

Please Read on Disciples Response Fund Sunday October 17-18

START READING HERE:

Each year the Bishop prepares a reflection to share on Disciples Response Fund Sunday. Every parish in the Diocese will share this reflection this weekend.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

Today's Gospel reflects the sinister partnership between religious and political groups that conspired to try to discredit the teachings of Jesus Christ. They developed a controversial question about money and taxes for the sole purpose of trying to embarrass Jesus and his motives. We can relate to this story because the subject of money and taxes is still controversial, even today! But Christ masterfully and dismissively responds with a simple phrase that tells us to prioritize our relationship with God first.

The passage that strikes me most is where the Gospel states that Jesus, "***knew their malice.***" The great irony in the New Testament's references to the Pharisees is that they were considered authorities in Church tradition, yet they were so threatened by this man of compassion, unconditional love, and generosity. They came to hate him! The Gospel lesson challenges us as the Catholic Church to be people who not only **KNOW** our faith, but who **practice** our faith in the way we treat others. We need to constantly evaluate the lessons of Jesus that challenge our own attitudes and behaviors.

In the first two readings, Isaiah reminds us that God is the priority, and then Paul describes to the Thessalonians what attributes open us up to the Holy Spirit. I have witnessed many examples of this faith being lived out over the last eight months. I am proud of the way parish leadership, both ordained and lay, continue to respond to the needs of our community. I see an abundance of grace being poured out and described in the second reading that "***our work of faith is a labor of love, and our endurance is in the hope of our Lord Jesus Christ.***" Paul's message to the Thessalonians was one of thanksgiving for their faith, and for the way the church conducted themselves, even during adversity. I am also thankful how **WE** are responding as a Catholic community to this pandemic. We are anticipating the needs from this pandemic to grow, and we all need to work on efforts that increase our response to the most vulnerable among us. We are instructed today that we must continue to work unceasingly in our labor and to endure in hope. We are chosen just for these times. Yes, Jesus chooses each one of us for this time! We will not let pandemics OR political processes distract us from doing God's will or responding in a Christ-like manner. These holy attributes allow the power of the Holy Spirit to work through us and change the world around us.

I want to conclude by thanking all of you who so generously supported the Disciples Respond Fund appeal this year. Many of our families face an uncertain financial future, which means we will have an increased responsibility to communicate and respond as a parish and diocesan church community. Please read the materials mailed to each household to see all the important ways each gift impacts a life. Thousands of you contribute each year, and you allow us to serve some of the most vulnerable families in our Diocese. Blessings on all who can respond with a financial gift and who support us in prayer. I pray for each one of you in my daily intentions.

Blessings,

Bishop William F. Medley