

## Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

October 19, 2008

*Isaiah 45: 1. 4 – 6; Psalm 96; 1 Thessalonians 1: 1- 5B; Matthew 22:15 – 21*  
*S. Beth Quire, OP*

Today's Gospel is one of those that we have heard over and over. There may be a tendency to say, "yeah, yeah, sure, sure." But have we really listened to it below the surface. "Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God." On the surface level this is easy, pay your taxes and pray to God.

If we read it another time we can go deeper. "Repay to Caesar what is Caesars." We are supposed to be responsible contributing members of society. We are to do our part. This goes well beyond paying taxes. We have a responsibility to each other as human beings. A responsibility to the next generation in the planet we are leaving them. Will there be clean air to breath and clean water to drink? Will there be beautiful places to go and renew their spirits? Or has our greed led us to want them to fend for themselves and figure it out when they get there.

What about our responsibility to the vulnerable, the poor. Do we expect government to do it all or do we do our part? We've all hear of the human named, religious responsibility of tithing, giving God the first 10%, some churches say 5% for the church and 5% for the poor. Candidates running for office often claim they understand and what to help those who are poor and experiencing hard times, one way to see who really is for the poor is to look at tax returns. But it says a lot, "Do they put their money where their mouth is?" "Do **WE** put **our** money where our mouth is? Or are we just content to say "we support you." The Letter of James says that it is useless to have faith and not show it in deeds.

I have to say I have always been impressed by the Mormon Church's sense of responsibility for their brother and sister. The state of Utah needs so few programs for those who have fallen on hard times because everyone in the church supports each other in those times. Am I willing to take responsibility for others? In this season of elections, do I vote for things that are for the "common good" and not just good for me and my family?

All this and we have not even approached the second part "Repay ... to God what belongs to God." It all belongs to God! The earth, our loved ones, even our own bodies! We are merely care takers. I heard an interesting interpretation of infant baptism the other day. The priest said the parents bring the child and give them to the Church now the child belongs to the Church! The Church gives the child back to the parents to care for and raise, so when we are baptized **we belong to God!** God gets all of us. The parts of me that I'm proud of, the parts I don't accept, even the parts that I don't yet know are there. God accepts all of us as we are. We are accepted, but we need to give it back to God.

Anthony de Mello speaks about not being attached to anything. It is all God's. I am privileged to use it or care for it. But it is not mine. Recently while I was on the other end of the country and a fellow sister from another congregation lent us her car to drive somewhere we could not get, by public transportation. When I think of this, we have it for the use, but it is not ours. I don't know about you, but I'm always extra careful and more attentive than usual when I'm using something that belongs to another, because I don't want anything to happen to it. Do we do that with God? Are we extra attentive with all that God has given us to care for while we are here on earth?

"Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God."