

Have you been following the bruhaha over property taxes in the State of Kansas? I have to confess that as a Missourian, there's a part of me that wants to say, "That serves them right for living in Kansas." Or, "Well, that's their problem; let's skip on to other news." But proper taxation is serious matter. I believe the idea of taxes is good, but the practice often lacks justice.

Property taxes may be "their problem," but many are the injustices which are "our problem." Our gas bills are going up. Families with children in Catholic schools support two educational systems. Employment opportunities for white males are generally better than they are for women, blacks, and hispanics. If we have our problem, it's that the system is unjust. Everyone wants a fair shake.

Unjust government is as old as civilization. Isaiah the prophet was also a great social reformer. His king judged by appearance and hearsay. His king cheated the poor and took advantage of the afflicted.

The prophecy we hear from Isaiah today predicts the arrival of a truly just king. The spirit of God will give this king many gifts: the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and fear of the Lord. Do those gifts sound familiar? They are the gifts of the Holy Spirit we pray for at the sacrament of confirmation. They are the gifts that Isaiah said would belong to a truly just king. A king who understands, a king who counsels, a king who fears God will be a king who works justice. No unfair property taxes in his realm.

This prophecy dealt with more than Isaiah realized. Oh, the people got their king, but centuries later they got something more: they got the birth of Christ the King. Jesus perfectly represents the just judge, the one who brings salvation to the poor and justice for the oppressed.

Isaiah envisioned a reign in which this just king would bring so much peace that wild and domestic animals would lie down together. Not just people, but nature herself would be clothed in peace.

Today there is a new just ruler. It is not Isaiah's king; it is not Jesus. Today the just ruler is you and me. We are the body of Christ; we have been confirmed with the gifts of the Spirit: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. God gives us those gifts for one reason and one reason only. It's the same reason God gave these gifts to Isaiah's king. They are given to us so that we will work justice. We will treat people fairly: children, employees, neighbors--yes, even in-laws. We will treat all fairly.

What a marvelous preparation we could make for the coming of Christmas if we took this prophecy to heart. When we work justice, God will give peace.