

Thirty Second Sunday in Ordinary Time B2021

The readings of this Sunday talk about our donations to God. They show that the one who freely and with heartfelt spirit gives to God will receive back much more in turn. They invite us to be open to the needs of our fellows and to give without counting the cost so that we receive from God his countless blessings and gifts.

The first reading describes the generosity of the widow of Zarephath toward the prophet Elijah. It shows how, when there was famine in the country, she did not hesitate to give to Elijah a piece of bread to eat as he asked for. It also shows that as she acted unselfishly, forgetting her own hunger and that of her son, God blessed her with an abundance of food.

What is behind this text is the idea that any good deed done to others in the name of our faith in God will never remain unrewarded. Another idea is that the generosity shown to our fellow human beings attracts God's blessings upon us. The last idea is relative to the truth that what counts most is not the quantity of what we offer to God, but the righteousness of the heart that gives to him.

This text allows us to understand the point of today's Gospel as Jesus praises the poor widow for her small offering in the temple. The Gospel starts with Jesus' warning about the behavior of the Scribes who like to show up in what they do in order to be seen by the people. Then, it talks about the condemnation they will receive because of their bad behavior.

After that, the Gospel talks about Jesus' praise and appreciation of the poor widow. It explains in particular the reason why he did so by declaring that, while all other rich contributors in the temple's treasury gave of their surplus wealth, she, on the contrary, out of her poverty, gave all she had as a livelihood.

What do we learn from this Gospel? Today I want to talk about the reward of a generous heart. First of all, let us clarify things: What is a generous heart? It is a heart that gives without counting the cost. Now, let us go to the readings. We have two widows, one in the first reading and the second in the Gospel. They both lived in different time and epoch, but they have something in common as their action before God is similar: they give not like everybody would do, out of their abundance, but out of their scarcity.

The first widow trusted the word of the prophet Elijah and believed her. Even if the famine was strong in the country and she did not have enough flour left in the jar than for a last meal for herself and her son before they died, she obeyed the prophet.

Of course, Elijah knew more than her that, where human beings fall short, God can provide. That is the reason why he invited her to not be afraid and just do what he asked her. As she believed the prophet, God rewarded her so that her jar of flour never got empty and her jug of oil never run dry.

The same God is still acting in the varieties of the conditions of our today's world. What is required of us is to trust him and have confidence in his word. Those who trust his word and give without counting the cost or the acuity of their own problem will be surprised by his generosity. Another truth we learn is that: Today God acts through us, he touches people through us. God brings back the lost in the right path through us; he heals, consoles and comforts through us. Our hands have become his hands, our eyes

his eyes, our tongue his tongue. Through us God touches people and through God heals people.

The second widow has nothing to offer in the temple than two coins worth a few cents. She gives them wholeheartedly, with humility, sincerity and gratitude to God. That is all she has.

For Jesus, the tiny contribution of the widow was more important than that of the other contributors in the temple. While others had given what they could spare easily enough and still have plenty left, she had given everything she had.

The reaction of Jesus to the offering of the widow teaches us that what matters is not the amount or the size of the gift, but the heart that gives if it is generous, sincere and humble enough to surrender to God. Like the widow, God wants us to give in the same way.

Moreover, the sacrifice of the widow was total and complete, without reservation and calculation, done freely and joyfully from the bottom of the heart. She certainly would have given one coin and kept another, probably for her survival for tomorrow. But, she gave everything she had without hesitation or reservation, unselfishly.

From where did she get the courage to do such an extraordinary act of generosity? Like the widow of Zarephat, it is her trust and confidence in God that guided her. What she has done is what is asking of all of us.

The two widows challenge us seriously, especially with regard to our generosity toward the needy and about offerings in the Holy Mass.

Without surrendering completely ourselves to God with what we are and what we have, it will be difficult to give generously. When we act by believing in God's word and counting on his generosity, he will bless us with many gifts in our life. That is why, even when we do not have plenty of things to give, we have always to remember that even our small gift is worthwhile before God. What we put at his disposal, so small as it might be, can become a fortune in his eyes and for the glory of his name. In giving, there is no shame, provided it is done from the heart.

Jesus himself gives us a strong example of self-giving to the point of dying on the cross for us. That is why the letter to the Hebrews salutes him as our High Priest who has entered the sanctuary of God with his own blood for our salvation. He takes away our sins and will come again to bring salvation to us who eagerly await him.

Let us ask him to help us to be generous with our time, our talents and treasure. Let us ask him to help us give with a generous heart what we have for the glory of his name. May God bless you all!

1 Kings 17: 10-16; Hebrews 9: 24-28; Mark 12: 38-44



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