

Twenty-Ninth Sunday of the Year – October 18, 2020

Isaiah 45: 4-6 – 1 Thessalonians 1: 1-5b – Matthew 22: 15-21

The reminder that is placed before us today is that God acts through human instruments. Our Faith declares the importance of human actions as a way in which God and God's presence in our world is revealed. The ultimate sign of this, of course, is that God, in the person of Jesus Christ, became a human in order to reveal the total love of our God for us.

What Isaiah describes to us is that Cyrus, the king of Persia, a pagan king, was also the instrument of the restoration of God's Chosen People. In allowing for the rebuilding of the Temple, Cyrus acted in a manner that helped to restore the Jewish nation. What is emphasized in this account is that while Cyrus is mighty in doing this, it is by God's investiture of him with authority that he is able to accomplish this. Cyrus may have been the king of an earthly kingdom, God was still the Lord of Lords over all of creation.

There is, then, a good connection with the familiar passage from the Gospel of Saint Matthew. Jesus offers us the reminder that while we are to take care of our civil duties by "rendering to Caesar, the ultimate, the final, rendering is to be made to God. God and Caesar are not co-equals. God is the final source of authority, the final object of honor.

What Jesus says is actually even more significant in our times

than in his. The issues in our world are more complex than then and we are much more aware of them. We have a much greater voice in determining what government does. We can affect what Caesar does and who Caesar is. We have a greater duty to insure that government acts in line with God's purpose for humanity.

In the expression of the Catholic Faith there are values which we are to uphold. These values included that of life itself, from beginning to end. These values likewise concern matters of the migration of people, of truth and of honesty, of peace and of justice, and most especially, of the dignity of and the respect for all persons. These are all very much a part of the fabric of our beliefs. However, we can often allow ourselves to be swayed by those whose values are so wrapped up in themselves and their own selfishness.

This is not just a matter of politics. There are issues which go beyond politics. Often too much is being rendered to the Caesars of the world and not enough to the purposes of God. Too much of our thinking can be influenced and formulated by the Caesar of this world rather than by the Gospel message.

As citizens of our society and members of Christ's Body, the Church, we must continue the work of God in bringing into the world God's purpose and God's goals: the revelation of God's love for mankind and for all of creation. As Cyrus was once God's instrument, so we are to be instruments now in revealing the values we possess because of our faith in a good and gracious God.