



Bringing Home the Word

Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)
October 18, 2020

Our Divine Mark

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

Have you ever wondered why so many ancient busts of emperors and gods still exist? In any major museum around the world, you'll see rows of these masterful sculptures. The Vatican Museums have one of the best of these collections.

Thousands of busts and statues of the emperors and gods were produced for civil use in ancient times. Just like the American president's portrait is in every US embassy, so Caesar's sculpted form was all over the Roman Empire. For example, a bust would be placed in the town squares of the outlying territories

to indicate that a border population belonged to the Roman Empire. The sculptures of Roman gods were also set up in public places around town so that a certain religious unity was preserved. Being within the empire obliged citizens to pay tributes and taxes, and it assured them of protection. Once the Caesars declared themselves divine, their statue also required sacrifice and worship.

The image of the Caesar marked what belonged to him: from land, to money, to people, to prayer. If you were under his image, you belonged to him.

We also carry the mark of a divine image that indicates to whom we belong. Each human being is made in the image of God, to be his reflection. We are sculpted and formed to reflect the artist who made us. God gives humans dignity because we are an eternal reflection of God's free, intelligent, artful, and beautiful nature. Our inalienable rights, rooted in our spiritual and rational nature, come from our Creator, as do our duties. No one can take them away.

It is proper to render unto Caesar what is his, but both Caesar and his subjects must render to God what belongs to God. +

Everyone is made in the image of God.

A Word from Pope Francis

Every drug addict has a unique personal story and must be listened to, understood, loved, and—insofar as possible—healed and purified. We cannot stoop to the injustice of categorizing drug addicts as if they were mere objects.... Each person must be valued ...in his or her dignity.

Address to Pontifical Academy of Sciences, November 24, 2016



Sunday Readings

Isaiah 45:1, 4-6

I am the LORD, there is no other.

1 Thessalonians 1:1-5b

We give thanks to God always for all of you, remembering you in our prayers.

Matthew 22:15-21

"Whose image is this and whose inscription?" They replied, "Caesar's." At that [Jesus] said to them, "Then repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Do I realize my dignity and value come from God?
- Do I render to God what he deserves?

Political Campaigns Leave Christ Out

By Kathleen M. Basi

Faith and politics—are there any two words in the English language that are more fraught with potential to divide?

In the United States in 2016 and even in 2020, we went through a heartbreakingly ugly presidential primary and convention season, only to be thrust into an equally disgusting general-election fight—entire seasons in which the *modus operandi* seemed to be: “Say whatever you want, whether it’s true or not, because all things are justifiable in the pursuit of winning.”

When faith intersects with politics, we are faced with very hard choices. No party, no candidate, represents the totality of the Catholic faith. No party holds a moral high ground; the bending of truths and the oversimplification of issues is a near-universal characteristic of political rhetoric, and all party platforms contain positions that are inconsistent with the teachings of Christ.

Candidates often tell us that we stand at a point of no return—that if we don’t get the “right” result, our country is lost. And for this reason, we tolerate the behaviors, the shredding of opponents’ human dignity, the dishonesty, and the trash talking that stand diametrically opposed to the Ten Commandments. Even worse, we participate in them.

Most of us don’t want to own our guilt. We’d rather blame the system. If we take an honest look in the mirror, though, almost all of us are part of the



problem. Too often, the tone of our comments on social media and in our safe zones, among those who think like we do, mirrors the un-Christlike ugliness exhibited in direct mail, TV ads, and speeches. We fail to hold our candidates—even the ones we know personally—accountable for the tenor of the discussion. Then, too, there are the articles and editorials we choose to share. It’s easy to hide behind them, to let an author take the blame and refuse the responsibility we incur by spreading his or her influence.

The truth is, there is no one “point of no return.” We face crossroads every day, every election season, and in every conversation about social, economic, and governmental affairs. At each one,

we make a choice to put our faith in the driver’s seat—or to make a particular political party, candidate, or issue our god.

In the next few weeks, we, as individual followers of Christ, must decide whether to condone the false absolutes, the polarization, and the dehumanization that have come to characterize our political process, or to hold ourselves and all our leaders accountable to the standard set by Jesus. We all have a choice to make. What will you choose? +

Almost all of us are part of the problem exemplified by the nastiness of politics. We must be more like Christ.



Lord, I am grateful for the power of your love and grace. Teach me to trust that you care about my human needs and obligations.

From Grateful Meditations for Every Day in Ordinary Time, Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

October 19–24

Monday, Sts. John de Brébeuf, Isaac Jogues, and Companions:
Eph 2:1–10 / Lk 12:13–21

Tuesday, Weekday:
Eph 2:12–22 / Lk 12:35–38

Wednesday, Weekday:
Eph 3:2–12 / Lk 12:39–48

Thursday, Weekday:
Eph 3:14–21 / Lk 12:49–53

Friday, Weekday:
Eph 4:1–6 / Lk 12:54–59

Saturday, Weekday:
Eph 4:7–16 / Lk 13:1–9