

“Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God.” Jesus provides a very clever answer. Those who willingly use the coin that is Caesar’s should repay him in kind. Jesus sidesteps the trap set for him and sets a much higher standard. He requires much more than the mere payment of taxes.ⁱ Repay to God what belongs to God.

Two weeks ago, we had the parable of the vineyard. The Lord asked for the tenants to produce their payment for the land they had used, and they responded by killing his Son. “Therefore, I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that will produce its fruit” (Mt 21:43).

God has given us much more than a vineyard. He is the author of life and calls us to be fruitful and multiply. In the context of a marital covenant, husband and wife promise to be open to children and to raise them to know and love God. At baptism, a mother and father promise to teach the faith to their children. They show them right from wrong. They instruct them about love and forgiveness. The command to be fruitful and multiply applies to everyone, married or single, young or old, the house full of children, the home with none. Let me explain.

Repay to God what belongs to God. A young boy of 15 was diagnosed with a severe case of Leukemia. He offered his suffering for the pope and for the Church. His body weakened, he went into a coma, he died within a week of the diagnosis. This teenager bore his suffering with dignity and grace in order to bear fruit for others.

Eight years earlier, that same boy expressed a special love for God and wanted to attend Mass. His parents were not practicing Catholics, so it was difficult for him. He felt the presence of God when he received the Eucharist and started going to daily Mass, often dragging his family members along with him. His strong faith had an impact on his parents, and they recognized the need to practice their faith more fully.

The boy had an aptitude for computer programming. He was self-taught. He also had a deep devotion to the Eucharist. He made Holy Hours before or after Mass. He understood, “the more often we receive the Eucharist, the more we will become like Jesus, so that on this earth we will have a foretaste of heaven.”ⁱⁱ With his love for God and his talent for computer programming, he built a website to excite others about Eucharistic miracles and Marian apparitions. He bore fruit that touched people around the world. Last weekend in Assisi, Carlo Acutis was beatified. He died in 2006, but from heaven he is still reaching out to others being fruitful and multiplying their faith.

Repay to God what belongs to God. My father received a gift from God. His father nurtured that gift and taught him to be fruitful and share poetry with others. He began with silly rhymes as a boy just learning to speak and he multiplied the gift a thousand-fold over the course of a lifetime. He even used it to express his dismay about paying to Caesar what belongs to Caesar:

Oh hear, dear Lord, my humble plea:ⁱⁱⁱ
“Why is the I.R.S. picking on me?
When I think of what my dear life offers,
Is it to enhance the I.R.S. coffers?

The I.R.S. will happily chime:
“Paying taxes is no crime.”
It’s time to fret ... it’s time to sweat!
Have you paid your taxes yet?

I encourage you to identify your God given talents and help your friends and family to do likewise so that each person can give to God what belongs to God.

God's love is manifested and clearly shown^{iv}
Giving each person a talent all their own.
God gave you a special role:
Share joy and happiness ... with every soul.

From the cross, Jesus showed us the way.
Love isn't love, until given away.
With gratitude for the life given you,
Give back to God all He is due.

ⁱ See footnote Mt 22:21

ⁱⁱ catholicnewsagency.com/news/blessed-carlo-acutis-doctors-recall-his-last-days-in-hospital-55243

ⁱⁱⁱ Adapted from Why is the IRS Picking on Me and It's Tax Time

^{iv} Adapted from A Talent Shared