

## **29th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle A) Homily**

St. William, Champion | October 18, 2020

Deacon Robert Mintus

**Is 45:1, 4-6 | 1 Thes 1:1-5B | Mt 22:15-21**

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Have you ever been on the receiving end of a question for which there was no good answer? Husbands are definitely in this category, and often give the “deer in the headlights” look when they get one of these questions... “Does this make me look fat?”... “Do you think she’s pretty?”... “How do you like my <insert name of any food dish here> ?” No matter how you answer, there is no right way to answer...

Jesus finds himself in a similar Catch-22 in our Gospel today. But this wasn’t an innocent question... It was a carefully worded trap that was meant to get him in trouble. If he agreed that it was lawful to pay taxes to the hated Roman government, then he would be seen as their ally. On the other hand, if he disagreed, then he would be seen as subversive and potentially arrested.

Jesus’ response is simple: “Show me the coin.” And on looking over this pagan coin which they had brought into the temple, he asks: “Whose head and inscription?” “Caesar’s”, they reply, to which he says, “Then repay

to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." Jesus acknowledges that Caesar has some rights, but he is not God. And He leaves the rest to us to sort out.

Many of us struggle with the sorting out process... I think that most of us can recognize that we are responsible to our lawful authorities for taxes and keeping the law in general, as well as potentially sitting on a jury when we're unlucky enough to have our name come up.

Obviously, we have a lot to repay to God, as He is the source of ultimately everything we have and are – all our gifts and talents, those we love, and all the resources we are entrusted as stewards over. We are ultimately called to take these gifts and use them to help build the Kingdom of God here on earth.

One of the ways that we often overlook, especially at this time of elections, is how we participate in the political process. While our faith is a personal thing, it is never just a private thing. We are called to live out our faith outside these walls... in our homes, our workplaces, and our communities. As members of our society, we are called to be politically

active and to advocate for social justice, to support candidates and policies which work for the common good of all peoples.

There are some people who would say that we live in a country that has the separation of church and state, and that we should not be involved in politics. I respectfully disagree. While our church does not align itself with a specific political party, it does recognize that we have a moral duty to vote for candidates and legislation that are in line with church teaching. If we truly love our brothers and sisters, then this has cultural, economic, and political implications. We can't just sit on the sideline while immigrants get mistreated, unborn babies are killed, or the poor are taken advantage of.

Back in 1976, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, also known by the acronym "USCCB", issued the document "[Political Responsibility: Reflections on an Election Year](#)", which encouraged Catholics to become informed about political issues and the candidates, to become politically active in the party or campaign of their choice, and to vote freely according to their conscience. Unlike other voter's guides, the document never told people which candidates to vote for; it encouraged them to select the best candidates based on the issues, as well as the candidates' personal integrity, philosophy, and performance. They have

updated this document every four years, and the current version can be found online at: <https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/faithful-citizenship/upload/forming-consciences-for-faithful-citizenship.pdf> I've read the document, now about 50 pages with all the references. I would encourage you to look into it as well. There are live links to these documents in my copy of the homily that will be posted on our parish website.

I encourage each of you to be as informed as you can on the candidates and issues for this election. Unfortunately, when looking at our candidates for President, as is often the case, neither the Democratic nor Republican candidates align with Catholic teaching. There are key issues with both. As a result, I am challenged with a question with no right answers, just like Jesus in our Gospel. I will be voting based on my conscience – for the candidate who I believe will do the most good and least evil, who possesses the proper character and capacity to serve, and will do the best to safeguard our country's political institutions. I will also pray that he changes his positions that do not align with my Catholic beliefs, and pray that we have better choices available to us in four years.

I would like to close with this prayer from Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship:

Merciful Father, Thank you for inviting each of us to join in your work of building the kingdom of love, justice, and peace. Draw us close to you in prayer as we discern your call in our families and communities. Send us forth to encounter all whom you love: those not yet born, those in poverty, those in need of welcome. Inspire us to respond to the call to faithful citizenship, during election season and beyond. Help us to imitate your charity and compassion and to serve as models of loving dialogue. Teach us to treat others with respect, even when we disagree, and seek to share your love and mercy. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.