

Homily 29th Sunday Year A 2023

The Gospel raises the old chestnut of the relationship between Church and State. It is too often assumed that they are opposed to each other when this is not necessarily the case. In fact, Jesus makes it clear that they are not. Jesus accepts that we have a duty to keep the rules of the state but that our response to those duties is governed by our loyalty and desire to follow the laws of God which are to love God and to love our neighbour.

“The Church today” of Vat II states: “let all Christians appreciate their special and personal vocation in the political community. This vocation requires that they give a prominent example of devotion to the sense of duty and service in the advancement of the common good..... “It is, therefore, highly important that a proper view exist of the relation between the political community and the Church.

Simply put, we are religious citizens or citizens with a faith and it is our faith that governs how we live as citizens. We recognise that we are made in the image of God not in the image of the State.

Richard Rohr believes: *Jesus always approaches life from the point of view of God. At that time a serious problem was whether a Roman could be a child of God? If he is, then I have an obligation to bring him back into the family... If God loves him, that binds me to help him. However terrible my enemy is God knows them as well as he knows himself and much better than I know them. Yet, there is something in every human being that remains intact, inviolate, regardless of what he [or she] does. It would seem that there is an integrity in every person that is so intrinsic in its value and significance, that no deed, however evil, can ultimately undermine it. Therefore if a person is of infinite worth in the sight of God, whether saint or sinner, a good person or a bad person, evil or not, if that is true, then I am never relieved of my responsibility for trying to make contact with this worthy thing in them.*

There is a story about a king who placed a heavy stone on the road into the city and then hid and waited to see who would remove it. *Men of various classes came and worked their way around it, some loudly blaming the King for not keeping the highway clear but all dodging the duty of pushing it out of the way. At last, a poor peasant on his way to town with his home-grown vegetables to sell, on encountering the stone, set down his load and rolled the stone into the gutter. Then turning round, he spied a purse that had been lying under the stone. He opened the purse and found it full of gold coins with a note from the king that it was for the one who should remove the stone (Indian)*

Jesus teaches us through his encounter that **every obstacle** we come across gives us an opportunity to improve our circumstances and while the lazy complain, others, like you and me, are creating opportunities through their kind hearts, generosity and willingness to get things done.

A dog is being interviewed to join MI6. The agent in charge of the process is irritated by this, but he is relieved that the agency provides a set of guidelines that dictates whether or not a candidate passes. So, the agent takes the dog for the first test.

“Your first task is to type at 60 words a minute.”

To the agent’s surprise, the dog manages to type at 80 words a minute and gives the agent a big smile. Slightly irritated, the agent shrugs it off.

“Your next task is to complete an obstacle course in under three minutes.”

The dog manages to complete the obstacle course in 1 and a half Minutes and gives the agent a big smile.

The agent, now quite irritated, looks at the next task. What he sees there makes him smile. He turns to the dog.

“The final test is that you must be bilingual,” he says with a smirk.

The dog looks up at him with a big smile, opens his mouth, and says ***“miaow”***.