October 18, 2026 Homily
Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time
https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/101826.cfm

Once more, Jesus gives the Pharisees and us a deep teaching about human dignity. According to him, if a coin has the image of the emperor on it, it belongs to the emperor and they have to give it back to the emperor. Following the same logic, the coins that have the image on God on them, belong to God and have to be given back to God as well. Let's remember that in Genesis, we are told that we are made in the image and likeness of God. In other words, God's image is stamped upon us, therefore, every human being belongs to God, is sacred, and we are to give ourselves totally to God. We all have the stamp of God within our essence, we all belong to God, we all have a life that is sacred and worthy of respect, protection, and love. In today's episode of the Gospel, Jesus subordinates political obligation to divine allegiance. Jesus does not elaborate a doctrine of two kingdoms or of civil disobedience here. Rather, He forces us to a deeper understanding: To whom do we belong? Whose image do we bear? Whose inscription is written on our lives?

Dear brothers and sisters, a good Christian is first of all, a person who recognizes that all expressions of life on this planet are sacred. Jesus ironically says, "Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and to God what belongs to God. " The message is ironic, because in fact, everything belongs to God. If we accept that all human beings have a dignity that is to be always respected, promoted and protected, if we finally accept that every person and every living creature on this planet are God's creation, we may change the way we value ourselves and others, and the way we interact with the created world. If we respect the gift of life, because it belongs to God, we will never promote the ideologies that support abortion, death penalty, war, violence, exclusion, or the destruction of our natural resources. Understanding that the world is not ours but God's, restores order and balance, joy and gratitude, to our lives. It gets our priorities and values straight. It gives us a direction for our life, and it helps us to get to heaven at the end of our days. If we know well that we are made in the image of God, then we will live as people who belong to God. If Jesus is our Lord, then, we will listen to and obey him more than how we listen to and obey those who promote hate and divisions among us. If Jesus is our Lord and King, then, we will treat each other as Jesus has asked us to.

In this text of the Gospel, Jesus talks about politics. He does not deny the authority of Caesar. But He calls his disciples, to obey only God, to remember always that we belong to God, and our dignity does not depend on our opinions or preferences that are based on gender, color of the skin, religious or political affiliation, origin, or economic status. The most political thing we can do in the world is to be the Church, and that means to do everything we can to be a people who live in a different way, always promoting justice and peace, forgiveness and reconciliation, love and harmony.

The leaders of the nations, exercise their power, and they find pleasure in godless glory. The church obeys Jesus, prays for all in the world, even for those who have contempt for the church, and thereby shows the world the possibility of a people of peace in a world at war. If we recognize that we and everyone else, are the beloved ones of God, created and sustained by God, and that we have everything because of God, we will know who we are, to whom we belong to, and we will find joy and peace in our lives, regardless of our external circumstances at any given moment.

The Gospel today calls us to reflect on this: We have to decide whether God is important or world leaders. We have to decide whether we embrace the Gospel of love and life eternal, or the ideologies of hate and death. No matter what we decide, our truest truth is that we are God's beloved children, we are citizens of God's Kingdom, and Jesus is our Lord and Savior, and the model of how to live according to God's will.

Today the Gospel proclaims that every human being has the stamp of God upon them, no exceptions. It also proclaims that true Christians are the hope for a better world, as they anticipate God's Kingdom in the midst of our earthly kingdoms.

The Universal Prayer
Sunday 18th October 2026
World Mission Sunday
Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Celebrant:
Sisters and brothers, today we celebrate the 100th World Mission Sunday with the theme, given by Pope Leo, "One in Christ, United in Misson."

1. For Pope Leo, that he may receive peace of heart, healing and the opportunity to recuperate from his surgery:

We pray to the Lord.

2. For the Church, that continuing her missionary journey with joy and zeal in the Holy Spirit, all will renew in themselves the fire of her missionary vocation.
   We pray to the Lord.
3. For each other, that one in Christ, we will grow in that unity by which we are enabled, in the daily circumstances of our lives, to witness to him by word and action, animated always by prayer.
   We pray to the Lord.
4. For all who share the vocation of being missionaries to the nations, that centered upon and proclaiming Christ, they will do so with cultural sensitivity, respectful dialogue and constant charity.
   We pray to the Lord.
5. For our world broken by war, especially in the land from where Jesus sent the Apostles to proclaim the Gospel to the nations, and between the Christian nations of Russia and Ukraine, that Jesus will be their true Peace.
   We pray to the Lord.
6. For more vocations to religious life in the order of Daughters of St. Mary of Guadalupe, and to the priesthood in the Diocese of Raleigh.
   We pray to the Lord.
7. For all who, having witnessed to Jesus in the world with a missionary spirit, have died that they will enter the never-ending joy of heaven.
   We pray to the Lord.

<u>Celebrant:</u>
(prayer of Pope Leo in his Message for Mission Sunday)
Holy Father, make us one in Christ, rooted in his love that unites and renews.
May all members of the Church be united in mission, docile to the Holy Spirit, courageous in bearing witness to the Gospel, proclaiming and daily embodying your faithful love for all creatures.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.