

Homily of Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B, 2021

1 Kings 17:10-16; Psalm 146:7-10; Hebrews 9:24-28; Mark 12:38-44

Today's readings remind me of a story. A girl was ill and in need of blood. Her parents were poor and unable to pay for the blood. The only solution was that her older brother who had the same blood group as her was asked to donate to her the needed blood. When he finished donating the blood, he asked the doctor, "When am I going to die." His question is quite touching because he was ready to die to save his sister. He presumed, wrongly, that he was going to die in order that his sister might live.

1 Kings 16:29-33 summarized the disastrous reign of King Ahab. For that reason, Elijah prophesied, "As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, during these years there shall be no dew or rain except by my word" (1 Kings 17:1). Under God's direction, Elijah moved from Israel to Jordan. When the drought became severe in Jordan, God told him to go to Sidon. As we read in the first reading, it was in Zarephath, Sidon that Elijah met the widow and asked her for something to eat. The widow made it clear to Elijah how bad the situation was, "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 few sticks, to go in and prepare something for myself and my son; when we have eaten it, we shall die." Then, Elijah assured her, "Do not be afraid. ... For the Lord, the God of Israel, says: The jar of flour shall not go empty, nor the jug of oil run dry, until the day when the Lord sends rain upon the earth." It came to pass as Elijah prophesied (1 Kings 17:13-16).

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 for his good plan. Let us not have excuses when God wants to use us.

In many ways, God sends 'Elijah' to us. Did we share the little we have with the 'Elijah, or did we drive the 'Elijah' away?

In the gospel, Jesus says about the widow, "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" (Mark 12:43-44).

The generosity of the two poor widows are perfect examples of sacrifice and faith. Both widows, generously, gave from their whole livelihood. There are many testimonies of multiplication of 'flour' and multiplication of 'oil' after sharing with the needy, and after giving for God's work. Jesus says 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."

The widow in the gospel teaches us that the little we are, sincerely able to give is mighty in the eyes of God. Therefore, let us not hold back the little we can afford to give. God whom we give in his name knows our situation.

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, time, understanding, care, cooperation, assistance, presence, and services.

Finally, St. Paul encourages us 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).

Blessed are they who sacrifice to give for the work of God and the building of his kingdom; they will receive from God; a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing and poured into their lap. Blessed are they who sacrifice to give to those in need for their jar of flour shall not go empty, nor their jar of oil run dry. Amen.

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