

Homily

One of the most heard and repeated phrases in the world, for whatever reason, is the one that Jesus responds to the Pharisees and Herodians about paying tribute, and that we read this Sunday in the Gospel.

However, the readings are not reduced to that single expression, but they bring two connected ideas that gives a much deeper meaning to such famous expression.

It is true that the expression of Jesus " Then repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God]" has had many interpretations and opinions. But, to have a slightly clearer and broader context of it, it is good to take what the other readings teach us.

The first idea that we reflect on is the theme of God's call that is present both in the first reading and in the second. God calls Cyrus for a specific mission, and then Saint Paul, in the letter to the Thessalonians, reaffirms that God is the one who chooses.

God chooses people for something special; we give it the name mission. We are all called by God to a mission; God has a plan. Cyrus, emperor of the Persians, as we heard in the first reading, is part of a larger plan, which only God knows and carries out.

Such a situation lets us see that the "temporal power" can never overcome the "eternal, divine" that God has. Even the most powerful of rulers is part of a plan that God has established. And Saint Paul has it very clear, "God is the one who has chosen us", and we only have to believe in God's plan and act according to his teachings.

But how to respond to that call of God in this world? If God has a plan with us, how can we fulfill it?

It is here where the expression of Jesus finds a greater value and meaning, which goes beyond the temporal. The expression "***repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God***" goes far beyond a simple division of the fulfillment of our temporal and spiritual responsibilities. Many have affirmed, based on this expression of Jesus, that the Church should only deal with worship, without meddling in politics. Honestly, this is a simplistic and limited view on the separation of power domains.

The affirmation of Jesus goes far beyond the participation or not in the political-social sphere. The interpretation we must do, focus on and highlight, is in the question that Jesus asks about the image that is inscribed on the coin: ***Whose image is this?*** In this question is the key.

Jesus responds not on an earthly plane but elevates his response to something higher and of greater value. Everything material in this world carries an "image" that gives it a limited value and that can be bought or paid for.

But, the Image of God is not printed in gold or silver, but in the humanity of each man, giving it an eternal, priceless value that surpasses the earthly: "in His image and likeness, God created them, male and female, created them".

Jesus, referring to "giving to God what belongs to God" indicates that man bears the image no human power can change or modify, much less buy giving a limited value.

That is why giving the material to the world is to fulfill what is established, but man is oriented and destined to give and deliver what is inscribed in his being; further, to reflect in the world the One who cannot be seen or bought.

That is the mission and plan that God has for us: to be a visible image of what God is, of that and the One who has marked our soul and that no temporal power can place value on it or pay. Elevate to the eternal plane what the human being wants to limit. Give back what God has given us first: love, mercy, salvation.

That is why we are called to be men and women who proclaim respect for the value of life, from conception to natural death; to defend the good not only material but also spiritual of the people; because the image of God inscribed in our souls cannot be handed over or reduced to the world.

Being the visible image of God in the world is the invitation and mission; returning to the creator what he has given us is what constitutes our reason for life on this earthly plane.

God bless you

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