Cathedral Basilica of Our Lady of Peace
Cathedral of the Honolulu Diocese • Founded 1843 • National Historic Register

29th Sunday in Ordinary Time

October 18, 2026

Beloved Disciples of Christ,

Greetings of peace, love, joy, and hope!

"Giving Back to God What Belongs to God"

In this Sunday's Gospel, Jesus' adversaries, particularly the Pharisees, once again try to entrap Him. They pose a question meant to put Him in a no-win situation: "Is it lawful to pay the census tax to Caesar or not?" If Jesus supports paying taxes, He risks angering the people who resent their Roman occupiers. If He opposes the tax, the Romans could report Him as a rebel. Knowing their hypocrisy and hidden intentions, Jesus asks for a coin and points to its image. When they say it bears Caesar's image, He responds with the now-famous words: "Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God."

Jesus' answer goes far beyond a discussion of taxes. It reminds us of our dual responsibilities. We are citizens of our country, called to contribute to the common good and to fulfill our civic duties. At the same time, we are citizens of God's Kingdom, called to live according to His will and commandments.

At times, tensions arise between Gospel values and those promoted by the world. At other times, questions about public life touch deeply on matters of faith and morality. In such situations, Jesus teaches us that our first allegiance must always be to God. While we respect legitimate civil authority, we must never forget that God is the Lord of our lives.

What makes this teaching especially meaningful is that Jesus Himself lived it perfectly. Throughout His earthly life, He sought not His own will but the Father's. Even when obedience led Him to suffering and death on the Cross, He remained faithful. He shows us that true freedom is not found in doing whatever we want but in choosing what is right and good before God.

The Gospel also invites us to reflect on a deeper question: What belongs to God? The coin belonged to Caesar because it bore his image. But we belong to God because we bear His image. Our lives, gifts, talents, time, families, and everything we possess are ultimately gifts He has entrusted to us. We are not owners but stewards of these blessings.

This understanding brings us to the heart of Christian stewardship. God has generously shared His love with us through His Son, Jesus Christ. In gratitude, we are called to offer our time in service, our talents for the good of others, and our resources to build up His Kingdom. We live out this stewardship in our families, our parish community, our workplaces, and our service to those most in need.

Our world often promotes self-interest, personal gain, and the pursuit of power. Yet these paths can leave the human heart empty. Lasting purpose and joy come when we recognize what belongs to God and willingly place our lives in His hands. When God is at the center, we find the direction, meaning, and peace our hearts long for.

As we gather around the Lord's table this Sunday, let us ask ourselves: Do I give God only a portion of my life, or do I offer Him my whole heart? May we renew our commitment to live faithfully as disciples of Christ and return to God what already belongs to Him. May the Blessed Virgin Mary, Our Lady of Peace, always guide us to her Son and help us become faithful stewards of all God's gifts.

Your Friend in Jesus,

Fr. Pascual