

In 1970, a man by the name of Malcolm Muggeridge went to Calcutta to do a special documentary on Mother Teresa for BBC-TV. Well, on that fated morning of their meeting (a morning that would change him the him for the rest of his life) he met her as she was working out in the streets with sick and poor people in a ghetto like he had never seen before, amid stench, filth, garbage, disease, and poverty that was just unbelievable. But what struck Muggeridge more than anything else, even there in that awful squalor and decadence, was the deep, warm glow on Mother Teresa's face and the deep, warm love in her eyes.

"Do you do this every day?" he began his interview.

"Oh, yes," she replied, "it is my mission. It is how I serve and love my Lord."

"How long have you been doing this? How many months?"

"Months?" said Mother Teresa.

"Not months, but years. Maybe eighteen years.

"Eighteen years!" exclaimed Muggeridge. "You've been working here in these streets for eighteen years?"

"Yes," she said simply and yet joyfully. "It is my privilege to be here. These are my people. These are the ones my Lord has given me to love."

"Do you ever get tired? Do you ever feel like quitting and letting someone else take over your ministry? After all, you are beginning to get older."

"Oh, no," she replied, "this is where the Lord wants me, and this is where I am happy to be.

I feel young when I am here. The Lord is so good to me. How privileged I am to serve him."

Later, Malcolm Muggeridge said, "I will never forget that little lady as long as I live. The face, the glow, the eyes, the love—it was all so pure and so beautiful. I shall never forget it. It was like being in the presence of an angel. It changed my life. I have not been the same person since. It is more than I can describe." By the way, after Malcolm Muggeridge made those comments, Mother Teresa continued to serve in that sacrificial way until the end of her life nearly twenty-seven more years.

I'll tell you the story of Oseola McCarty. She died just a few years ago at the age of 91. She was an African-American woman from Mississippi, who earned a living by washing and ironing other people's clothes. McCarty, who never married, was in the 6th grade when she had to leave school and take over her mother's laundry business while she cared for a sick aunt. "All my classmates had gone off and left me so I didn't go back," she said. "I just washed and ironed." McCarty's arthritis forced her to retire in December of 1994 at the age of 86. Throughout her life she scrimped and saved, however, until she was able to leave \$150,000 to the University of Southern Mississippi to set up scholarships for other needy African Americans. Contributions from more than 600 donors have added some \$330,000 to the original scholarship fund of \$150,000. After hearing of Miss McCarty's gift, Ted Turner, a multi-billionaire, gave away a billion dollars.

He said, "If that little woman can give away everything she has, then I can give a billion." Oseola just said, "I want to help somebody's child go to college." "I can't do everything," she said, "but I can do something to help somebody. I wish I could do more. But what I can do I will do."

A minister tells about a woman who came out of the shadows on a Sunday morning just as the worship service was coming to an end. She had two little boys in tow, and told the usher that she wanted to talk to the pastor. Not only that, she wanted to pay her tithe – many protestant churches require a tithe, 10% of your income.

The usher said, "*You're not a member of our church. You don't have to give us any money.*" The woman insisted. After the service she was taken up front, where she sat in the front pew and spoke with the minister. After spending a few nights with her sons in a battered women's shelter, she was taking the bus to Atlanta the next morning to start a new life far away from her abusing husband. She was leaving behind her friends and family. She had made arrangements to live in a shelter until she could find a job, get back in school, or somehow get her life in order.

"Before I leave," she said, "I want to have you pray for me, and I want to pay my tithe." She pulled out all the money she had in the world, counted out ten percent of it, and handed it to the stunned pastor. The total was \$30.56. "*You can't give this to us,*" protested the pastor. "*You need it. It can make a difference for you and your boys.*"

"You don't understand," said the woman. "Even if I kept that ten percent, I wouldn't have enough money to provide for me and my sons. So I want to give it to God. I trust God will give me a new life. To show him I trust him, I want to give my money."

The gospel today isn't really about stewardship or supporting your church. It is about whether you trust God and believe in the work he wants to accomplish. When we do hear of people who are unselfish, give of themselves or do the extraordinary, what do we really feel in the secret places of our heart that we hardly admit to even ourselves? Do we admire them or are we secretly glad that I don't have to do anything like that? In the secret recesses of our heart it can be a bit painful to admit that we aren't a lot better than the scribes sometimes.

In Bishop Barron's series on the Mass, he talks over and over about what he calls "**The Law of the Gift.**" It is at the very heart of our worship, of Jesus Sacrifice on the cross, of the lives we are called to live. It goes something like this: **God doesn't need anything from us so whatever we offer to him comes back to us, but it comes back enhance, enriched, transformed.** It means that we trust that God will use our gifts of time, money, fasting, prayer, bread and wine in ways beyond anything we could do with them or imagine.

No matter how great our faith is, it is extremely difficult to put our total trust in God. There is something within us all that looks for solutions to our problems outside of the realm of faith. Perhaps as

rugged individualists we think that we can solve our own problems, conquer all obstacles ourselves. Certainly, our politicians believe that the proper amount of cash applied in the right places can heal all life's ills. At the same time, I know you will agree that the great delusion of our age is that money can solve our problems.

The radical message of today's readings is that we must place our confidence in God rather than in our material possessions. We all agree that sounds great but in practice it can be a challenge.

A Sunday School Teacher asked her eight eager children if they would give \$1,000,000 to the missionaries. "YES!" they all screamed!! "Would you give \$1,000?" Again they shouted, "YES!" "How about \$100?" "Oh, YES we would!" they all agreed!! "Would you give just a dollar to the missionaries?" she asked. The boys exclaimed "YES!" just as before except for Johnny. "Johnny," the teacher said as she noticed the boy clutching his pocket, "why didn't you say 'YES' this time?" "Well," he stammered, "I actually HAVE a dollar."

The story of the widow isn't really about encouraging your church support. It's about humbly admitting that we can't handle things by ourselves and trusting that God will be at our side. Only a humble person recognizes where he or she stands before God. Only a humble person recognizes his or her profound need for God. Only a humble person is certain that the presence of God in his or her life is fundamental to happiness.