

I found myself preparing two homilies for this Sunday's homily. One first is a bit longer and is meant for Sunday when we have a little more time to explore the Word. The second, pasted in at the end of the first is much shorter and was "trimmed" to around two minutes because it will be given at a taping of a Mass for shut-ins that must be said in a ½ hour format.

Homily 32nd Sunday, B

The law of survival is to watch out for number one, that is, ourselves. But today's readings clearly tell us that there is another way for us to live.

Both the first reading and the Gospel account have as their main characters, widows. A widow in the ancient middle-east was a person who was without. Without a way to make a living, without a husband for protection, without a voice in society.

In each account the one who is without gives the last of what they have. They give their all, their last hope for survival. Do they give in faith and in hope that God will return their investment? Perhaps, but I am not so sure that the text really supports this.

In the first reading we hear that the flour and oil do not run out.

Is that the reward the widow was to receive for her generosity? I'm not so convinced, because God is bigger than that.

The flour and oil were as much a gift to the prophet as to the woman. But, you see, soon afterwards, she is struck with an unbearable tragedy.

Her son dies.

She blames Elijah for her loss. No amount of food or material goods could ever satisfy one who has lost a child, but how much more important for a widow to have her son, for it would be that son who would eventually have to provide for her and give her honor in her society.

The psalmist today tells us that "**The fatherless and the widow he**

sustains".

Elijah begged God for the life of her son, and God listened. The true gift of God was not food, but life, for both the son and for the widow.

Every time I hear the story of the widow who placed all of her money, everything she had into the Temple poor box, I cannot help but wonder, whatever happened to her. I do not know with certainty if her story had a happy ending or not. One thing I do know is that Jesus noticed her, and was moved by her, and so I believe He, somehow, came to her aid because the Psalmist also says that the Lord, "**secures justice for the oppressed, (and) gives food to the hungry**".

What I do know for certain is that no matter how generous these widows may have been, no matter how generous we may be, with our money or our service and love to others, God will not be out-done.

I'm not talking about return for investment mentality that we often hear from TV preachers who make monetary and material promises for God if you just send in a donation. I'm not talking about how God might prosper someone who gives generously. He may....He may not, that's up to God.

When I say that the generosity, the largess of God that cannot be out done, I am referring to the second reading today, that speaks of Jesus' once for all, but forever continuing Sacrifice of His life on Calvary.

Sandwiched between these two remarkable stories of sacrificial giving by these women, is the truth about How much more God is willing to give to us: not money, not possessions, but His very self.

We are reminded today that the person and nature of Christ is Sacrificial. That He is the eternal Sacrifice made once, but forever re-presented in an unbloody manner to the Father on our behalf at each and every Mass.

If Elijah's prayer to the Father for the dead son of a widow might persuade God's Justice, how much more will the death of God's only begotten Son

insure our justification?

If you want to know how to live a generous life, pleasing to God, look to this altar....hear the words of the Eucharistic Prayer, know what love God has for each of us, taste the Bread of Life, take in the heady aroma of the Cup of Eternal Salvation and let us be transformed by Whom it is we Feast Upon.

Do not hesitate to be grandly generous to God and to one another. Give of ourselves to the point of a sacrifice, but not because of a promise or even in hope for something better in return, for the best.....the very best has already been given to us at this Calvary, this Altar of the Ultimate Sacrifice.

Shorter Version

Homily 32nd Sunday, B

Both the first reading and the Gospel account have as their main characters, widows.

In each account the one who is without gives the last of what they have. Do they give in faith and in hope that God will return their investment? Perhaps, but we do not know their motives.

In the first reading we hear that the flour and oil do not run out.

Is that the reward the widow was to receive for her generosity? I think God is bigger than that.

Despite the miraculous food, soon after Elijah comes to her, she is struck with an unbearable tragedy.

Her son dies.

Elijah begged God for the life of her son, and God listened. So, the true gift of God was not food, but life.

Every time I hear the story of the widow who placed everything she had into the Temple poor box, I cannot help but wonder whatever happened to her. I do know that Jesus noticed her, and was moved by her, and so I like to believe He came to her aid.

What I know for certain is that no matter how generous we may be, God cannot be out-done.

I am referring to the second reading today.

Sandwiched between these two remarkable stories of sacrificial giving is the truth about how much more God is willing to sacrifice for us.

We are reminded today that Jesus Christ is the eternal Sacrifice made once, but forever re-presented in an un-bloody manner to the Father on our behalf at each Mass.

If you want to know how to truly live a generous life, look to this altar....hear the words of the Eucharistic Prayer, and know what love God has for each of us. Taste the Bread of Life, take in the nectar of the Cup of Salvation and let us be transformed by Whom it is we Feast Upon.

As Christians we are called to give of ourselves, because the promise of God has already been given to us, this gift of food that is the source of life Himself.