

29th (QA&SJ) Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A

We ask questions about everything under the sun and those beyond this world. *Why do banks have branches when money doesn't grow on trees? Why do feet smell and noses run? Why is it called "beauty sleep" when you wake up looking like a troll?* People ask all kinds of questions: easy, tough, relevant, sensible or challenging. They ask out of curiosity, sometimes for information and better understanding or simply to trap the one being asked. In the bible we heard some of these questions: *Who is my neighbor? Is he the messiah? What is the greatest commandment?* Now we ask God: *What shall I do? What is the best for me? Is he the right man? Am I called?* Or even question life: *Do you love me? Why do these things happen to me? What wrong have I done? Do you hear my prayers?* As Christians we are inclined to ask God questions about life and the life hereafter. *Why do we ask these questions?* It simply shows we are so concerned.

To ask these questions is an expression that we trust God. We ask him and tell him even our *disappointments, frustrations, defeats, fears, doubts, anger, hatred, and problems* for we know that God can do something and make something good out of them. We bend our knees and cry like a helpless child seeking for his father's refuge. When we ask God these questions it shows we are submitting everything to him. With confidence we tell him for He knows and understands us so well. For He is a loving, merciful and compassionate God who cries with us.

In our Gospel the Pharisees tried to test Jesus. They asked a tricky question that would trap Him. *“Is it lawful to pay the census tax to Caesar or not?”* If Jesus answers ‘yes,’ the people would resent him. If He says ‘no’ he would be accused of inciting rebellion against the Roman government. Jesus outwits and embarrasses them, like a hunter who got into his own trap. He answered, *“Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God.”* How does he turn the tables on them? Simple. He is a truthful man. He is not concerned about any man’s opinion or a person’s status, but teaches the way of God in accordance with the truth.

What the gospel teaches us: First, we should give earthly authorities their due, but we should give to God our all. Second, learn not to measure God’s *love, knowledge* and *goodness* by asking him these questions. God has already proven himself when He conquered *darkness with light, hatred with love, and death with resurrection.* *Have you asked God a good and sincere question?* Never hesitate to ask God for he has all the answers. Jesus’ answer simply indicates that there are two realms – *the worldly and the spiritual.* We are in the world and so bound by the rules of the world, but we are spiritual and so are bound by the Laws of God as well. We need to pay service to both. *While we often look for exemptions, finding ways to avoid our obligations and wanting to be excused, Jesus does not mind sharing in people’s burdens.* We demand our rights; but let us not forget that with every right is a

corresponding responsibility. We hate standing in line and waiting for our turn. We expect privileges and clamor for what we believe is due to us. Had we been doing diligently enough when it comes to our duties and responsibilities, perhaps things would be a bit better in our world.

Do you render to God what belongs to God? A minister was once asked how he divided the collection he gets from his church and services. *“After the service, I throw the collection upwards. Whatever stays up belongs to God. Whatever comes down belongs to me!”* *Do you give God what is his?* Our time, talents, the treasure which He has given us are not ours. The fact is everything belongs to God. Even our very life comes from Him. *Are you a giving or a taking person?* Don't think you can *manipulate or* outsmart God. He has the final say and holds the final accounting. Allow God to be God in your life. First, we cannot claim everything for ourselves alone. There is one thing for Peter and another for John. What is for Peter is for Peter, and what is for John is for John. What is good for Peter may not be good for John. Second, our work for God should not be an excuse to neglect our neighbor. And our work for our neighbor should not be a substitute for our time with God. We have an obligation to God and to society as well. Third, everyone has a corresponding and appropriate need. Your kids, not your hobby, need your time. Your wife, not your work, deserves your love. Your God needs your faith.

Let us not be afraid to stand with our beliefs and principles that may not align with social values of the world. Let us examine Scripture and hear God talking to us, for the Scriptures are for every age and all time. And know that whether we are rendering unto Caesar or unto God, that all things will someday be one and God shall reign – that is our Christian hope and our Christian belief. As we observe Mission Sunday let us pray that we may go beyond ourselves to reach out to God and to others, especially those in need. Amen.