

Spiritually Speaking

Give God what belongs to Him

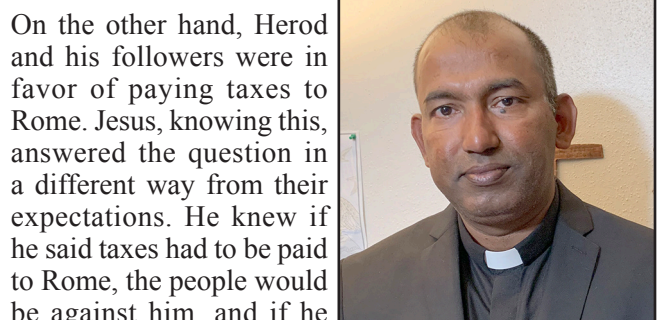
By Fr. Thankachan Joseph SDB, St. Patrick Church

Human beings are always engaged in various types of work and activities. We compartmentalize our lives and values according to situations and persons. When we go to work, we embrace one set of values for dealing with persons we engage with in our workplaces. Once we return to our homes, we have another set of values and principles. Similarly, we profess yet another set of values in our religious commitment. Often there can be moments when these values clash and we must make choices. Does God have the first place? Do we see ourselves as believers first? Today's word challenges us to make first preference to God always.

The first reading, from the prophet Isaiah (45:1, 4-6), reiterates the basic principles: God is the God of history and He is in charge of the world and nothing occurs by accident or by mere coincidence. The Lord is constantly at work, even though we may not see His hand or recognize Him. King Cyrus may think that victory comes because of his might, but he is God's hand, to chasten the rebels who fight against Israel. The prophet goes on to repeat that God is supreme and none can take His place. Even though the people do not acknowledge this and give due credit to God, He still takes care of His people and will continue to provide for them. God took care of His people through a pagan king and He continues to take care of us, often through the most unlikely people in strange and wonderful ways. Even at this time of pandemic, we need to acknowledge the fact that we are surviving and going ahead not because of our merits. It is because of Him who has a plan for every one of us.

In the second reading, Paul congratulates the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 1: 1-5) for their acceptance of the message of the Gospel and for their living of the faith in their daily life. Paul notes that he constantly thanks God for the Thessalonians and mentions them in his prayers. He is obviously happy with them. The credit goes not only to their efforts but to God, whose grace is active among them and to which they respond so generously. The Thessalonians are also praised for having heard and accepted the word of God and letting the word transform their lives. This letter of St. Paul invites every one of us to have this attitude of the Thessalonians, who received the word of God and transformed their lives, and each of us needs to give thought to his advice.

Today's Gospel, Matthew (22: 15-21), continues to relate the conflict growing between the Pharisees and Jesus. The Pharisees try to test Jesus on the issue of paying taxes to the Romans. "Is it permissible to pay taxes or not?" The unspoken question is whether it is proper to pay taxes to the government, but there is a hidden agenda that Jesus is well aware of. Because the tax paid to Rome was a constant humiliation and a reminder that they were a conquered people, a majority of the Jews hated it, and the Pharisees were against paying taxes to the Romans.



Fr. Thankachan Joseph

On the other hand, Herod and his followers were in favor of paying taxes to Rome. Jesus, knowing this, answered the question in a different way from their expectations. He knew if he said taxes had to be paid to Rome, the people would be against him, and if he said the opposite, he would be seen as provoking revolt against the authorities. Jesus completely sidesteps the issue by asking them for a coin with which the taxes were to be paid. This coin bore the image of Caesar and an engraving declaring his authority. Jesus simply says, "Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God." Since the money comes from Caesar and belongs to him, he obviously has a right to demand it, so Jesus says, "Give it to him."

Jesus is not entering into a discussion of the rights of the state and the rights of religion; he is not making a statement in favor of one or the other, but he proposes a deeper truth. What matters more to Jesus than being under Caesar's rule and paying taxes is belonging to God's kingdom. Jesus is reminding his listeners of a deeper issue, that if they belong to God, they have to give God his dues through their daily lives, that they should have God as the most important priority in their lives. What they owe to God is far more important than what they owe to anyone else. It is easy to remember what we owe to our fellow men, but do we forget what we owe to God, who doesn't force anything from us? A good Christian is one who fulfills his duty both to his fellow men and women and to God. In fact, Christians should not shirk public office but see it as an opportunity to serve their fellow men and women and, thereby, God. Only when there is a clash of interests do we have to remind ourselves that God always comes first.

