days before death.

Anyway, let us return to the point. Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar. Sometimes in our countries, we may be tempted to have blind allegiance to the governments and politicians, even to the extent of forgetting that our primary allegiance is to God and his teachings. Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and to God what belongs to God. Serving one's country should not take away one's responsibility to adore and honor God. We have to pay taxes as citizens and respect good laws. Even more than that, we have to honor our allegiance to God, and our faith as disciples of Christ. Our faith in God should inspire how we participate in civic life. We need always to remember that earthly kings and leaders come and go, but the Heavenly King lives eternally. He loves us and he wants us one day to enjoy eternal happiness with him in heaven. I was reading the other day how much people have given to various campaigns here in Oregon. I hope that they also give to God's campaign and to the mission of the Church: God's work.

As I mentioned in the beginning, today we celebrate World Mission Sunday. The Church is missionary by nature. This year the mission of the Church has been challenging due to the COVID pandemic and the suffering caused by it. Yet, even now the Lord calls asking, "Whom will I send?" We need to respond, "Here I am Lord, send me," and go and proclaim his love and hope to all (cf. Isaiah 6:8). As we live in pain and suffering of

our time, Pope Francis in his message for World Mission Sunday says, “Pain and death make us experience our human frailty, but at the same time remind us of our deep desire for life and liberation from evil. In this context, the call to mission, the invitation to step out of ourselves for love of God and neighbor, presents itself as an opportunity for sharing, service, and intercessory prayer...We find ourselves when we give ourselves to others.” Today, let us pray for missionaries, do our part to serve others, and support the Church’s mission to inspire others to get closer to God. Finally, I want to thank all those who are supporting our parish’s annual Fall Bazaar, for this is one way of supporting the mission of the Church. I thank you all for your support. God bless you. Amen.