

I was born in Chicago, Illinois, therefore a citizen of the U.S.A. However, I have spent 24 years of my 34 years as a priest in Canada. On July 1, 1998 I became a citizen of Canada. I am a dual citizen. When I travel, at the U.S. border I show them my American passport and am greeted with “Welcome home.” When I arrive back at the Canadian border I show my Canadian passport and am told “Welcome home.” There are definitely advantages in being a dual citizen.

As Christians, we are all dual citizens. We are citizens of our earthly home, and we are citizens of our heavenly home. This is what Jesus was getting at when he told those who were trying to trick him: *“Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.”*

Jesus acknowledges that we have a responsibility to uphold as citizens of the world, and to the governing authorities of our nation, our state, our county and our community. We have an obligation to pay taxes to the government, for the various services and benefits that result from living under its ruling authority.

We also recognize that earthly governments ask their citizens for more than money. Governments also ask for allegiance. Governments have the right to establish laws and have the authority to enforce them. And in times of war, governments ask for military service, which may require the sacrificing of one’s own life.

Jesus also is clear to point out our citizenship of heaven when he said: “give to God the things that are God’s.” Clearly God deserves our tithes and offerings, our worship and thanksgiving for his gift of redeeming grace as members of his church here on earth. But what else belongs to God?

The Roman coin that Jesus was given bore the image of Caesar, therefore it belonged to Caesar. But what bears the image and name of God? We do! Our whole being bears God’s image! In the very first chapter of Genesis, we are told that God said, *“Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness.”* And the author of this first book of the Bible concluded, *“So God created man in his image.”*

In essence, we are the coins of God’s realm, of his kingdom. If we are to “give to God the things that are God’s,” then we must conclude from our Lord’s teaching that there is no limit to what we owe God. We owe God our whole being, our very life, all that is ours. No part of our life is excluded from our fundamental covenant with the one who is our Creator, and who has redeemed us from sin and death to make us citizens of his kingdom.

Jesus invites us to acknowledge that our government has a right to expect a certain allegiance from us, but the allegiance we owe our earthly kingdoms is limited. What we owe to God is not. And when we perceive a conflict of allegiance, that is, when we believe that our earthly authority is in conflict with God’s authority, we are to align ourselves with the higher authority of God Almighty.

We all have dual citizenship. Our earthly citizenship is temporary. Our heavenly citizenship is eternal.