

Rectoría San Juan de Dios
XXIX Sunday of Ordinary Time, Cycle A
Is 45, 1.4-6; Ps 96; 1 Thes 1, 1-5; Mt 22, 15-21
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Let Us Acknowledge God

The religious and civil authorities had allied with each other to bring Jesus down. At the root of this trap is the acknowledging of God and the acknowledgement of temporal and religious powers. Jesus is an obstruction to one or the other group, whether he declares himself a nationalist Messiah or a religious leader with temporal influence.

It seems much the same today as in that time. We don't clearly understand the place of God in society; we don't acknowledge Him. It should be clear to us that there is no contradiction between politics and religion, between temporal power and the authority of the kingdom of God; these powers coexist on different planes, yet God is behind temporal power; He is the sole master of all power.

How opportune it is to meditate on this Gospel today, when we live in times in which many pay tribute to false gods, to gods that do not save; in a time in which many are failing to understand that the religious, transcendental plane is above the temporal plane; when many have occupied the place of gods or have accustomed themselves to occupying a place in the chain of command that recognizes only temporal power.

We want to respond to the duties of real life, civil and religious, but to acknowledge God as the principle of all authority and power.

To acknowledge God:

1-Let us know how to use power.

I understand that behind my power, behind the titles of honor I have received is He who gave them to me. Isaiah inspires us in this way in the first reading when he persuades King Cyrus that the power he has received is not his own, that it belongs to God, and that it is not for taking advantage of but to use so that all the people acknowledge that there is no other God but the Lord.

In truth, we are not the masters of our abilities or powers; we are only administrators. Anyone can ask himself today how he has used his authority, his power—whether as the father of a family, or as a son, or in the work environment—and recognize that, at times, he has used this gift as his own, as an instrument of control and, in the worst of cases, has become dizzy with power, exaggerating its use and taking the place of God.

2- Let us make the Gospel effective.

Altruistic works stand out and help a lot, including social welfare programs, but they are not sufficient because they help and alleviate the life of the needy person for a time, but they cannot save him. These kinds of help must exist, whether administered by the state or by private initiative; they are a form of the distributive justice of material goods whose ultimate end is the good of all. But it is necessary to acknowledge that God saves and that works born from the Gospel achieve their effect: God loves you, God is with you, and God makes sense of your life, of your pain, of your suffering.

Paul congratulates the Thessalonians for this because the Gospel that he had preached to them didn't remain with

them as only words but was turned into concrete works of love where the power of the Spirit produced the best fruit, the experience of the salvation of God.

Whoever helps like this, with a believing and charitable vision, does it without losing sight of the fact that he has been chosen for this, to be a communicator of this grace of God, and this totally changes the sense of our acknowledging God in society; then salvation does not come from paying tributes but from recognizing God. The one who makes the Gospel effective knows how to return to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's.

3-Let us pay tribute.

Let us try to break the chain of injustice as long as the stability of our plan of the family of God is not compromised.

The social order is necessary; everyone must contribute in order to maintain a state of individual rights and guarantees; the plan of the kingdom does not eliminate the civil authorities. To serve God does not exempt us from our obligations to society; even the unjust can be paid, those who we know do not administer in favor of all or who embezzle the goods of the nation, but we only return to them their poor power which we don't need for salvation on the religious plane.

When Jesus asks for the coin of tribute with the image of Caesar, with the inscription *Caesar is God or Caesar is the son of God*, and he ends by saying, do not give, but give back to Caesar that which is his, He is saying to the conspirators, the Pharisees and Sadducees of Herod's party: Caesar is not God, but you enjoy the use of his power. Dare to give back power to the ruler so that it does not weigh on you; dare to renounce this benefit, to let go of the position of

power that produces an unjust system. He is telling them that God is above Caesar.

We must pay the tribute, but not because those in power are gods, but because of our civic responsibility; we must pay it not looking to be rulers but understanding the influence of God in any power and acknowledging the primacy of God in our society.