Faith, Hope, and Love Lesson 24 Mar 17 Acts 22:30, Acts 23 Sanhedrin

Q1. (Faith) In ancient Israel, the high priest was appointed for life. However, when Israel fell under Roman domination, the high priest was appointed by the Roman authorities, normally to serve for one year. In this passage the high priest, Ananias, served 47-59 AD. He was assassinated in 66 AD fulfilling St. Paul’s prophecy. St. Paul had his conversion experience ~35 AD. After a time he returned to his home in Tarsus until St. Barnabas brought him to Antioch where they began the First Missionary Journey in ~46 AD. Now, ten years later, in~56 AD, he is on trial before the Sanhedrin. It is not surprising that he did not recognize the current high priest. Yet, notice his respect for the office of high priest, once he was informed of his identity. How does St. Paul’s example help you respect the office Pope in our Church even when you learn of some Popes in the history of the Church who were reprobates and scoundrels or the office of bishop even when there has been misbehavior and negligence in recent years?

Acts 23:5

5 Paul answered, “Brothers, I did not realize he was the high priest.   
For it is written, ‘You shall not curse a ruler of your people.’”

Q2. (Hope) There are many similarities between the trials of Jesus and St. Paul before the Sanhedrin. Jesus remains silent because His mission is to die for our sins. St. Paul is quite vocal because in his trial because his mission is to spread the Gospel. Like Jesus, St. Paul appears to understand that his witness will end in his martyrdom. Indeed, he has been informed by the Lord of the price of his witness. The Greek word for witness is “martyr.” How does the sure and certain hope of the resurrection of the faithful who persevere to the end encourage you for the day of your death or the death of a loved one?

Acts 23:11

11 The following night the Lord stood by him and said, “Take courage. For just as you have borne witness to my cause in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness in Rome.”

Q3. (Love) The Catechism imposes a moral duty upon Catholics to respect and obey legitimate civil authority as authority from God. In each instance, it provides an escape clause, for immoral or unjust actions of the Government. Can you think of situations in your life where you may be called upon to choose between obeying the authority of the Government or the moral authority of God?

CCC1900 The duty of obedience requires all to give due honor to authority and to treat those who are charged to exercise it with respect, and, insofar as it is deserved, with gratitude and good-will.

CCC1903 Authority is exercised legitimately only when it seeks the common good of the group concerned and if it employs morally licit means to attain it. If rulers were to enact unjust laws or take measures contrary to the moral order, such arrangements would not be binding in conscience. In such a case, "authority breaks down completely and results in shameful abuse."

CCC1899 The authority required by the moral order derives from God: "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore he who resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment."

A1. All authority comes from God, but it is intended to be used for the common good. When authority is misused or used for self-serving purposes, I must rightfully disapprove of the misused authority while still respecting the position. This is true in Government and in Church authority. The bad Popes and even today’s misbehaving bishops brings disgrace upon the individuals, but the respect due the office remains.

A2. My experience through the death of my wife and the knowledge that I will ultimately follow her, gives me great courage to know that whatever trials my end may bring, if I persevere in faith to the end, my salvation and resurrection is assured by the Grace of God.

A3. While abortion is legal in the United States today, it is immoral and contrary to the most basic of God’s Law, “You shall not commit murder.” While respecting the rights of others to make their own choices, I am morally required to do whatever I can to protect the innocent lives of the unborn, the most vulnerable of all human beings.