

Alleluia, alleluia! Even if you have to die, says the Lord, keep faithful, and I will give you the crown of life. Alleluia!

Mark 12:38-44

In his teaching Jesus said, 'Beware of the scribes who like to walk about in long robes, to be greeted obsequiously in the market squares, to take the front seats in the synagogues and the places of honour at banquets; these are the men who swallow the property of widows, while making a show of lengthy prayers. The more severe will be the sentence they receive.'

He sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the treasury, and many of the rich put in a great deal. A poor widow came and put in two small coins, the equivalent of a penny. Then he called his disciples and said to them, 'I tell you solemnly, this poor widow has put more in than all who have contributed to the treasury; for they have all put in money they had over, but she from the little she had has put in everything she possessed, all she had to live on.'

What a difference between the actions of the scribes and the actions of the widow in the treasury. This difference stems from the difference in their relationship with God and their response to the generosity of God's love dwelling in their hearts. This story of the Widow's Mite invites us to examine the quality of giving in our lives — not just to Church collections, but to whatever worthy cause attracts our attention and our sympathy. More than once, Jesus spoke about this subject. Not only should the gift be made with a generous heart, but so far as is possible, in an anonymous way that doesn't attract attention. The gift should be given because it is right, with the intention of pleasing God, and not as the scribes did, who were seeking credit or praise from others. The more it costs us in personal terms, be it giving up some of our time, or our comfort, for something worthwhile, the more it is part of the one great sacrifice of Christ, who gave himself up totally for us.

***THIRTY-SECOND SUNDAY
ORDINARY TIME***

Year B

7th November 2021



Today, the church encourages us to learn, and appreciate the virtues of generosity and hospitality. She reminds us that, as Christ generously offered himself for our salvation, we too must be generous to the needs of others. Common to the readings of this Sunday is generosity, and trust in Divine Providence. The readings challenge us to remember that all we have comes from God and we must be willing to not only give back generously but with a cheerful heart!

Opening Prayer

Almighty and merciful God, graciously keep from us all adversity, so that, unhindered in mind and body alike, we may pursue in freedom of heart the things that are yours.

1 Kings 17:10-16

Elijah the Prophet went off to Sidon. And when he reached the city gate, there was a widow gathering sticks; addressing her he said, 'Please bring me a little water in a vessel for me to drink.' She was setting off to bring it when he called after her. 'Please' he said 'bring me a scrap of bread in your hand.' 'As the Lord your God lives,' she replied 'I have no baked bread, but only a handful of meal in a jar and a little oil in a jug; I am just gathering a stick or two to go and prepare this for myself and my son to eat, and then we shall die.' But Elijah said to her, 'Do not be afraid, go and do as you have said; but first make a little scone of it for me and bring it to me, and then make some for yourself and for your son. For thus the Lord speaks, the God of Israel: "Jar of meal shall not be spent, jug of oil shall not be emptied, before the day when the Lord sends rain on the face of the earth.'" The woman went and did as Elijah told her and they ate the food, she, himself and her son. The jar of meal was not spent nor the jug of oil emptied, just as the Lord had foretold through Elijah.

Saint Paul coined the phrase "God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor 9:6-7.), and there can be no doubt that the cheerful gift is always one which is well received. The hospitality shown to the famished prophet Elijah by the poor widow in the town of Sidon, was all the more precious in that it was given with loving respect, and not as a grudging duty. Here was a man of God, clearly in need of help. There was no need for long, involved argument about how he had found himself in this position, or whether he had drawn up a wiser plan for his future. She did what she could for him, and was blessed in the process. The personal touch is part of the giving, and giving our time can often be more precious than anything else. Shakespeare's line remains true about all works of kindness and mercy, in whatever circumstances: "It is twice blessed: it blesses him that gives and him that takes."

Psalm 145(146): 7-10

It is the Lord who keeps faith for ever, who is just to those who are oppressed. It is he who gives bread to the hungry, the Lord, who sets prisoners free.

It is the Lord who gives sight to the blind, who raises up those who are bowed down. It is the Lord who loves the just, the Lord, who protects the stranger.

The Lord upholds the widow and orphan but thwarts the path of the wicked. The Lord will reign for ever, Zion's God, from age to age.

Hebrews 9:24-28

Christ, our high priest, has done away with sin by sacrificing himself. It is not as though Christ had entered a man-made sanctuary which was only modelled on the real one; but it was heaven itself, so that he could appear in the actual presence of God on our behalf. And he does not have to offer himself again and again, like the high priest going into the sanctuary year after year with the blood that is not his own, or else he would have had to suffer over and over again since the world began. Instead of that, he has made his appearance once and for all, now at the end of the last age, to do away with sin by sacrificing himself. Since men only die once, and after that comes judgement, so Christ, too, offers himself only once to take the faults of many on himself, and when he appears a second time, it will not be to deal with sin but to reward with salvation those who are waiting for him.

Today's second reading tells us how much God loves us; that Christ came to take away our sin by his sacrifice. There is no end to how much we can meditate on this love of Christ for us. St. Bernard of Clairvaux said that whenever he looked at the crucifix the wounds of Christ seemed like lips speaking to him saying, "I love you". In the first letter of John, we can see what perhaps could be called a simplification of the message between the time he wrote the Gospel and that letter. His first letter is consumed with the love of God. There is a tradition that one of his disciples complained to him because he was preaching about nothing else but the love of God and John replied that there was nothing else to preach about.