

Fr Ben's Weekly Reflection

29th Sunday Ordinary Time

Oct 18, 2026

Not Father's Soap Box

Quick history lesson to begin. The Romans were pagans and believed in a whole bunch of gods. Rome also held one of the largest empires in the world for centuries. Part of how they did that was a passive "absorption" of local gods. They didn't come in and force Zeus and Hermes to replace Thor or Isis. The attitude was "eh, throw them up on the shelf with all the rest. However…one little teeny tiny caveat…you got to 'worship' the Emperor: Caesar."

That doesn't really work well for the Jewish people who worship the One True God. This is why the census tax was a loaded question to "trap" Jesus. But Jesus, of course, bests them by sidestepping the issue with "repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God."

We don't have a Caesar anymore, but politics always has and always will be the loaded question. And frankly, are we any different than Jesus' time? We may not worship statues of crocodiles, bears, or lions… well…its actually donkeys and elephants now.

Also just like Jesus' day, we live in the world. Part of living in a society is governance and "politics." Unless our vocation is to live as hermits or cloistered nuns, we bump into the world in some form every day. The question is, what do we do with that?

What it does not mean is that we spend hours and hours a day watching news or social media to see how our "team" is "destroying!" the other. It does not mean we cut out friends or family who hold different beliefs than us. It does not mean we fly off the handle every time we see a headline, or hear a leader's name, or when a "hot button" topic gets mentioned.

We have a duty as Catholic Christians to participate in society. St. Paul speaks of it to the early Christian communities. That does mean we vote as well as pay well informed and meaningful attention to what is going on in our local communities, state, and nation. We speak out civilly and constructively when there are clear, documented injustices, and not just random murky detailed grievances that some AI-bot tweeted about which may or may not be true. We speak out on things that are directly connected to Catholic Social Teaching. A perfect example of this is the respect and dignity of all life from conception to a natural death, especially in October which is Respect Life month.

I've heard it said, "Father, you need to speak about X more at Mass from the pulpit." I say "did Jesus comment on the Roman occupation? NO!" "Give to God what belongs to God." Eight minutes is not enough time to explain nuanced topics and the pulpit should not be "Father's personal soap-box" either. You're not going to get that from me.

We come to Mass to get away from the world and give to God what is His: adoration and worship.