

Unwanted

32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

November 7, 2021

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In small group discussions, sometimes the most profound comments come from the quiet people in the group. These are the people who are overlooked for much of the conversation, but have been listening and thinking the whole time. They usually don't share a lot, but when they do, the one or two points they make are quite significant. Unfortunately, sometimes these very people end up not sharing their thoughts at all with the group due to feeling inadequate, shy, or not having a chance to speak.

In today's Gospel, Jesus calls attention to a woman who was probably overlooked by the crowds, for she was both poor and widowed. After she put her few small coins into the treasury, Jesus called his disciples aside and shockingly said, "this poor widow put in more than all the other contributors to the treasury." Even though she technically put less money into the treasury than the wealthy people, he wanted his disciples to notice her, for she gave out of her poverty, her whole livelihood. Because of that, her offering was extremely valuable in the eyes of God. In fact, Jesus specified that it was the wealthy, the proud, the attention seekers, and even the religious people who 'devour the houses of the widows' that would receive a very severe condemnation from God.

During the course of her ministry, St. Mother Teresa, who worked tirelessly with the poor in India, began to notice a certain poverty in the Western World as well. Also referred to as 'the Leprosy

of the West,' she said it was 'unwantedness.' As she pointed out, "for all kinds of diseases there are medicines and cures. But for being unwanted, except there are willing hands to serve and loving hands to love, there is no cure." (Quoted in *Such a Vision of the Street*, Eileen Egan, 442) Too many people are feeling unwanted in the Western World and too many of us are making people feel that way. For her, this unwantedness was a greater poverty than material poverty. People need to be wanted and valued. As followers of Christ, we are encouraged to be those hands of love who notice other people, especially those overlooked by society due to poverty, shyness, or discrimination. If given the time and attention, they may very well have a lot to contribute and share with us.

Whenever people are unwanted, we are missing out on their contributions to our communities.

In today's Gospel, Jesus pointed out the poor widow to the disciples. Who is Jesus pointing out to me? Who do I knowingly or unknowingly consider as unwanted? Who do I overlook?

As we continue with this mass, let us pray for eyes to see and the ears to hear all the members of the group, especially the overlooked and unwanted. May we not base the health of our communities on the riches of our surpluses, but on how well we give to each other out of our livelihoods.