

Scripture Study

Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time—Cycle B



Opening prayer

1 Kings 17:10-16

(Psalm 146:7-10)

Hebrews 9:24-28

Mark 12:38-44

Overview of the Gospel:

- Jesus is now in Jerusalem and in the midst of his opponents, the scribes, Pharisees, and Saducees; it is after his triumphal entry (on Palm Sunday, Mark 11:1-10) and before his Passion (Holy Thursday, Mark 14:12ff). This Sunday finds him in the Temple precincts near the “Court of the Women,” where there were thirteen trumpet-shaped chests in which to place offerings.
- The scribes (often translated as “scribes of the law” or “lawyers”) were the scholars and intellectuals of Judaism. As do lawyers today, they could serve as trustees for the property of widows and other powerless people, sometimes receiving as their fee a share of the estate.
- Widows, as we heard in our first reading, were among the most powerless of ancient society, most of her rights coming from her closest male relative. Left on her own, the widow often had no means of support. The Bible often singles out poor widows as those who are to be the special concern of those who are more fortunate (Psalm 68:5; Isaiah 10:2; Acts 6:1; 1 Timothy 5:3; James 1:27).
- Jesus contrasts the attitudes of the mighty and powerful religious specialists, with the poor widow who displays humble confidence in her God.

Questions:

- How would you describe the initial faith of the poor widow in the First Reading? What was it like at the end of the story? What caused it to change?
- How would you describe the lifestyle of many of the scribes of Jesus’ time (verses 38-40)? By contrast, what should the attitude of a Christian leader be (see Mark 10:42-45)?
- What is Jesus’ point in contrasting the situation of the scribes with that of the poor widow?
- When it comes in serving the Lord, when is “more” actually “less”?
- What does Jesus say about how we should give alms (see Matthew 6:1-4).
- How do people use religion to make themselves look good? How have you been tempted to do so?
- Why do you give to God’s work? What do you give besides money?

Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 678, 2444, 2544-2547

Closing prayer

The poor widow cast only two pennies into the treasury; yet because she gave all she had it is said of her that she surpassed all the rich in offering gifts to god. Such gifts are valued not by their weight but by the good will with which they are made. --St. Jerome

Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings found in the bulletin!

"This poor widow has put in more than the rest"

Scripture: Mark 12:38-44

And in his teaching he said, "Beware of the scribes, who like to go about in long robes, and to have salutations in the market places and the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation." And he sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the multitude putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. And a poor widow came, and put in two copper coins, which make a penny. And he called his disciples to him, and said to them, "Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For they all contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, her whole living."

Meditation: What is true religion and devotion to God? Jesus warns his disciples against the wrong kind of religion. In his denunciation of the scribes (the religious experts of his day), he warns against three things: the desire for prominence rather than selfless service; the desire for deference and recognition (and seeking esteem from others) rather than seeking to promote the good of others through humble service and love; and



thirdly, attempting to use one's position (even a religious position) for self-gain and self-advancement. True religion is relating rightly to God and to one's neighbor with love, honor, and respect. The Lord puts his Holy Spirit within us that we may be filled with the joy of his presence, the joy of true worship, and the joy of selfless giving and love for others. True reverence for God frees the heart to give liberally, both to God and to neighbor.

Jesus taught his disciples a dramatic lesson in giving with love. Love doesn't calculate; it spends lavishly! Jesus drove this point home to his disciples while sitting in the temple and observing people offering their tithes. Jesus praised a poor widow who gave the smallest of

coins in contrast with the rich who gave greater sums. How can someone in poverty give more than someone who has ample means? Jesus' answer is very simple: love is more precious than gold! Jesus taught that real giving must come from the heart. A gift that is given with a grudge or for display loses most of its value. But a gift given out of love, with a spirit of generosity and sacrifice, is invaluable. The amount or size of the gift doesn't matter as much as the cost to the giver. The poor widow could have kept one of her coins, but instead she recklessly gave away all she had! Jesus praised someone who gave barely a penny—how insignificant a sum—because it was everything she had, her whole living. What we have to offer may look very small and not worth much, but if we put all we have at the Lord's disposal, no matter how insignificant it may seem, then God can do with it and with us what is beyond our reckoning. Do you know the joy and freedom of giving liberally to God and to neighbor with gratitude and love?

"Lord Jesus, all that I have is yours. Take my life, my possessions, my time and all that I have and use them as you desire for your glory."

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