

A Tale of Two Widows

November 7, 2021, Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Gospel of Mark 12:38-44

Fr. John

Our first reading and today's gospel reading relate stories concerning two widows who, in biblical times, were among the poorest and most vulnerable of all the social classes. They had no social standing without a patriarch who would head the family and were often left destitute even by members of their own family. Coupled with that, in the reading from the Book of Kings, there was a severe famine in the land which was affecting everyone.

So with all that in mind, it seems rather presumptuous if not impertinently bold that the prophet Elijah would demand food and drink from someone who is much more worse off than he is. It would seem that Elijah has no compassion for the widow and her son but is only focussed on himself. But as the story unfolds, we begin to understand that there is a bigger lesson that is unfolding - namely that of putting our trust entirely in God's hands especially when all our human resources are failing us.

The prophet, challenges the widow to trust with God's help, her very meagre resources will be more than enough to sustain them if she is willing to use them. [This theme is to be echoed in the Gospel account of Jesus feeding the multitudes with five loaves and two fish.] The question is: would we have had that same level of trust?

Much of our world's economy seems to be based on a philosophy of scarcity rather than abundance. Hoarding rather than sharing. [Someone once referred to this as 'financial constipation'] Wastefulness rather than conservation. Fear rather than trust. And it is often the wealthiest societies that are the guiltiest.

In the end, where do we look for our ultimate security?

The widow, which Jesus observes, putting two small coins - a penny's value, brings forth another truth about generosity.

God notices the **cost of the gift to the donor**, rather than its objective value. Jesus points out to his disciples that while the rich gave out of their abundance, 'she, **out of her poverty**, had put in everything she had to live on'.

How does this play out in our lives? Well, in terms of our use of whatever financial resources we may have, we may have to reassess our contributions to the poor. In our giving, what are we sacrificing? Or are we merely giving what happens to be left over after we have looked after our own wants and needs.

In terms of the use of our time, do we spend enough quality time with our families? How much volunteer work do we put in for the community? Yes, we may have to sacrifice some of our precious time in self pre-occupation. But whenever we've gone out of our

way to visit a shut-in, a care home, helped out with youth program, or a soup kitchen - we know that we always came away from that experience a richer person.

I realize that during the course of the Covid pandemic, that many of these things are not as possible in the same way as they were before. This just means that we need to be more creative and perhaps even during these rather restrictive times, God is giving us an opportunity to re-evaluate where and how we will expend our time, energy and material resources when things get back to a more normal even keel.

How often is the person that we help turns out to be **our** life saver? These bring an exceptional joy and meaning to our existence.

These are the opportunities that God, through life, brings to us. It can lead to a marvellous - sometimes even miraculous life. It is indeed the way of love.