

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Last Saturday, October 10, Fr. Edgardo and I were privileged to witness the marriage of Jesse and Lidia Ruiz, a young couple who has been in our RCIA program. Jesse and Lidia had been preparing to receive the sacrament of Confirmation at the Easter Vigil, but alas COVID-19 made this impossible. During the wedding Mass, I confirmed them both. It was a very powerful experience and it was such a grace and blessing to see how important this sacrament is to them. Over these many months, they have had to be patient and learn perseverance, essential gifts and qualities for a healthy and strong marriage and spiritual life. There have been unexpected scheduling changes due to the necessary health provisions mandated by the County of San Mateo. Through it all, as I intimated in my homily, Jesse and Lidia remained hopeful and classy. It is always a grace to celebrate the Sacrament of Marriage, as before the Church a couple seals the bond of love. We witness with hope and joy all that the Lord holds in store for the couple. In reflecting with Fr. Edgardo after the Mass, we agreed that there was something extra special about this particular Mass. The sense of gratitude and thanksgiving was palpable; indeed, it was a resounding confirmation that amidst challenging and uncertain times, grace upon grace abounds in our community here at St. Pius XI!

Congratulations as well to Jack Torres, Liam Lonergan and Dylan Gotelli...Thanks to their teachers and catechists who prepared them for the Sacrament of First Holy Communion.

Today's Gospel reading from St. Matthew presents us with a very complicated scenario. The Herodians were followers of King Herod and they were fiercely loyal. As an occupying and therefore an outside force, they were imposing their rule on the Jewish people. On the other side, we have the Pharisees who were bitterly opposed to Herod and his Roman occupation. As we can see in how the Pharisees and Herodians are treating Jesus, they are united in trying to entrap Jesus. They place Jesus in an untenable and unwinnable position: no matter what he does or says, he will end up angering both the Pharisees and the Herodians.

Jesus very wisely answers their questions by recognizing the obligation and duty to pay taxes and meet the basic requirements of citizenship, thus his exhortation: "Then repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God." "The teaching of Jesus transcends any kind of political approach, and if the faithful, using the freedom that is theirs, chose one particular method of solving temporal questions, they 'ought to remember that in those cases no one is permitted to identify the authority of the Church exclusively with his own opinion.' Jesus' words show that he recognized civil authorities and its rights, but he made it quite clear that the superior rights of God must be respected, and pointed out that it is part of God's will that we faithfully fulfill our civic duties." [The Navarre Bible: Gospel and Acts, Text and Commentaries].

This revelation is timely as we are in the midst of a campaign season. The Scriptures help us to understand the tension that exists between the spiritual and temporal realms. The words of Jesus himself can help guide us in our call to responsible citizenship in the light of our Christian call to discipleship. We can "read the signs of the times" in response to our prayerful reflection and discernment.

May God continue to bless each one of you!

~ Fr. Tom