

Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

There was an elderly couple, who had been married for sixty years. Strangely, they both died on the same day and went to heaven. So, they arrived at the pearly gates and Saint Peter escorted them to their beautiful, palatial mansion.

The husband was amazed at the size and extravagant features of the home. "How much is this going to cost?" he asked. Peter replied, "This isn't going to cost you anything, this is heaven."

Peter then escorted the couple to the dining room where there was a lavish buffet with cuisines from all over the world. "How much does it cost to eat here?" the man asked hungrily. Peter said once again, "It costs nothing, this is heaven. Please understand that everything is free." The man looked around and said, "Wait a minute, where are the low-fat and low-cholesterol foods?"

Peter replied, "That's the good thing about heaven. You can eat anything you want and you'll never get fat, you'll never get sick, and you'll never die."

The man became angry and threw his hat down on the ground and started stomping up and down on it, screaming. Peter and the man's wife asked, "What is wrong with you? Calm down." The man looked at his wife and said, "If it weren't for your bran muffins, I would have been here 10 years ago."

Dear Friends,

Sometimes in our families, we hear the discussion among the parents : Who is your favorite among the children? Parents usually say no, we love everyone. Today's world teaches us about choices and favors.

The first reading tells that God is impartial. He called Cyrus, The Anointed. History says that God can work even through people who do not know God or acknowledge him as Savior.

The Gospel talks about three things.

1. Tempting Jesus to trap him in their way: The couple of passages we have in all the synoptic gospel talks about the Pharisees and other groups of their intention. The Herodians and Pharisees are enemies to each other. It was a very complicated and burning issue within the community. You will be caught in the trap by your answers when you are in the middle of two rivalry groups. It is like sitting in the middle of a Packers' fan and Vikings' fan asking a question at the beginning of the game: who will win the game? We should not think that Jesus has given a straightforward answer to their question and this is his teaching in relation to God and the state. He moves on to higher questions. Something about the answer of Jesus – where do we belong?
2. Some nations have dual citizenships. As Christians we have the same. By birth, we belong to the state, by Baptism we belong to God. Belongingness gives ownership. By our baptism we are sealed with the Holy Spirit. We belong to God in our human nature and we belong to the state by material nature. The church is not against the state in total.
3. 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 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. We live in a community.

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."