

32nd SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME; Cycle – B; Nov. 10th 2024
1Kings 17:10-16; Hebrews 9:24-28; Mark 12:38-44

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

Quite unusually, we have two widows in today's Scripture readings; both are very poor, but extremely generous. In the ancient time as the man was the only bread winner, naturally his family would starve if he had died young. In the first reading we find Prophet Elijah being sent by God to a poor widow in Zarephath, outside of Israel during the sever drought. As she was getting ready to prepare the last loaf of bread for her son and herself, there comes a stranger, Elijah, with the request for some water and bread. She had only two options left; either refuse to share the bread or to give him the bread at the cost of her and son's life. But she was generous enough to offer that loaf to Elijah and as a result God became generous towards her. And we have heard in the reading: **“She was able to eat for a year, and he and her son as well, the jar of flour did not empty, nor the jug of oil run dry.”** Here, the poor widow never thought about her dire need and gave everything what she had, to Elijah, without even knowing who he was.

In the gospel we meet another widow who offered to God in the Temple her whole saving, though worth a few pennies, by which she could have sustained her life for some time. Remember, the occasion was the Passover celebration in Jerusalem Temple. As it was customary, hundreds of people cast money in the Temple Treasury for the up keeping of the Temple. Naturally the scribes and Pharisees offered huge amount so that people could appreciate their wealth and generosity. Here in this rush Jesus' attention was caught by the widow's small offering. **It is clear that where one offers something to God in full generosity and goodwill, God will never fail to see that sacrifice.** Jesus praised the action of that widow, for the reason that she was willing to offer everything to God, though it was a very small amount. He did not appreciate the generosity of the rich as they were just offering only a small fraction of their surplus wealth.

St. Paul writes to the Corinthians: **“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” (2Cor. 9:6-7).** In the eyes of God generous giving is not counted in terms of the quantity of one's giving; rather the **quality, such as love, goodwill and sacrifice attached to the giving.** If the giving to God or the needy does not come out of our sacrifice and love, it will not hold much value before God. *In other words, our generosity should not be the surplus we contribute; rather the fruit of our sacrifice and good will.*

And also when we speak about generous giving, it does not mean that it should be always something material. **We can be generous to God and fellow beings with our love, time and talents too.** Wherever our material support is needed, we should be generous even if it hurts our need. *We can give God and our fellow beings different things in different ways; “To God we can give our best time, though it may be a little hard on the material point of view; to our enemies our generous forgiveness; to a friend our loyalty; to the sick our kind words, visit and prayer; to a child, our good example; to the parents our respect and love and to a neighbor our helping hand.”*

These days many think that holding back everything selfishly for themselves will only help them to have a decent living. So people hesitate to give or when they give, they do it sparingly. Many keep the same attitude towards God too. For instance, God gives us 168 hours a week and we are free to do anything what we want. But out of which He is asking us to give Him at least one hour in every weekend. But many people find all sorts of excuses not to give God even that one hour. Some people may give that hour to God when they don't have anything else to do and then they may come to Church. In other words, as we eat the leftover food, we give our leftover time to God. That is why, St. Paul warns the Corinthians: **“Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly.”**

Remember, if we have the best gift to give to God, He has the best for us. If we have priority for God, He will have priority for our needs. If we give God our leftover time, God too will offer us His leftover gifts. If we give the best to our fellow beings, God will be pleased by that and will reward us for our generosity. In the words of **Bishop Robert Barron**, "Your being increases in the measure that you give it away. Your being decreases in the measure that you cling to it." There is a poem, the author of which is unknown which speaks about the great generosity of God: **“We ask for a flower, He gives us a garden. We ask for a drop of water, He gives us a lake. We ask for a grain of sand, He gives us a beach. We ask for a blade of grass, He gives us a lawn. We ask for something to eat, He gives us His body and Blood.”**