

Taxes have become one of the big themes of this political season. Everyone wants lower taxes, but no one has offered the tax cut the pharisees propose in this gospel. They suggest that we simply cut out all taxes. The ultimate flat tax. But here's their reason. It's not so they can spend more money on clothes and cars, but because they think taxes are illegal. Their government claimed that it was divine. To pay money to them was like contributing to a false religion. It said so right on the coin, "Tiberius Caesar son of the divine Augustus, great high priest." Suppose they put this inscription on our dimes, "FDR, successor of the divine Herbert Hoover, great high priest." Would you ever feed another parking meter?

Jesus counseled that both the state and the church deserve their due. This isn't about separation of church and state; it's about obligations to church and state. Giving to church and state brings benefit to everyone; not giving brings consequences. If you don't give to the state you commit a crime, subjecting yourself to fines and imprisonment. If you don't give to the church, it discomforts individuals who say they believe in love but do not practice charity; it hurts the community which could offer better spiritual service if it had better material resources. Some people say you can be a good Catholic without going to church. I don't think so. Others say you can be a good Catholic without practicing stewardship. I don't think so.

This week we've mailed you a stewardship form. It's not what you think. We're not asking you for a single dime this time, no matter how the inscription about FDR reads. We're asking you for something more precious. Your time and your talent. Stewardship is a gift of yourself for the community. Of course we need your financial support and we're grateful for all that you give. But now I'd like everyone to consider a different kind of step. A step of service. I know, I know, many of you are already outstanding volunteers. I kiss your feet. This is an open invitation for everyone to make a pledge of service. Can you help us at Mass? Can you make repairs? Can you serve on a council? Can you educate? Write grants? Visit a prisoner? Help the elderly? Have you got a talent you know we could use? Tell us. Our community is working miracles: We give families a place to pray and play, we donate blood, we collect food, and we're helping a tiny farming community in El Salvador get up on its feet. Our stewardship campaign this fall will harness the energy in this community and steer it toward new horizons.

If you're interested in serving on one of our councils, or you know someone who'd be good, we need to know today. Pass around those forms in your pews and fill them out as soon as I finish this talk.

If you can serve in some other way, get this form. Talk it over with your family. Fill it out, and bring it back next week. If you come next Sunday afternoon, you can join our tailgate party. Watch the Chiefs beat Denver on big screen. We'll provide the hotdogs and the popcorn. You bring a dish and this form--filled out. God has given us all we have and are. Let's give to God the things that are God's.