

**ECHOING GOD’S WORD
IN
THE CATHOLIC FAITH COMMUNITY
THIRTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**

November 10, 2024

SCRIPTURES:

1 Kings 17:10-16	God cares for the widow through the ministry of Elijah.
Hebrews 9:24-28	Christ will save those who wait for his return.
Mark 12:38-44	Jesus praises the humble, faith-filled woman who gave all she had.
Psalms 146: 7-10	God stands by those who have no one to defend them.

SCRIPTURE BACKGROUND:

1 Kings:

In the Vulgate (Latin) edition of the Bible, some of these books have different titles. What we now refer to as 1 & 2 Samuel are entitled 1 & 2 Kings. What we now call 1 & 2 Kings are entitled 3 & 4 Kings. So, the Vulgate lists 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 Kings. The new Catholic editions and Protestant versions list 1 & 2 Samuel, followed by 1 & 2 Kings. The book we have today is called 3 Kings in your old Douay-Rheims version.

In whatever version, the text still tells us that God will send a divinely commissioned agent to care for his faithful people. The widow had no other provider. The culture did not allow her to have her own resources; there was no Social Security system. Flour and oil represent the absolutely, rock-bottom essentials for human survival. God provides these, too.

This passage in 1 Kings does not tell us how the widow survived after Elijah had left her. Did she continue to have oil and flour for herself and her son?

Hebrews:

The sacrifice of Jesus is superior to those of the Temple priests in many ways: His is in heaven (where according to Platonic ideas, the real is really real). Theirs are on earth (where a mere shadow of the real exists). His is in the presence of God. Theirs in the presence of people. His is “once and for all.” Theirs have to be repeated again and again. The high priest of the Jewish law reappeared at the entrance to the Holy of Holies to show that he had finished the sacrifice. Jesus will reappear at the end of time (Second Coming) to show that the work of salvation is finished.

Mark:

Again, Mark links the contents of this section not with a logical connection but with a mere word: “widow.” It is as if the word itself suggests a teaching.

Some have tried to interpret the story of the Widow’s Mite as a teaching on generous giving to Church support. A careful reading of the passage suggests just the opposite. The kind

of giving that demands that the last penny of her worldly substance be given is an abuse of spiritual power. The passage is meant to condemn those scribes who in their greed have promoted this kind of simple response on the part of the faithful person. Jesus does not praise them for extorting the very last cent from this poor woman. By blessing her, Jesus is effectively condemning those who have done this to her. The clear implication here is that God will fill her void, that in her powerlessness, the power of God will find a place to pour in heavenly riches. The self-serving practices of the scribes are held in sharp contrast to the total self-giving of the woman.

This is no magic story! We are not told that the widow went home to find all kinds of coins in her purse. She was still poor. The episode tells us that the economic system under which she lived seems to be responsible for her poverty. The lesson seems to teach us that women, too, have rights: rights to property, by which she could have more than a coin on her person.

In the Church today, we should look at how much the parishes and dioceses give away, not at how much they take in. Any financial system that does not give to the poor or does not promote the removal of poverty from the human condition is inherently an unjust system.

What do we do with all the coins in our purses?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. It is said that the poor have more to offer their guests than do the rich. What do you think this means?
2. Explain how the Church is called to identify with the poor widow and to imitate her total self-giving?
3. Ask someone who practices the 12-Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous to explain how human powerlessness is the necessary prerequisite for the introduction of God's power.
4. Let the group decide on a common action, done this week, that will show the group's dependence on God.

PRAYER

Let the members of the group write out on separate slips of paper some prayers addressed to God in this form:

“Lord, I pray that I may use my money to

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CATHOLIC DOCTRINE

Catholic teachings on the responsibility that richer nations have for sharing wealth with poorer nations have aroused much controversy among some intellectuals. The Synod of Bishops of 1971 asserted that action on behalf of the poor is at the very heart of Gospel practice. Pope Paul VI stated that the name for peace among nations today is development. Saint John Paul II repeatedly called on more developed nations to share with those who are not so advantaged. And Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis agreed. The well-being of human persons has absolute priority over any corporate or economic gain. Political or economic systems that do not allow people to enjoy the basic necessities of life are unjust. Government policies that permit the exploitation of some persons for the benefit of others cannot be tolerated. The sale of military weapons to nations whose people are in dire need of food, shelter, and education is a crime both for the nation buying and the nation selling.

Political democracy does not automatically ensure that people will make good choices in the economic order. Special interests are always present urging the passage of laws that will favor their constituents. The poor seldom have anyone speaking for them.

The local Church is often ambiguous about who needs to be protected from whom. The majority of the bishops in Haiti welcomed the military takeover of General Raoul Cédras (1991). To them, it seemed a better deal than the presidency of the so-called “liberationist” Father Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Now, they have to live with the choices they made at that time.

The Good News that the Church has for the world is that Jesus Christ is the only Lord worth serving. Individually and collectively, the members of the Church must spread the Gospel and bring the truth of salvation to all. We are called to evangelize by the Gospel quality of our lives and by the face of Christ clearly visible on the face of the Church.

See: The Catechism #2437 to 2449

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