

## Ordinary Time 29<sup>th</sup> Sunday [Year A]

**Introduction:** The common theme of today's readings is the nature of our obligations to God and to our country. The readings show us how, with God's help, we can be ideal citizens of both earth and Heaven.

**In the first reading,** Isaiah the prophet foretells how, unintentionally, the policies of the great Persian Emperor Cyrus will be made part of God's saving plan for His chosen people.

**In the second reading,** Paul praises his converts in Thessalonica for their fidelity to God and to Christ His Son, "*our Lord Jesus Christ,*" and for their practice, with the help of the Holy Spirit, of the Theological virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity.

**In the Gospel,** Jesus escapes from the trap in the question, "*Is it lawful to pay the census tax to Caesar or not?*" by stating, "*Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God.*" With this answer, Jesus reminds his questioners that, if they are so concerned and careful about paying taxes to the state, they should be much more concerned and careful about their service to God and their obligations to Him as their Creator and Lord. We fulfill our duties to our country by loyally obeying the just laws of the State and working for the welfare of all citizens. We become good Heavenly citizens by obeying God's laws.

**Life messages:** 1) We need to "give to Caesar what is Caesar's": How? It is the duty of Christians, as citizens of the country, to pay for the services and the privileges that government provides, like paved roads, police and fire departments, banks, schools, and other necessities. If we refuse to pay taxes, how will these needs be met? Another way of "giving to Caesar what is Caesar's" is to participate actively in the running of the government, electing the most suitable candidates and influencing them through frequent contacts. Third, we must submit to the civil authorities and respect the just laws of the country in order to live in peace. As loyal

citizens, we must also see to it that our elected representatives are faithful in maintaining law and order in the country and in promoting the welfare of all its citizens without violating God's laws.

2) We need to "give to God what is God's." How? Since everything is God's, we must give ourselves to Him 100%. We should be generous in fulfilling our Sunday obligations, and we should 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. We are invited each year to make a stewardship pledge of our offerings to the local Church. Our contribution to the parish Church should be an expression of our gratitude to God, giving back to God all that He has given us. Active participation in the various ministries of the parish is an offering to God of our time and talents, yet another way of giving to God His due, our whole self.