

THIRTIETH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

October 26, 2008

Ex 22:20-26; Th 1:5c-10; Mt 22: 34-40

S. Mary Paul Mehegan

Lately we've been hearing a call to assume responsibility as Catholic Christians by our participation fully in governmental processes by voting conscientiously—fully aware of what makes for the “common good” in our country. Voting in a democracy is a moral responsibility not to be taken lightly.

This Sunday's liturgy is calling us not only to the love of God but in Christ's very words to include in that love our neighbor as we love ourselves. This is the greatest law for us to consider as we fulfill our responsibilities as citizens on the first Tuesday in November. Having studied our ballots and listened to others who propose their reasons for this or that candidate or proposition—through television programs, radio messages, discussions with our friends or through the numerous flyers delivered by mail—we are now to take action.

Then what? Listening to the outcome of the elections beginning Tuesday night, our next step as loyal citizens will be to accept the decisions of the majority and do our best to work with the results—still committed to the love of God and neighbor. Love is at the heart of this Sunday's call to each of us. From as far back as Exodus we hear God's word that we must treat the alien, widow and orphan with fairness together with God's promise to defend the poor with great compassion. The years ahead must involve our efforts to support those who have been elected in the carrying out of their promises and in the implementation of plans to care for all the people.

In the gospel today Jesus clearly follows through in his response to the Pharisees when he proclaims as one piece the greatest commandment: love of the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind and neighbor as yourself. This response includes the golden rule of doing to others only what you would expect others to do to and for you.

As a practical consideration of what constitutes Christian behavior, we are invited to weigh the consequences of our decisions as American citizens by studying the purposes proposed, the effects of any measure, and the sponsors of each candidate or proposition—all in the light of our faith, our common bonding with all humanity and our nation's founding principles. This will not be an easy task. It may take hours of prayer and study, but the privilege of voting that we enjoy in a free country is surely worth the effort. It is one way of showing how we live out the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and renew the face of our earth!