

**29<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A**  
**October 19, 2008**

**Readings: Isaiah 45:1, 4-6; 1 Thessalonians 1:1-5b; Matthew 22:15-21**

**Life Belongs to God**

*“Then repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God.”* But what belongs to Caesar, or in our case, to Uncle Sam? And what belongs to God? The government wants our money; all God wants is our obedience to His commandments. Which comes first in our lives? Where are our priorities?

We hear a lot of promises from the candidates, especially those running for president, about which one is going to raise or lower our taxes. There are so many contradictions between them that it's hard to know who to believe and trust. And while I feel, as I'm sure most of you do, that I am already over-taxed, the issue of taxes is not high on my priority list when selecting a political candidate. The government printed the money, and though I may not like it, I have to give a good portion back as a condition of living in this country. Besides, if we don't give enough back, they'll just print another \$700 billion anyway. My election priorities are not on how my tax obligations are impacted. And my election priorities are not focused on who can do the best thing for the economy, even though my retirement accounts have gone down 30% since I retired last April, and I'm probably going to have to go back to work. I am much more concerned with how my voting decisions affect my obedience to God's will for our country and state. I am very concerned with the issues that will promote a culture of life in our country and in our state. I am willing to pay more in taxes; I am willing to suffer even greater impact to my retirement funds from a failing economy; if I have some hope it could in some way help protect human life in all stages from conception to natural death; to build a culture a life.

We live with our feet in two worlds. All that we have comes from God, and we will take nothing with us when we leave this earth. But while we live in this world we have obligations to our civil authorities. We have to pay our taxes and we have to obey the laws of our society as long as they don't conflict with our obligations to God's laws. When laws, or potential laws, of our society conflict with God's laws, it is our obligation to try to change them or prevent them from being enacted. We must fight against laws which are intrinsically unjust, intrinsically evil, especially those that involve the intentional killing of innocent human life.

Two weeks ago, Fr. Aaron was here and he spoke about and against Proposal 2. He spoke about the immorality of killing human embryos to obtain their stem cells. He talked about how adult stem cells, which are morally-acceptable, cells which can be obtained from the patient's own skin for example, have been shown to be effective in producing many cures and treatments, while embryonic stem cells have not been useful for any cures despite over 10 years of research. What he didn't add was that if embryonic stem cell research actually produced a cure or treatment, the next step to implement the cure would lead us down the path to human cloning. You see, when cells from one person are injected into a patient, they face rejection because the body treats them as foreign objects. The way to get around this is to create a clone of the patient, a perfect DNA match, and then kill that clone while it is still in the embryonic stage. Sounds a bit like science fiction, but that's what Proposal 2 is all about, what it can ultimately lead to. And it can lead to even more scary and bizarre research and attacks on human life. Proposal 2 goes too far. It intends to remove all limitations and regulations.

As Catholics we need to fight against proposal 2 because it endorses and expands embryonic stem cell research which we know is morally unacceptable. But the scariest part of the proposal is the last line which states its most troubling component. It states that the proposal would: ***“Prohibit state and local laws that prevent, restrict, or discourage stem cell research, future therapies, and cures.”*** If this proposal passes, it will change our state constitution to prevent any laws that could try to control future abuses of embryonic stem cell research such as human cloning, or even animal-human embryos and cloning. Even if you have friends that disagree regarding the immorality of embryonic stem cell research, it important to explain to them how far this proposal goes. Embryonic stem cell research, and its associated spin-off technologies, would be the only industry to be immune from any local or state laws. Why do we need to extend this freedom from regulation? Why should we allow this to happen?

You may not know that our current laws in Michigan already allow embryonic stem cell research; there is a large center at The University of Michigan operating since 2003. We already have gone too far in Michigan, but the proponents of Proposal 2 want even more. Currently, Michigan law does not allow the destruction of embryos within our state. But, if they're destroyed somewhere else, the stem cells can be brought here for research. Embryonic stem cell research is legal in Michigan now; but proponents of Proposal 2 aren't satisfied. They want all laws and controls removed, and the ban on cloning, which currently exists in our state, will fall by the wayside because it interferes with future embryonic stem cell therapies.

We have to fight against proposal 2. We have to fight against all laws that take away the dignity of human life. The government might think our money belongs to them, but we know for sure that human life belongs to God.

**Deacon Joe Hulway**