

32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time **Father Ed's Homily**
Theme: True Generous Self-Giving of Poor Widows, A Model for Us All

Both the first reading and the Gospel reading deal with the symbolism of True Generous Self-Giving of the Two Poor Widows as a Model for Us All. In the first reading, taken from 1 Kings 17:10-16, the prophet Elijah asked a widow, a non-Jew, to serve him with a meal. Elijah's name means "Yahweh is my God" or "The Lord is my God." He came from Tishbe



in Gilead, in present-day Jordan. As you heard in the first reading, it was her last meal that she reserved for herself and her son to eat and then die due to the shortage of food. There was a severe famine in the land of Zarephath due to many years of drought. She was very honest with Elijah: "As the Lord, your God, lives, I have nothing baked; there is only a handful of flour in my jar and a little oil in my jug. Just now I was collecting a couple of sticks, to go in and prepare something for myself and son; when we have eaten it, we shall die." Elijah assured her not to be afraid and honor his request, and God would provide more than they need. This widow trusted the prophet Elijah and prepared the meal for him. How many of us would trust a stranger and do what she did for Elijah?

My dear parishioners, when you put all your faith and trust in God, he will never fail you. God blessed this widow and her beloved son with an abundance of food. This widow is a perfect example of those who trust in God and are not disappointed. She was truly a generous self-giving person. God rewarded her generosity abundantly. Yes, you will never give God a gift and not be rewarded abundantly.

We read a similar story in today's Gospel of a widow who also put all her faith and trust in God and put all her money into the temple's treasury.

She won Jesus' admiration. Jesus says to his disciples and all of us: "Amen, I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the other contributors to the treasury. For they have all contributed from their surplus wealth, but she, from her poverty, has contributed all she had, her whole livelihood."

My dear parishioners, one of the lessons for all of us is this: Jesus did not judge an offering by its size but by what it cost the giver. Do we give from our surplus, things that have no value, or do we generously give things we value/treasure? This poor widow, like the one in the first reading, teaches us to generously give from what God has blessed us with to the poor and needy. Also, our generosity should not be just material things but also our time, talents, and knowledge, especially with those who are unable to reciprocate.

According to some Biblical scholars, these two widows represent all those who, despite their poverty and oppression, continue to put all their trust and faith in God.

To appreciate these widows well, let me give you a brief life situation of the widows during the time of Jesus. In the culture of the Ancient Near East where Jesus lived, women and widows had no inheritance rights. Their livelihood depended on their husbands. So, widows could not inherit from their husbands upon illness or death. If the widow had a son, then she would have life security from her son. Many of these widows depended on public charities for their means of livelihood. Even though the legal system in Israel did provide for widows and orphans, it was not always respected. As we might read in the Old Testament. The Law of Moses obliged Israel to take care of the widows just as they take care of foreigners and orphans. (Deut 10:14-19, 24:17-22). They did not always honor it; hence, they incurred the displeasure of God.

Our Lord Jesus Christ and his early Christian community, as you read in the New Testament, promoted the love and care for widows and orphans. St. James reminds us: "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after the orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world" - James 1:27. Also the seven deacons were appointed to take care of widows and orphans as you will find in Acts 6.

I do believe our Jesus continues to ask us to be truly generous with our gifts and talents to the widows, orphans, elderly people, those with disabilities, and all those the world looks down upon. Our Roman Catholic Church, as you are aware, is well known throughout the world for her charitable works since its inception. As a missionary priest from Ghana, I can honestly tell you my people own a great debt to missionaries working in Ghana. Our education and health systems, to mention a few, would not be there without the pioneer missionaries and the current missionaries' generous assistance.

Our parish family is also doing well with charity. For instance, just imagine without the dedicated parishioners helping at Parish House, the Parish House would not be able to serve meals on Wednesdays and Fridays. I am also very grateful for your generosity to the mission of our parish, the diocese, and the universal church. We can't do our mission Christ has called us to without your generosity of your talents and gifts. We have dedicated parishioners also helping homebound people, visiting nursing homes, hospitals, prisons, to mention a few. May God reward you and your loved ones for your love and care, especially for the poor and the needy.

Jesus Christ, our high priest, unlike the Jewish high priests who offered animals for atonement of sins, offered his very self generously to God for our sins, as we read in the second reading. We must also, like him, continue to give ourselves generously to his mission he has called us to.

Tomorrow is Veterans Day. We continue to remember and honor these great men and women who sacrificed their precious lives for our freedom. Through their generous self-giving, we continue to enjoy peace and freedom. May God continue to grant them eternal rest and consolation to their families and friends. Amen

May holy Mother Mary and her beloved husband, St. Joseph, continue to intercede for us to give generously to those we are called to serve as their beloved Son, Jesus Christ, did. Amen!