

**1. Read** — Read the verses slowly and prayerfully several times. Write down any words or phrases that seem to stand out:

**2. Meditate** — Now begin to reflect on the verses and ask God what it means and how he wants to speak to you through the passage. **God what are you saying to me through this?**

**3. Pray** — Respond from your heart to what God has been saying to you. **What do you want me to know?** Write down your prayer to him or record whatever he says to you.

**4. Contemplate** — Be quiet before the Lord enjoying His presence.  
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**How is God calling you to act in response to what he has shown you?**

[1] Compendium of the Catholic Church 388

[2] Divine Intimacy pgs. 198-199

[3] Lumen Genteum 40.2

[4] CCC 791 [5] CCC1824 [6] CCC1828

[7] CCC 1827 [8] CCC 1833 [9] CCC 1829

[10] Fernandez, In Conversation with God 5, 74.3

[11] cf. Catechism of the Council of Trent, IV, 14, 23

[12] Hardon, Catholic Catechism pg. 260

[13] ibid. [14] CCC 1861 [15] CCC 2094

[16] Hardon, The Catholic Catechism pg. 571

[17] Lumen Gentium 61.

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# Quick Connect

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## **Gospel Reading – Mark 12:38-44 – Roman Missal**

In the course of his teaching Jesus said to the crowds, "Beware of the scribes, who like to go around in long robes and accept greetings in the marketplaces, seats of honor in synagogues, and places of honor at banquets. They devour the houses of widows and, as a pretext recite lengthy prayers. They will receive a very severe condemnation." He sat down opposite the treasury and observed how the crowd put money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. A poor widow also came and put in two small coins worth a few cents. Calling his disciples to himself, he said to them, "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."

## **Spiritual Reading – Office of Readings – 32<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time Cycle B**

*From a letter by Sulpicius Severus - "Martin the poor and humble man"*  
Martin knew long in advance the time of his death and he told his brethren that it was near. Meanwhile, he found himself obliged to make a visitation of the parish of Candes. The clergy of that church were quarrelling, and he wished to reconcile them. Although he knew that his days on earth were few, he did not refuse to undertake the journey for such a purpose, for he believed that he would bring his virtuous life to a good end if by his efforts peace was restored in the church. He spent some time in Candes, or rather in its church, where he stayed. Peace was restored, and he was planning to return to his monastery when suddenly he began to lose his strength. He summoned his brethren and told them he was dying. All who heard this were overcome with grief. In their sorrow they cried to him with one voice: "Father, why are you deserting us? Who will care for us when you are gone? Savage wolves will attack your flock, and who will save us from their bite when our shepherd is struck down? We know you long to be with Christ, but your reward is certain and will not be any less for being delayed. You will do better to show pity for us, rather than forsake us." Thereupon he broke into tears, for he was a man in whom the compassion of our Lord was continually revealed. Turning to our Lord, he made this reply to their pleading: "Lord, if your people still need me, I am ready for the task; your will be done." Here was a man words cannot describe. Death could not defeat him nor toil dismay him. He was quite without a preference of his own; he neither feared to die nor refused to live. With eyes and hands always raised to heaven he never withdrew his unconquered spirit from prayer. It happened that some priests who had gathered at

his bedside suggested that he should give his poor body some relief by lying on his other side. He answered: "Allow me, brothers, to look toward heaven rather than at the earth, so that my spirit may set on the right course when the time comes for me to go on my journey to the Lord." As he spoke these words, he saw the devil standing near. "Why do you stand there, you bloodthirsty brute?" he cried. "Murderer, you will not have me for your prey. Abraham is welcoming me into his embrace."

### Christian Charity – Lesson and Discussion

*"giving two small coins"*

Jesus speaks of the charity the poor widow shows by giving all she has to God. There are many definitions of what charity is, but we will look at the basic definition and how it applies to the Gospel reading for this Sunday.

