

## Homily of 32<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B

The first reading brings to mind Jesus' words in Luke 4:25-26, "I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon." It is noteworthy that the widow who showed Elijah great generosity and trust was not an Israelite but a Canaanite. Despite the famine, I am sure that there were families in Israel and in Sidon who were not impoverished, and could have taken good care of Elijah. Yet, God chose to send Elijah to the poor widow. This means that God can use anyone. Let no one say, "I am too poor;" or "I am not worthy." 1 Corinthians 1:27 says, "God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong." The generosity of poor widow in the first reading and the generosity of the poor widow in the Gospel are perfect examples of self-giving and faith. Both widows, generously, gave their whole livelihood. Jesus, himself, gave his life for us. Philippians 2:7 says that Jesus "emptied himself in the form of a slave."

The readings are a challenge to us, firstly to empty ourselves to God in such a way that whatever we have should be used for God's glory. St. Ignatius of Loyola has this in mind when he composed a prayer for liberty: "Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding and my entire will. All I have and call my own, you have given all to me; to you, Lord, I return it. Everything is yours; do with it what you will. Give me only your love and your grace, that is enough for me." We may not be able to strip ourselves of our material possessions as St. Francis of Assisi and some saints did. However, we must consider all we have to belong to God and be used for his glory. We are to be more God conscious and less protective of what God has giving us. James 1:17 says, "All good giving and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no alteration or shadow caused by change."

Secondly, two major vices that have caused poverty in our world are greed and selfishness. Poverty will be alleviated when our world becomes less greedy and less selfish. Again, we need to realize that everything we have is from God, and giving to us not only for our sake but for the sake of humanity.

Thirdly, as we see in the first reading and in Luke 6:38, "Give and gifts will be given to you; a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap. For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you." The widow gave and was given back: "She was able to eat for a year, and he and her son as well; the jar of flour did not go empty, nor the jug of oil run dry, as the Lord had foretold through Elijah."

It is not only material possessions that we are invited to share with one another, we are also invited to, generously, share with one another our talents, ideas, knowledge, attention, understanding, care, cooperation, assistance, presence and services.

Below are various kind of uncheerful givers:

**Expired Item Givers:** Expired product givers select what is best for themselves and give out what is not good enough.

**Stingy Givers:** Stingy givers give miserly and insignificantly.

**Grudging Givers:** Grudging givers give reluctantly. They complain and regret about what they have given.

**Half-Hearted Givers:** Half-hearted givers are indifferent and uncaring with their gifts.

**Pharisaic Givers:** Pharisaic givers only give to be recognized or praised.

**Greek Gift Givers:** Greek gift givers give with ulterior motives and bad intentions in mind.

**Discriminatory Givers:** Discriminatory givers are partial with their gifts. They give only to their own.

**Leftover Givers:** Leftover givers give only when there are leftovers.

**Peripheral Givers:** Peripheral givers give generously to outsiders while neglecting their own.

**Dishonest Givers:** Dishonest givers give from what they obtained improperly.

**Reactionary Givers:** Reactionary givers give only when they feel forced to do so.

Finally, St. Paul encourages us on the best way to give, "Consider this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each must do as already determined, without sadness or compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:6-7).

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