

## 29A

*Some time ago I read about a certain vicar who spent a short spell in prison because he refused to pay the council tax. He reckoned that the rises in this tax have been so numerous that it constitutes an unjust burden for a very large segment of the population.*

However, it would be unfair to cast Caesar (the State), in the mould of being forever anti-God as if the powers that be and God are permanently at loggerheads. After all there have been many saintly Kings and queens throughout history, not least in this country but also in others. Having said that, the relationship between Church and State throughout history has been mostly fractious.

I believe that the upheavals of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Reformation, for instance, was as much to do with monarchs and other ruling classes in a power struggle with the Catholic Church as it was to do with religious questions per se – human pride being the underlying motive. At that time, the monasteries were indeed powerful owning well over one-fifth of the land of this country. The Reformation led to the dissolution of the Monasteries - at least 800 of them.

Sometimes the relationship between Church and State has been openly hostile as in the last century when communism, tried, but failed, to silence the church and stamp out its influence from public life. Closer to our day I notice that the Planned Parenthood group within the United Nations are not at all happy with the Catholic Church for its stance on certain UN programmes associated with re-production which it regards as morally objectionable. Unfortunately western State aid for these poorer nations is often held back if they refuse to follow the UN secularist agenda. The growing church especially in Africa is encouraging its people not to be swayed by the UN offers.

Politicians generally don't like to be on the wrong side of public opinion and often go against the Natural Law inscribed by God in our inmost hearts. The natural law is based on reason and is what makes us human. A thousand years before the commandments were given to Moses, for instance, Cain knew it was wrong to kill his brother, Abel. He didn't have to wait for God to tell him this through the commandments 'thou shalt not kill'. The commandments then set in stone what was already inscribed in our inmost being.

Some say you should never mix religion and politics. Surely our faith should inform the way we vote and the stance we take on certain social and moral issues affecting us and the lives of our children. As catholic Christians, the common good should take precedence over individualistic agenda. We need to be careful that we don't render to Caesar what belongs to God. The re-definition of marriage some years ago by the powers that be is a good example of where this actually happened.

The laws of God and the laws of Caesar often clash. Our cardinal said recently the church's stand on things is often counter cultural. We uphold the church's proud tradition especially when we render to God what is rightfully his in all areas of public and private life.

*A state or country is only as Christian as the individuals within it. If we do our best to keep Caesar from encroaching on God's domain then we're headed in the right direction.*