As we approach our Presidential election, we need to keep in mind an example of a religious man involved in politics, Mahatma Gandhi. He said, "I am in politics because I cannot separate life from belief. Because I believe in God, I have to enter politics. Politics is my service to God." Similarly, friends tried to warn Nelson Mandela to stay off politics, saying, "Politics brings out the worst in people. It is a source of trouble and corruption and should be avoided at all cost." Fortunately for South Africa and for the world, Nelson Mandela ignored their advice and made an outstanding contribution to his country and the world. We need to keep in mind the above principle, "Give God what belongs to Him" then surely, He in turn will bring a leader according to His fashion. So make first preference to God always.

Local man proposes vandalized Portland statues find new home, in Heppner

'Are the citizens of Heppner interested in acquiring these statues?'



Portland rioters vandalized and defaced statues of Washington, top, and Jefferson.

By David Sykes

A Heppner man wants to know if citizens of Heppner are interested in obtaining several Portland statues vandalized by Anti-fa rioters this past summer (See letter to editor 'Move statues to Heppner') and bring them to a new home where they would be taken care of and appreciated. He specifically mentioned statues of Jefferson and Washington damaged in June as well as statues of Abraham Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt that were also overturned and vandalized this past weekend.

Dale Woods of Heppner said he would like to see statues that have been vandalized by rioters in Portland, "taken to places where they will be preserved and appreciated." Woods asked for city council input and approval of the idea of bringing the statues to Heppner. He read a letter which is also published in this week's Heppner Gazette-Times.

"On June 14 the statue of Thomas Jefferson was toppled from its place at Jefferson High School a few blocks from where I once lived in north Portland," Woods said. "And less than a week later the statue of George Washington was pulled down where it stood on the grounds of the German American Society. The day after, the director of public art at the Regional Arts Council went to the site and asked people gathered there what should be done with the statue of Washington. One citizen

stated a desire to see the statue relocated somewhere and displayed exactly as it was that morning: tipped over, face down, sprayed with graffiti, an object of scorn and contempt," Woods told the city council.

"I write this letter not in a momentary burst of outrage, but because I have thought many times in the past several months about statues all over the country that need to be taken to places where they will be preserved and appreciated," he added. "My question now is this: Are the citizens of Heppner interested in acquiring these statues?"

The council discussed the idea with one councilmember asking if Heppner people would want the statues. Eventually most agreed it was a good idea and told Woods to move forward with finding out who owns the statues and what was planning on being done with them. He said he would write letters to several agencies in Portland to find out.

Buys new street lights

In other business the council agreed to purchase 30 new streetlights from distributor Carlson's Sales for \$21,950. Local representatives Slater Mitchell and Josh Coiner were on hand to talk about the new lights, and the council also went outside and looked at several samples already mounted from various companies. The council also authorized spending \$2,000 for light installation and \$500 for repair of electrical outlets on the poles.



Councilmembers Dave Gunderson and John Bowles along with city Manager Kraig Cutsforth go outside city hall at last night's meeting to evaluate several sample street lights.

The Loop committee meetings scheduled

The Loop - Morrow County Transportation will be holding its quarterly advisory committee meetings on October 20 at the Bartholomew Building lower conference room, located at 110 N. Court St. in Heppner.

The Special Transportation Fund Advisory Committee will start at 3 p.m. On the agenda will be public comment, approval of minutes, Transportation Coordinator update and other business as needed for the good of the order.

The Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund Advisory Committee will immediately follow the Special Transportation Fund Meeting. On the agenda will be public comment, approval of the minutes, Transportation Coordinator update and other business as needed for the good of the order.

In response to the current health emergency resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, county facilities have limited seating capacity and meetings are being held electronically to provide participation

other than in-person. The meetings will be available for viewing via Morrow County Zoom Meeting. To schedule a Zoom Meeting invitation please provide your name, phone number and email address with The Loop - Morrow County Transportation via phone message at 541-676-5667, or kimes@co.morrow.or.us.

ALL NEWS AND ADVERTISEMENT DEADLINE: MONDAYS AT 5:00 P.M.

Advertisement for Renewal by Andersen windows and patio doors. Features a 40% off discount, a 4.7 star rating, and contact information (888-351-9341). Includes an image of a window installer.

Advertisement for Generac home standby generators. Text: 'Prepare for power outages with a Generac home standby generator'. Includes a photo of a generator unit and contact information (844-942-3614).

Advertisement for Sheriff Kenneth W. Matlack. Text: 'Re-Elect MATLACK SHERIFF "GO THE EXTRA MILE"'. Lists attributes like 'Lifetime area resident', 'Over 40 years Law Enforcement Knowledge', and 'A working Sheriff'. Includes website and Facebook information.