

SACRIFICIAL GIVING



I walked out of Starbucks and I encountered a homeless man selling the current Street Roots newspaper. This Street Roots vendor earns an income by selling this biweekly newspaper. It's one dollar. The newspaper sells for one dollar which means that the vendor has to stand on the street corner for many hours and sell a lot of newspapers to earn something resembling income.

I don't have a dollar bill. I know that in my wallet there's a five and a twenty but no ones. So I pass by without buying a newspaper.

Yeah, as if I couldn't afford to give the man five dollars for a newspaper. Or ask for change. Or buy five copies and share them at work.

On that street corner outside of Starbucks, I was not going to give from my abundance. After all, I subscribe to the dictates of a market economy which guides the behaviors of buying and selling: a vendor sells at a price that s/he thinks is fair; a consumer buys at a price that seems reasonable and satisfying. The man asked for a dollar in exchange for a newspaper. I think that one dollar was a fair price for something I wanted. But not five dollars!

This was an economic decision, and not an opportunity for altruism.

I am the first to admit to ignoring the principal of sacrificial giving. And in the example of the newspaper vendor, it's obvious that I even shy away from unnecessary giving.

In today's Gospel reading, Jesus 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.

Jesus said to his disciples, "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."

I hesitated to contribute from even my surplus wealth (four extra dollars!), much less from what I had available (\$25). I certainly would not have considered contributing my "whole livelihood."

In today's First Reading, from the First Book of Kings, the widow listens to Elijah and, placing her trust in God, provides him with what may be not only her last meal and drink but also her son's.

Pope Francis reminds us that in Sacred Scripture, "justice is conceived essentially as the faithful abandonment of oneself to God's will" (Pope Francis, *Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy*).

Trust in the Lord. Trust that the Lord will provide. We hear what this looks like in the Responsorial Psalm:

The LORD keeps faith forever, secures justice for the oppressed, gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets captives free. The LORD gives sight to the blind. The LORD raises up those who were bowed down; the LORD loves the just. The LORD protects strangers. The fatherless and the widow he sustains, but the way of the wicked he thwarts.

Let me open my heart and give my \$5. Let me grow in faith and give \$20. Let me trust in the Lord and contribute the whole \$25.

(Sunday Readings for November 8, 2015)



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