

When a centurion appealed to Jesus to alleviate the paralysis of his suffering servant, Jesus was prepared to go in person and offer help. Jesus was amazed at the faith of this officer in the Roman army. He felt unworthy for Jesus to enter his home but trusted that Jesus had the authority to heal from a distance. Jesus praised this foreign soldier for his faith and immediately offered healing to the paralyzed servant.

“Human society can be neither well-ordered nor prosperous unless it has some people invested with legitimate authority to preserve its institutions and to devote themselves as far as is necessary to work and care for the good of all” (CCC 1897). Virtue is a necessary quality for anyone in authority for they are called not to serve their own interests but the common good.

A good leader must be like Jesus, willing to lay down one’s life for the good of others, and also one who leads by example. When Jesus washed the feet of the apostles, he explained his actions: “If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another’s feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do” (Jn 13:14-15).

In addition to humble servants, we also need citizens that respects authority and the moral order. Saint Paul teaches us in the Letter to the Romans: “Let every person be subordinate to the higher authorities, for there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been established by God. Therefore, whoever resists authority opposes what God has appointed, and those who oppose it will bring judgment upon themselves” (13:1-2).

Having authority and exercising it properly are often very difficult things to do. As Christians we are called to pray for our leaders on a continuing basis. Pope St. Clement of Rome provides the Church’s most ancient prayer for political authorities:

“Grant to them, Lord, health, peace, concord, and stability, so that they may exercise without offense the sovereignty that you have given them. Master, heavenly King of the ages, you give glory, honor, and power over the things of earth to the sons of men. Direct, Lord, their counsel, following what is pleasing and acceptable in your sight, so that by exercising with devotion and in peace and gentleness the power that you have given to them, they may find favor with you” (CCC 1901).

As citizens we have a responsibility to vote for leaders who will serve the common good and follow God’s moral order. “The common good concerns the life of all. It calls for prudence from each, and even more from those who exercise the office of authority. It consists of three essential elements” (CCC 1906 ff):

- Respect for the fundamental and inalienable rights of the human person such as life, liberty, and the free exercise of our conscience.
- Access to basic goods such as food, clothing, health, work, education, culture and information.
- Protection so that people may live in peace. Police, firemen, and military help us to live in peace and safety.

In order of importance, we must always place people above things. “The common good is always oriented towards the progress of persons: ‘The order of things must be subordinate to the order of persons, and not the other way around.’ This order is founded on truth, built up in justice, and animated by love” (CCC 1912).