

## THIRTY SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME B2024

Let me tell you the tale of two widows. Once upon a time there were two widows. They lived at different times and in different towns. One was from Zarephat, a settlement called today "Sarafand" in the South of the district of Sidon in Lebanon and the other was from Jerusalem in Israel.

Though different, those two widows had something in common: they were generous and their hearts were given to God. Each gave wholeheartedly everything of what she had, not as people do, out of their abundance. The first had attracted the attention of the prophet Elijah, the second the praise of our Lord.

Let us talk about the first widow. In time of drought and famine in the country, Elijah, tired and hungry from a journey, asked the first person he met in Zarephath for a drink and for something to eat. It turned out to be a poor widow who told him she had next to nothing, that she and her son were about to eat what little they had, then after eating, wait for death because there was no more.

As Elijah knew a little more than the widow did, he told her, "Don't be afraid." Be at peace; God will provide. Encouraged by the words of the prophet and his trust in God, she cooked a cake and offered him to eat. Once she did it, she was surprised to realize that neither her jar of flour nor her jug of oil did go empty.

What is the point of this tale? The point is that any gift made to God, as small as it might be, can become for us a source of blessing. In other words, when we give to God with our whole heart, in spite of our hardships and difficulties, he is able to bless us beyond expectation. Therefore, what counts before God is not the quantity of what we offer, but the quality of the heart that gives. That is evidenced in the text: what the poor widow gave was little, but it was precious in God's eyes. The piece of bread she gave to Elijah stands for a generous giving of herself to God. That is why we have to learn making our gifts to God a genuine self-giving of ourselves.

Now let us talk about the second widow. In today's Gospel our Lord praises the widow who, unlike the rich people, gave only two small coins in the treasury of the temple. While many rich people gave a lot of money in the treasure of the temple, she gave only a few cents. But, for our Lord, that offering was more than all the contributors have given that day. While the others have given of their surplus wealth, she gave out of poverty, her whole livelihood.

Of course, our Lord does not say that the offerings of the other contributors were insignificant. If that is the case, then, where is the problem? The problem is all about the heart that gives. That is the reason the Gospel contrasts the attitude of the scribes who are full of themselves and take advantage of their situation from that of the poor widow who is humble and counts only on God.

For our Lord the tiny contribution of the widow was more important than that of the others. While the others had given what they could spare easily enough and still have plenty left, she has given everything she had.

In that perspective, what matters most is not the amount or the size of the gift we give, but rather the heart that is generous and the sacrifice accepted by doing so. It is like what parents do for their children. They give everything to them with generosity until it hurts. The sacrifice accepted in doing so becomes an undescribed joy of self-giving.

The widow of the Gospel would have given one coin and kept another, probably for tomorrow. And yet, she gave everything she had without hesitation or reservation. There is here a symbolic truth, namely that we have to surrender completely to God. When we act that way, God blesses us in turn with many gifts in our life.

Even when we do not have plenty of things to give, we have always to remember that our small gift is worthwhile before God. What we put at God's disposal, as 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. How would God refuse a gift done with the whole heart?

That leads me to the true meaning of our giving before God. True giving must be sacrificial. What matters is not the amount of the gift or its size, but the sacrifice accepted by doing it. We give everything we can generously and with joy until it hurts.

True giving has a sense of naivety. The woman would have given one coin and kept another, probably for tomorrow. And yet, she gave everything. The symbolic truth here is that we have to surrender completely to God. We very often do not give some part of our lives, of our activities and of ourselves to God. By acting that way, we miss God's blessing we would have received by giving everything to him.

True giving is our very self. It is strange that Jesus praises a woman who has given a gift of so little value in monetary terms. The point is to tell us that we may feel that we do not have much in terms of material or personal gifts to give to God. We have to remember, however, that when we put at his disposal what we have and what we are, he can make it a great gift for the glory of his name.

Our Lord himself gives us a strong example of self-giving to the point of dying on the cross for our salvation. For that reason, 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. We ask him to help us to be generous with our treasure, our time and our talents. We ask him to help us give everything we can for the glory of his name. May God bless you all!

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



Homily Date: November 10, 2024  
© 2024– Fr Felicien I. Mbala, PhD, STD  
Contact: [www.mbala.org](http://www.mbala.org)  
Document Name: 20241110homily.pdf.