29th Sunday in Ordinary Time – A **18 October 2026**

- At the end of today's Gospel we hear Jesus say: "Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's, and render unto God what is God's." In saying this our Lord is reminding us very clearly of our duties and obligations to two of the primary authorities in our life: God and our country.
- With regard to our country, as citizens and residents of a particular place, we have certain obligations to the government of that place, and our Lord wants us to fulfill those obligations.
- And so it is that we are expected to pay taxes, participate in our country's political process, and generally follow the laws of the land.
- At the same time our Lord reminds us that we also have a certain duty and obligation to Him.
- And two Sundays ago I spoke about the necessity of fulfilling God's expectations if we hope to go to Heaven, which is done primarily by fulfilling the Precepts of the Church, but also by growing in virtue and living lives of charity.
- Of course, our good works don't *save* us. We are saved by God's grace. We cannot earn our way to Heaven; we can only receive salvation as the gift that it is. Yet, the process of receiving salvation as a gift requires that we live in a manner that prepares us for Heaven.
- Jesus Himself tells us in Matthew 7:21: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven."
- With this in mind, last Sunday I spoke about the necessity of wanting Heaven and readying ourselves for it by living lives of faith, hope, and charity, practicing the virtues, participating in the Sacraments, and living lives of prayer.
- Again, while our good deeds don't save us, they are important signs of our faith in God; they are how we become more like Christ.
- Yet, living as God expects also means comporting ourselves according to His will and corresponding to His grace. Again: "Only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven" "will enter the kingdom of heaven."
- And what is the will of our heavenly Father? God the Father wants us to be transformed by His grace and truly grow in virtue and holiness while we live on this earth. He wants us to be other Christs here on earth.
- Ultimately though, what God wants from us, what God wants us to render unto Him, is unconditional love. Love of God is the highest commandment, and it is our Lord's deepest desire that we love Him.
- St. John tells us that God Himself is love. Love is God's very nature, and out of love He created us. And He did this so that we would love Him in return.
- Love always desires to be repaid by love alone.
- So while in today's Gospel passage our Lord frames His remarks on our obligations to Him in terms of doing one's duty, I wonder if we might look at it a little differently because we can never truly love anyone simply out of a sense of duty.
- Truly loving someone is always a choice. And what God asks of us, my friends, is that we choose to love Him just as He has chosen from all eternity to love us.
- Considering the great love and mercy that God has poured out on us, perhaps it might be good to understand rendering unto to God what is God's not so much in terms of fulfilling a duty, but rather as a way of humbly thanking Him for all He's done for us.
- Perhaps we should look at our rendering unto God what is God's as a matter of entering into the covenantal relationship that He desires to have with all of us.

- With this in mind, I'd like to focus on two images of God from our first reading today that tell us a little bit about God's love for us.
- In the first reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, our Lord speaks of all the good things He has done for Cyrus. Cyrus was a Persian king whom our Lord used to help liberate the Israelites from their Babylonian captivity in the 6th century B.C.
- In 539 BC King Cyrus and his Persian army captured Babylon from the Chaldeans, and soon thereafter he wrote a decree liberating all the foreigners who had been captured by the Chaldeans, and this included the Israelites, who had been in Babylon for roughly 70 years.
- In speaking of Cyrus in the first reading, our Lord talks about holding the right hand of Cyrus and of calling Cyrus by name. These are the two images I want to focus on, because our Lord does the same thing with each of us.
- In the first chapter of his Letter to the Ephesians, St. Paul speaks of all the blessings God the Father has bestowed on us in Christ, and St. Paul states that God has chosen us from before the foundation of the world.
- In other words our Lord knows us, and He has known us for all eternity. And He has called each of us – every single person – out of nothingness, and He has created us in His own image and likeness.
- Even though each person lives in a certain time and place in history, we have always – from all eternity – been in our Lord's mind and heart. There was never a time when He did not know us or desire us to be.
- In His providential will He has chosen a particular time and place for us to be born, to live, and to die. Thus it is that He calls us by name. Calling us and creating us in this way is a beautiful act of love by our Lord.
- St. Paul goes on to tell us in his letter to the Ephesians that in love God created us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ. God loves us so much that He desires that we be His very own children!
- So not only does God call us out of all eternity and create us in love, but He also holds us by the hand – leading us and guiding us – so that we might become His adopted children through Jesus Christ.
- Our Lord is not in any way impersonal. It's not enough for Him to simply create us and turn us loose in this beautiful world. Like a loving and protective father, He takes us by the hand and gently guides each of us along the path of salvation.
- And not only does our Lord lead us and guide us, but He also laid down His life for us to redeem us and save us from our sins. Thus we can see that there is absolutely nothing that our Lord will deny us in order to get us to Heaven! That's how much He loves us!
- He is a God who has called us by name and created us for Himself. He is a God who holds us by the right hand to comfort, protect and guide us.
- And He is a God who has laid down His life so that we might have eternal life. With this in mind, is there really anything we should fear?
- My friends, let us take up our Lord's counsel today and render unto Caesar what is Caesar's. But let us not neglect to render unto God what is God's: namely, our unconditional love and affection.
- Let us trust in God's love for us, and by His grace and mercy, may we all learn to love Him as we should!