

31<sup>st</sup> Sunday Ordinary Time Year “B”  
November 3-4, 2018

*That you may grow and prosper*

Readings: Deuteronomy 6:2-6; Hebrews 7:23-28; Mark 12:28-34

“...*That you may grow and prosper the more, in keeping with the promise of the LORD.*” These beautiful words from Deuteronomy are repeated in today’s Gospel, and serve as a powerful reminder of the deepest desires of the human heart to praise God with all our heart, soul and strength. The laws of the Lord were given so that we might have life, that we might grow and prosper and have a long life.

When Moses spoke to the people about his vision for their future in which they would prosper, he also gave a roadmap. The roadmap is one of the best known phrases in all of Sacred Scripture. We are called to love the Lord with all our heart, soul and strength. This is known as the *Shema* prayer. Observant Jews print the passage on a special scroll and place it this Mezuzah on the upper right of the doorpost at an angle.

Two verses after today’s passage, Jews are told “Bind them on your arm as a sign and let them be as a pendant on your forehead.” These are called Tefillin, and are worn at prayer on their arms and on their forehead as a powerful reminder that their faith is an integral part of themselves.

So too is ours, for our goal is to love the Lord with our entire selves, not just part. These verses from the Torah even echo to an extent the American dream with its talk of growth and prosperity. Many are increasingly wary of believing in an American dream, and tensions remain high in our divided nation. The Church too is in its own turmoil, the vast majority of which is self-inflicted. You, the faithful laity, too often bear the brunt of the fallout.

As a result, you are increasingly wearied, wondering to yourselves, “What is a faithful Catholic to do?” First and foremost, we pray and work and continue our daily lives. Nothing ought to trouble us such that our own daily routines are upset, our peace disturbed. That is counterproductive.

It pains me when people say they struggle to pray, allowing their discouragement to take hold of any sense of peace. Fight that tendency with all your heart, soul and strength.

Second, do not for a minute check your citizenship at the door of the Church building. We are whole persons, body and soul, intellect and will. Our life of faith flows into the work week and into the classroom because it informs the very manner in which we make judgments. It is not a question of our faith entering into an arena where it is not welcome in the world; rather, we **cannot separate** the two.

Many of our most urgent national issues, ranging from the economy, immigration, abortion and religious liberty to global security have profound moral questions. We have a broad vision, a truly Catholic vision. We are both Catholics and citizens and see no contradiction between the two. We pay our taxes and we exercise our voice.

Nor do we have split loyalties. We are loyal to God's saving truth, and we have both the right and duty as integral human persons to bring the light of this truth into the workplace, the voting booth and our communities.

As our faith reminds us: "...in addition to forming our consciences, we must fast and pray, asking our loving and gracious God to give us the ability to effectively proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ through our daily witness to our faith and its teachings."<sup>1</sup>

We do so while always being respectful of others, but never pretending that our convictions are somehow separate from who we are. To those who would prefer that we keep our faith to ourselves, our answer is that this would be completely un-American. We desire to transform society, to imbue it with the Good News of Jesus Christ. Let us humbly pray for an outpouring of the grace of the Holy Spirit upon our nation.

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<sup>1</sup> Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, introductory note. (Text adopted at 2015 USCCB meeting)