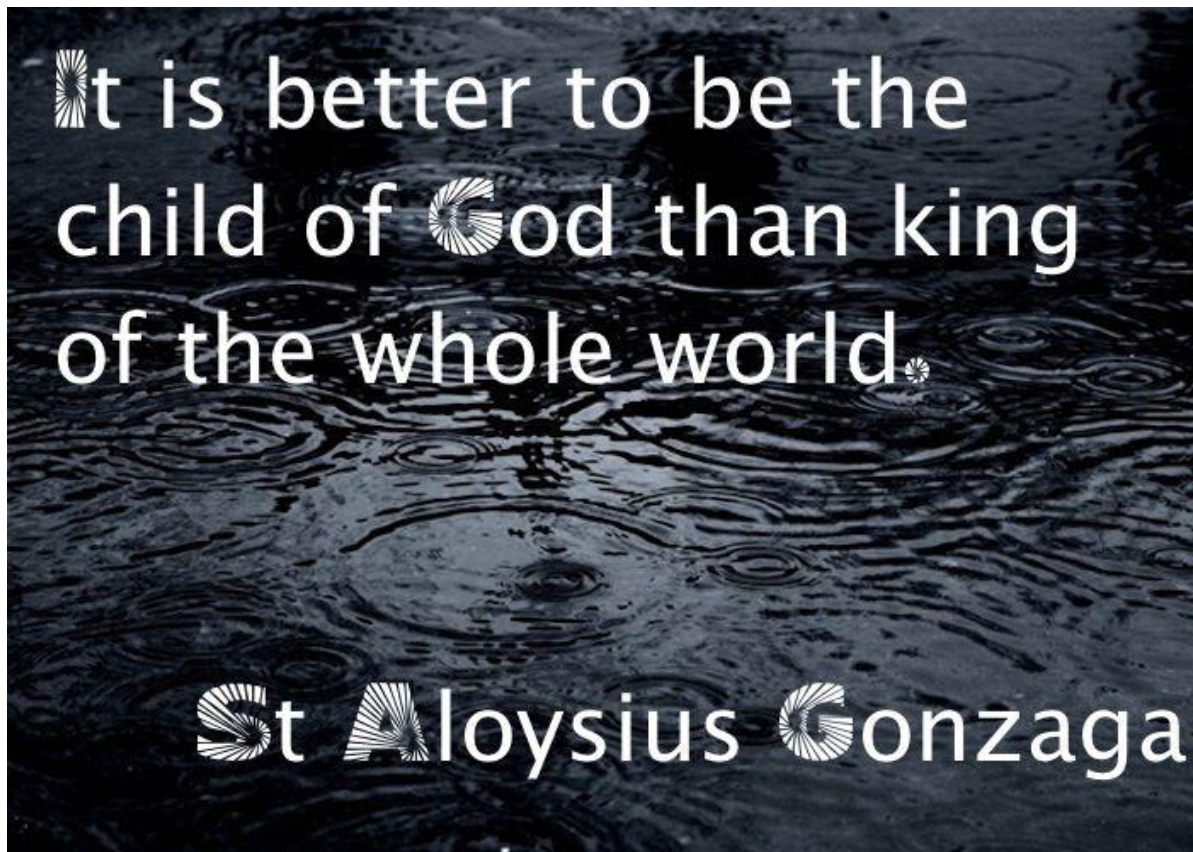


FROM FATHER JOHN: *"Some Pharisees and Herodians were sent to Jesus to ensnare him in his speech. They came and said to him, 'Teacher, we know that you are a truthful man and that you are not concerned with anyone's opinion. You do not regard a person's status but teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it lawful to pay the census tax to Caesar or not? Should we pay or should we not pay?' Knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, 'Why are you testing me? Bring me a denarius to look at.' They brought one to him and he said to them, 'Whose image and inscription is this?' They replied to him, 'Caesar's.' So Jesus said to them, 'Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God.' They were utterly amazed at him."* (Mark 12:13 – 17)



Happy Father's Day!! It is my profound wish and prayer that every father in our parish has a wonderful Father's Day celebrating the gifts of faith, family and love that God has given to each father. I truly believe that the most profound, wonderful and loving gift a father can give a child is faith in our Lord Jesus; faith that is practiced in and through the Catholic Church. I want to thank my father for passing our Catholic faith to me as I grew up.

In the gospel passage above, our Lord Jesus says to the Herodians and the Pharisees who are trying to entrap him, "Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God." This is probably the most misused line in Sacred Scripture.

Coinage was considered to be the property of the emperor in the Roman Empire. Every coin had Caesar's image stamped on it and the coin actually belonged to him. What our Lord Jesus is really saying when he says, "*Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar*" is ... "Give back to Caesar this worthless thing that belongs to him anyway."

Then our Lord Jesus moves on to His real point; repay "*to God what belongs to God.*" What He's really saying to us is that we are made in the image and likeness of God; that the image of God is stamped on us just as Caesar's image is stamped on a coin. He's saying that we belong to God. That this is our reality. We belong to God and not to the world and certainly not to any human government or secular authority. In our baptisms, our souls are indelibly marked by the Holy Spirit with God's image and likeness.

Our Lord Jesus makes an essential point about being created in the image and likeness of God. Those who bear the image of God belong to God. Those who bear the image of Caesar belong to Caesar. Pope Francis wrote that "*Saints are people who belong fully to God. They are not afraid of being mocked, misunderstood or marginalized.*"

This line of scripture ("*Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God*") is often used by secularists to tell Christians that we have to follow governmental edicts even if we find them abhorrent to our faith. For example, some civil authorities have demanded that Catholic hospitals perform abortions or do other immoral procedures. We, as Catholic Christians, cannot obey because we belong to God and His commandments take precedence in our lives. We repay to God what belongs to him; our very lives and our souls.

This is why the early martyrs were fed to the lions. They would not perform the civic duty of offering a sacrifice to Caesar, the divine emperor of Rome, and were martyred because they insisted on giving their lives back to God. They understood that they belonged to God.

May God Bless you and all those who love the Lord.