

Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time
November 10, 2018

Those of you who have lost your spouse in death can better appreciate the words of Scripture in today's Mass. There are few experiences in human life that are more heart rendering than to lose your spouse. In the first reading we find a widow that is absolutely destitute. There is no Social Security, there is a drought, she has no money, no relatives or safety net. It is in her destitution that she gives the last bit of food she has to Elijah the prophet. She does this in spite of the prophet's apparent indifference and insensitivity to her plight.

In the gospel the widow comes to the Temple and gives the last two coins that she possesses. She is alone and penniless.

Remember the story of Scrooge in a Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens? Scrooge says, Christmas ba humbug. There'll be no Christmas party, no Christmas bonus for the employees. With Christmas day off Scrooge tells Bob Cratchit to be all that much earlier for work the following day. We all know the story of that pathetic man.

The gospel story of the widow giving her last coins comes at a time in the Bible when Jesus is making his last ministerial appearance and teaching before his passion and death. The solemnity of the moment puts extra emphasis on the message and importance of his last words to the crowds.

This Gospel has often been used to get people to give more money to the church. Frankly, I think that approach is very superficial. The gospel is much deeper than that. The gospel is given to us to remind us that whenever we are linked to God the abundance of grace will never run out. No matter how destitute we might be, whether it is a crisis of health or problems at work or strife in the family or money problems, whenever we are linked to God he gives and gives and his grace will never run out.

This weekend is Veterans Day. It is one more example of a total giving of oneself for another. I look around our parishes of Sacred Heart and St. Alexander's and I see countless examples of self-giving love. I am always inspired by the way you give your time, energy, talent, financial contributions and dedication to the church.

St. Vincent De Paul said," to become solidly virtuous, one must make good practical resolutions concerning particular acts of virtue and be faithful in accomplishing them. Lacking this, one only imagines oneself to be virtuous."

In a way I feel sorry for the rich people in the gospel who were putting in large sums of money. They were giving up something, they were making a sacrifice. Jesus simply dismisses them as halfhearted because they were giving from their surplus and not from their want.

I worry about that myself because I have many things. I just know that God is lavish in his giving to me. I want to more completely embrace the teaching of the Scriptures that tell us we will receive 100 times as much as we give.

The rich came in with long robes and with great ceremony. They poured great amounts of coins into a large copper funnel with a loud clanging sound. Then came the widow. Kachink, cachink. And God was present in the silence and he filled the room with peace.