

# Gifts to God are payment of a debt

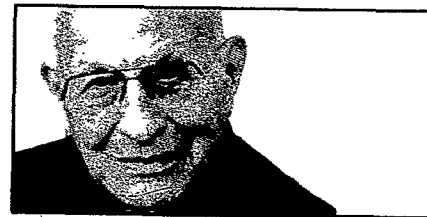
29th Sunday of the Year (October 20): (R3) Matthew 22:15-21; (R1) Isaiah 45:1, 4-6; (R2) 1 Thessalonians 1:1-5.

"Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar," said Jesus, "and to God what belongs to God."

Notice that our gifts to God are payment on a debt, not a bribe. We don't give our gifts to God in order to get something back. We give out of gratitude for what God has already done in our behalf, not in order that God will prosper us in all things.

If anyone deserved to prosper materially because of their devotion, it certainly would have been the Apostles.

Matthew was slain by the sword in Ethiopia. Mark died at Alexandria after being dragged through



Father Albert Shamon

A word for Sunday

the streets. Luke was hanged on an olive tree in Greece. John was put into a caldron of boiling oil, but escaped death and was banished to Patmos. Peter was crucified at Rome with his head downward. James was beheaded at Jerusalem.

Bartholomew was flayed alive. Andrew was crucified. Matthias was stoned and then beheaded.

Barnabas was stoned to death at Salonica. Paul was beheaded in Rome.

The early disciples took up a cross and followed Christ. They gave because they owed God an unpayable debt.

A second point we need to see is that God doesn't need our money. It is we who need to give.

One wealthy man convinced the Lord to let him bring his wealth inside the pearly gates when he died. God's one condition: He could bring in only one suitcase of his wealth. So the rich man filled his suitcase with gold bullion.

St. Peter greeted him at the gate and told him his suitcase would have to be left. "But I have an agreement with God," said the man, "to bring one suitcase into heaven."

The man opened the suitcase to reveal the shining gold bullion. St. Peter was amazed. He asked, "Why in the world would you bring more pavement to heaven?"

We need to give in order to combat the power of materialism in our lives. Materialism can exercise a power over one as strong as heroin and cocaine combined. How often it happens that the more goods of the earth one has, the more one feels the need for more. Luxuries become necessities. Worse still, the more we have, the more we feel we deserve — until the power of materialism separates us from our neighbor and ultimately from God. That is why Jesus said so much about money. For money, one of his Apostles became a traitor.

Finally, our giving to God should come off the top, not from what we have left over.

Our attitude should not be, "I'll

take care of my needs, and then after satisfying them, if I have enough left over, I will give to God." How beautifully Jesus put it: "Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink, or about your body what you will wear. ... All these things the pagans seek. Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides" (Matthew 6:25, 32-34).

The person who gives to God only what is left over will never be a cheerful giver but will always give out of a resentful heart. The man or woman who gives God the first fruits will know the joy and the satisfaction that comes with truly trusting God.

Yes, render to Caesar the things that are his, but unto God the things that are God's.

Father Shamon is administrator of St. Isaac Jogues Chapel, Fleming.

## DAILY READINGS

Monday, October 21

Ephesians 2:1-10; Psalms 100:2-5; Luke 12:13-21

Tuesday, October 22

Ephesians 2:12-22; Psalms 85:9-14; Luke 12:35-38

Wednesday, October 23

Ephesians 3:2-12; (Ps) Isaiah 12:2-6; Luke 12:39-48

Thursday, October 24

Ephesians 3:14-21; Psalms 33:1-2, 45, 11-12, 18-19; Luke 12:49-53

Friday, October 25

Ephesians 4:1-6; Psalms 24:1-6; Luke 12:54-59

Saturday, October 26

Ephesians 4:7-16; Psalms 122:1-5; Luke 13:1-9

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A PARENT NEEDS YOU.



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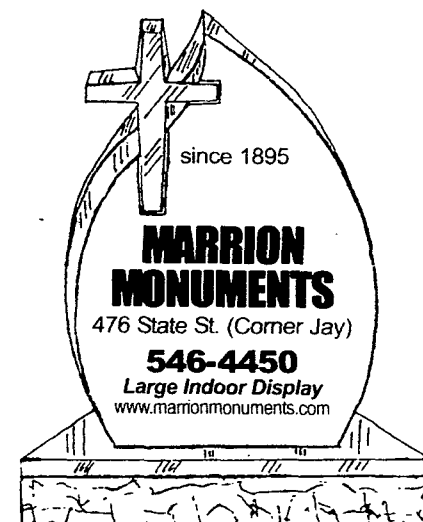
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