



Sunday Reflection With Fr. Rafal

Sisters and Brothers of St. Joseph Parish,

Today a legal scholar asks Jesus, "Master, which commandment of the law is the greatest?" We know the answer: You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. To that overriding requirement, Jesus adds, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Love is the foundation and goal of our lives as Catholics and Christians. In his essential book, **Render Unto Caesar**, Archbishop Chaput (Archbishop Emeritus of Philadelphia) sums it up this way: *"We are made for Love, to receive love and to show love to others. That's why we're here. That's our purpose. And it has very practical consequences - including the political kind."*

Now, Archbishop Chaput admits that the word, love, has become devalued - like a currency that once bought a steak dinner, but now can barely purchase a donut. As he wrote, *"Much of modern Christian life seems like a bad version of a Beatles' song rather than the morning of Pentecost."* We need to revalue the meaning of love. Perhaps this comparison will help: You probably know that at one time our country was on the "gold standard." It meant that a citizen could exchange his paper notes for a certain weight of gold or silver. I have no opinion about whether we were better off under the gold standard, but I do know this: We Christians must return to the gold standard when we speak about love.

What is the "gold standard" of love? Once again, I quote Archbishop Chaput: *"For a Christian love is not simply an emotion. Feelings pass. They're fickle and they often lie. Real love is an act of will, a sustained choice that proves itself not just by what we say, but by what we do."*

Emotions of course are important - and we should do all we can to have positive feelings toward family members, co-workers and fellow parishioners. But love itself is not a feeling. Love is a decision. And I should add that it is a gift of the Holy Spirit, because none of us on our own is capable the love Christ requires of us.

In this year of a Presidential election I am not going to tell anyone how to vote, but I do encourage you to read Archbishop Chaput's book for a fine exposition of the basic principles that should guide our political involvement. They are basically an application of what we heard in this Sunday's first reading - a concern to the most vulnerable. At that time the widow, the orphan and the foreigner. Today of course we must add: the unborn child and the terminally ill. Political involvement - voting, writing a letter to one's representative, etc. - is one means we have to defend the vulnerable. It is one aspect of the love that Jesus requires of us. It is not the greatest part of love: to treat others fairly and honestly is obviously a greater expression of love. Still, political involvement expresses an aspect love that no adult citizen can neglect. It is part of what it means to put God first - and to love one's neighbor as oneself.

Have a Blessed Week.

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