

We celebrate the Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time.

How should people of faith relate to kings, presidents, prime ministers and other rulers and leaders? This is a tricky question, especially if the person in authority is not of faith and has some qualities we may not like.

In the Christian tradition, all earthly authority, comes from and is subject to the authority of God himself. We should respect our leaders, while being honest about their shortcomings; generally we should obey them too, but our obedience should not be blind obedience.

In the gospel (*Matthew 22:15-21*) the question is about Caesar, the Roman emperor, the head of the occupying forces in Jesus' time. Jesus' answer 'give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's' is more than just a clever get-out. He refuses to endorse either blind obedience or outright rebellion.

In the first reading (*Isaiah 45:1,4-6*) we meet Cyrus, king of Persia, who was responsible for ending the Israelites' exile in Babylon. Cyrus is not a Jew, not part of the chosen people, yet he is described as 'the Lord's anointed.' This would have been very shocking. The lesson is that any ruler, of whatever faith, can be used by God to make things happen.

Whether our leaders be good or not so good, we are always called to pray for them, that God will pour out his Holy Spirit on them to guide them, and make up for their failings.