

Thirty Second Sunday in Ordinary Time November 7, 2021

Our Lady of Perpetual Help

First Reading: I Kings 17:10-16

¹⁰ So he arose and went to Zarephath; and when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks; and he called to her and said, "Bring me a little water in a vessel, that I may drink."

¹¹ And as she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, "Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand."

¹² And she said, "As the LORD your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of meal in a jar, and a little oil in a cruse; and now, I am gathering a couple of sticks, that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die." ¹³ And Elijah said to her, "Fear not; go and do as you have said; but first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterward make for yourself and your son. ¹⁴ For thus says the LORD the God of Israel, 'The jar of meal shall not be spent, and the cruse of oil shall not fail, until the day that the LORD sends rain upon the earth.'" ¹⁵ And she went and did as Elijah said; and she, and he, and her household ate for many days. ¹⁶ The jar of meal was not spent, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD which he spoke by Elijah.

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 146:7, 8-9, 9-10

R. (1b) Praise the Lord, my soul!

or:

R. Alleluia.

The LORD keeps faith forever, secures justice for the oppressed, gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets captives free.

R. Praise the Lord, my soul!

or:

R. Alleluia.

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.

R. Praise the Lord, my soul!

or:

R. Alleluia.

The fatherless and the widow he sustains, but the way of the wicked he thwarts. The LORD shall reign forever; your God, O Zion, through all generations. Alleluia.

R. Praise the Lord, my soul!

or:

R. Alleluia.

Second Reading: Hebrews 9:24-28

⁴ For Christ has entered, not into a sanctuary made with hands, a copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. ²⁵ Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the Holy Place yearly with blood not his own; ²⁶ for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. ²⁷ And just as it is appointed for men to die once, and after that comes judgment, ²⁸ so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

Gospel: Mark 12:38-44

³⁸ And in his teaching he said, "Beware of the scribes, who like to go about in long robes, and to have salutations in the market places ³⁹ and the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, ⁴⁰ who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation."

⁴¹ And he sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the multitude putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. ⁴² And a poor widow came, and put in two copper coins, which make a penny. ⁴³ And he called his disciples to him, and said to them, "Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. ⁴⁴ For they all contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, her whole living."

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INVITATION TO PRAY

Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God...

Proclaim the Scriptures out loud

As you listen to the scriptures be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

INVITATION TO REFLECT

“Every time I go to church they are asking for money,” is the woeful refrain often heard from people to justify their non-participation in worship services. There may be some validity in the statement, for many churches are struggling to simply maintain their presence and make ends meet and are completely hampered from vigorously advancing the Gospel due to low finances. However, if the same people who hide behind this refrain were equally honest, they would have to confess that the church’s need to continually ask for financial support says more about their own financial irresponsibility than it does about the church’s greed. It is interesting to note, though perhaps uncomfortable to realize, that Jesus’ references to money far outnumber his references to any other aspect of life, and he was not greedy. Jesus and his disciples lived a simple, unencumbered life, free from materialism. So why did Jesus speak so often of our relationship to our money? Because Jesus knew that there was a battle going on for our hearts and where our treasure is there also would be our hearts, our affections. The two cannot be separated. Jesus was most concerned that people love God “with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.” To do so, Jesus knew that we would have to be confronted regarding our relationship to our money, and how we view our treasure. When a man gives his money, he is giving a part of his life. The converse is also true, when a man withholds his money, he is withholding a significant part of himself, withholding his heart. Various means have been utilized to motivate people to give. For instance, fear and guilt; if you do not give, God will be upset with you and will punish you. Or selfish reward; if you give, God will reward you and make you even richer with the money you retain. Or self-glorification; if you give a lot, think how much you will be admired. Or for power; if you give significantly you will have greater control, influence, etc. Though these various motivations have within them a valid kernel of truth, the only legitimate motivation for giving is love. Where your treasure is there is your heart also; God has my heart and love and I want my money and treasure to reflect that love. Paul states it this way in 2 Corinthians 5:14, “The love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore, all have died. And he died for all so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them.” If God’s people, in any parish, develop their love for Christ and practice the generosity of which this week’s Scripture readings speaks, there will be an abundance of money for serving Christ and advancing his Kingdom, and we might add, an abundance of love. In the first reading the widow of Zarephath reminds us of another widow, the one Jesus observed tossing the last two cents she had into the Temple offering. This widow from Zarephath gave the last of her oil and bread. Both received commendation from God — why? I think it was because they did not stop loving God and expressing their love for him by giving of their substance in the midst of poverty, and difficulty. By contrast, it is not commendable for us to drop a dollar, or even a five into the offering, when we are spending plenty for the necessities, toys, and entertainments of life? It may be truthful; accurately expressing the limited degree of our love, but it is not commendable. God deserves more. God expects more. “I do not believe one can settle how much we ought to give. I am afraid the only safe rule is to give more than we can spare. In other words, if our expenditure on comforts, luxuries, amusement, etc., is up to the standard common among those with the same income as our own, we are probably giving away too little. If our charities do not at all pinch or hamper us, I should say they are too small,” *

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INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING

First Reading

1. How do you respond when asked for financial or material help?
2. What value does the very specific promise to the widow of Zarephath hold for us today?

Second Reading

3. What point is the writer of Hebrews addressing with his reference to “once for all” and “offered once”?
4. How does this passage relate to the sacrifice of the Mass?

Gospel Reading

5. What principles of behavior is Jesus warning us to avoid? How would you restate them positively?
6. How does Jesus measure the size of our contributions?
7. How would you advise people regarding giving?

INVITATION TO ACT

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.

CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another's openness and sensitivity. Conclude with a final prayer.