

Last week, we heard the Word of God proclaim that the greatest law is that of Love. First and foremost we must love God with all that we have and all that we are and we must love our neighbor as ourselves. We understood that one cannot have a deep love of God and not love others, for love of neighbor is only truly possible when we live in the presence of God.

I spoke last week of the importance of prayer in developing a relationship with God which leads to a proper love of self and of family and friends as well as our enemies. It also deepens our faith.

Now, faith is given freely by God, and it is concretely imparted to us at our Baptism. But while it is freely given, it is not without cost. Our second reading points to Christ and says: **“now once for all he has appeared at the end of the ages to take away sin by his sacrifice”**.

Our personal response to such love must be love, which is the desire for the highest good of the other.

We must live in the obedience of faith, a faith that shows itself in works of charity and self-giving. That is the lesson of the two widows in today's liturgy.

The widow in the First Reading is not a Jew, yet she trusts in the word of Elijah and in the promise of his God. Facing sure starvation, she gives all that she has, her last bit of food—feeding the man of God before herself and her child.

The widow in the Gospel also gives all that she has, offering her last bit of money to support the work of God's priests in the Temple.

This might be the perfect time for a stewardship talk, but even as important as that is, this level of trust and generosity cannot be contained in a weekly envelope; it is going “all in” and trusting in the hope and promise of our God.

In their self-sacrifice, these two widows embody the love that Jesus revealed last week as the heart of the Law and of the Gospel. They mirror the Father’s love in giving His only Son, and Christ’s love in sacrificing himself on the cross.

With what might seem an almost reckless regard for their own lives, they demonstrate their love for God and others.

We have seen this type of love, haven’t we? We have witnessed it with the eyes of faith. Perhaps we have been on the receiving end, maybe we have been the givers, maybe we were only observers. Either way, once we have seen it, once we have been touched by it, it changes us, doesn’t it? And we know that will never be the same again.

Blessed Mother Teresa once **said “I have found the paradox, that if you love until it hurts, there can be no more hurt, only more love”**.

These three women set before us the reality that we too can love like this. That we too can give, not just out of our excess but out of the depths of our being.

No matter where we are on the scales of Earthly riches, we all have our own sense of what it means to give and to love until it hurts.

Each of us can experience the paradox, that when we give of ourselves so deeply, we will encounter a love that can never be outdone in its generosity.

Yes, The LORD keeps faith forever,
He secures justice for the oppressed,
gives food to the hungry.

The LORD gives sight to the blind and raises up those who are bowed down.

And He does it through us.

I would ask you to cultivate this love in prayer.... Ask God to open your eyes and your heart to those in most need of your love today. Pray that you might have the strength and courage to rise to the occasion.

Do not be afraid. Hold in your heart that the Lord will provide for us, just as he sustains the widow and the fatherless.

Today, let us follow these holy examples, doing what God asks, confident that our jars of flour will not grow empty, nor our jugs of oil ever run dry.