

Twenty ninth Sunday in ordinary Time

A prosperous farmer was miserly in what he gave to his Church. So, his pastor went to visit him with the hope of getting him to increase his donation. The pastor pointed out to him that the Lord had given him a fertile piece of land and had blessed him with sunshine and rain so that his crops would grow. The priest added, "You know, this farm and everything you have is really on loan to you from God. You should be more grateful." The farmer replied, "I don't mean to complain, Father, but you should have seen what a mess this place was when God was running it by Himself!"

Dear Friends,

My mother used to always say – put things where they belong. Newspapers, food, the bicycle not in the hall etc. Jesus says the same here – give what belongs to where it belongs.

In the first Reading God uses Cyrus, the Persian to be God's instrument for the people of Israel. He was loyal to God and released the people of Israel on their own. Cyrus carried out God's plan by setting the Jewish exiles free and giving them permission to go back to Judah to rebuild their Temple and city. He also returned to them the gold and silver vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the Temple.

From today's Gospel, there are three things to consider into our life. The first thing is that there is an attempt to find fault in Jesus' speech or counter attack for the accusations made on them. Both, those who support the Roman Empire (The Herodians) and those who sympathize with the national group (the Pharisees), join together to try to discredit Jesus and imperil his life.

Jesus is being asked about taxes and politics and shifts things further. He knows he is being trapped about money. We should not think that Jesus has given a straightforward answer to their question and this is his teaching in relation with God and the state. He moves on to higher questions. Something about the answer of Jesus – where do we belong? We are born at God's time and die the same. This reminds us that we are not the masters of our lives, we come from God and go to God. This belonging is the center of our human family and community is that we are God's. God doesn't want to control us but to love us.

The second thing is that belonging to God means belonging to each other. We have rights and duties of love. Give to others what belongs to others; give to the poor what belongs to the poor. Our work for hunger, education etc. is not a charity for people; it is justice. Everyone has a right to the food of the earth and the food of the mind. It's not charity

when people are given food, education, a home, freedom of religion, freedom of speech – it is justice.

The third thing is to acknowledge, concentrate and spend time and energy to where and whom we belong to. By Baptism we owe loyalty to Jesus Christ, for we are citizens of His Kingdom. Since everything is God's, we must give ourselves to Him 100%, not just 10% on Sundays. We should be generous in fulfilling our Sunday obligations and find time every day for prayer and worship in the family, for the reading of the Bible and the proper training of our children in Faith and morals. St. Augustine teaches that when we truly succeed in "giving to God what is God's," we are "doing justice to God." This requires that we return to God, with dividends, that which God has entrusted to us, remembering that we are mere managers or stewards of God's gifts.

How do we better serve God in our life?