**What is charity?** "Charity is the theological virtue by which we love God above all things and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God. Jesus makes charity the new commandment, the fullness of the law. It is the 'bond of perfection' (Colossians 3:14) and the foundation of the other virtues to which it gives life, inspiration, and order. Without charity 'I am nothing' and I gain nothing' (1 Corinthians 13:2-3)."[1] "It also means serving God in our neighbor with a charity which does not measure out what we give on the basis of what is superfluous for us, but according to the other person's needs. Almsgiving is not Christian charity unless it includes the gift of self, a gift which is impossible without sacrifice, without renunciation, without taking something away from self. Christian charity means weeping with those who weep (Rom. 12:15), participating in the predicaments of the poor, sharing their deprivations and, in extreme cases, their hunger also...This was what the Jewish widow did who offered all she had."[2]

**Who is required to practice charity?** As the Church said in Vatican II, "All Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity."[3]

**Why are all Christians called to practice charity?** It is because we are all part of the Mystical Body of Christ. "The unity of the Mystical Body produces and stimulates charity among the faithful: 'From this it follows that if one member suffers anything, all the members suffer with him, and if one member is honored, all the members together rejoice.' Finally, the unity of the Mystical Body triumphs over all human divisions: 'For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.'"[4]

**What comes from being charitable?** By practicing true charity and giving over to God all that we have, we more easily live the commandments of God. "Fruit of the Spirit and fullness of the Law, charity keeps the commandments of God and his Christ: 'Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love.'"[5] "The practice of the moral life animated by charity gives to the Christian the spiritual freedom of the children of God. He no longer stands before God as a slave, in servile fear, or as a mercenary looking for wages, but as a son responding to the love of him who 'first loved us'"[6] Jesus tells us that the kingdom of Heaven is for the poor and the childlike. Children depend completely on their parents for their livelihood. The widow puts her complete trust and dependence on God, which frees her from any burdens. It brings her into balance and great peace because she is living out the theological virtues to the fullest extent as she can. "The practice of all the virtues is animated and inspired by charity, which 'binds everything together in perfect harmony'; it is the form of

the virtues; it articulates and orders them among themselves; it is the source and the goal of their Christian practice. Charity upholds and purifies our human ability to love, and raises it to the supernatural perfection of divine love."[7]

**Who in your life that you know lives in complete dependence on God? How can we be more charitable to God? What charitable things can we do for our neighbor? If you have done an act of charity for God or your neighbor, how did you feel afterwards?**

**What is virtue?** "Virtue is a habitual and firm disposition to do good."[8]

**What are the fruits of charity?** "The fruits of charity are joy, peace, and mercy; charity demands beneficence and fraternal correction; it is benevolence; it fosters reciprocity and remains disinterested and generous; it is friendship and communion: Love is itself the fulfillment of all our works. There is the goal; that is why we run: we run toward it, and once we reach it, in it we shall find rest."[9]

**What are the effects of charity?** Just as the widow attracted Jesus' attention by her charity, we too attract God's attention by our almsgiving.[10] Through our own charity, God can heal the wounds of our sins.[11] Additionally, charity increases charity, in that "Charity does not cease with the love-inspired word of encouragement or the selfless sharing of pain; it starts a chain reaction of generosity that goes on for centuries after the one who began the reaction has died."[12] Charity is not the only action that can have a ripple effect, though. The opposite is true as well. "Unkindness does not stop with an act of impatience or spite; its effects continue in a never-ending spiral long after the sin was committed." [13]

**What does sin do to charity?** Sin, especially mortal sin "results in the loss of charity and the privation of sanctifying grace, that is, of the state of grace. If it is not redeemed by repentance and God's forgiveness, it causes exclusion from Christ's kingdom and the eternal death of hell..."[14]

**How do we sin against charity?** "One can sin against God's love in various ways:

**Indifference** neglects or refuses to reflect on divine charity; it fails to consider its preventent goodness and denies its power.

**Ingratitude** fails or refuses to acknowledge divine charity and to return him love for love.

**Lukewarmness** is hesitation or negligence in responding to divine love; it can imply refusal to give oneself over to the prompting of charity

**Acedia or spiritual sloth** goes so far as to refuse the joy that comes from God and to be repelled by divine goodness.

**Hatred of God** comes from pride. It is contrary to love of God, whose goodness it denies, and whom it presumes to curse as the one who forbids sins and inflicts punishments."[15]

**What do faith and charity have in common?** We need both for our salvation. By having faith in Jesus Christ, we love Him above everything and everyone. However, it also means to give ourselves in charity to our neighbor: "...salvation does not depend on either faith or charity but on faith *and* charity. It is not enough to believe, even with a faith that moves mountains or that works miracles. We must also have charity, which is based on faith indeed but goes beyond faith to reach out to the One in whom we believe, and from this love for God reaches out to all whom his providence places, though casually, into our lives."[16] Let us follow Mary's example, the Church's model of faith and charity. "In a wholly singular way she cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope, and burning charity in the Savior's work of restoring supernatural life to souls. For this reason she is a mother to us in the order of grace."[17]