



Bible Study Thirty- Second Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B

St. Maria Goretti, St
Augustine, Blessed
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“... this poor widow put in more than all the other contributors to the treasury. For they have all contributed from their surplus wealth, but she, from her poverty, has contributed all she had, her whole livelihood.” Mk 12:43-44 NABRE

Reading I: 1 Kings 17:10-16

Give It All Away! The law of survival of the fittest tells us to preserve ourselves even at the expense of others. Look out for number one is the slogan of the survivalist. The modern-day minimalist declares: “If I give it all away, I could see what it feels like to not be attached to anything. I could better determine the importance of things I need by living without them. My mind could be free to think about things above and beyond stuff. I’d have nothing to lose.” This statement sounds radical to the survivalists in this materialistic society. However, it is precisely what we must do to serve God and each other. We must remove our attachment to worldly things. We are called to give it all away.

The readings this week remind us to trust in God in all things, especially for essentials. They also



She gave all she had.



remind us of the responsibilities of leadership and the danger of abuse of power.

The story of Elijah and the widow complements the Gospel for this Sunday, in that it is a lesson on how we should give all we have to serve God and each other.

The Lord told Elijah, who was near exhaustion, to go to the town of Zarephath in Sidon, where He designated a widow to provide for him during the famine and drought (vv. 1-9). Elijah met the widow, just as the Lord had promised and asked her for water. After she got water for him during this time of drought and famine, Elijah asked for bread as well (v. 11). Was this being greedy? The widow replied that she had nothing left and she and her son were about to eat their last provisions. Yet, Elijah asks her to feed him first, ahead of herself and her son (vv. 12-13). He assures her, as God has assured him, of additional provisions. She gave what she had and her jar of flour did not go empty, nor did the jug of oil run dry until the rains came. (vv. 15-16). She gave away all she had and God provided her with what she needed.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: Why did the widow obey Elijah’s request? Was Elijah sent to the widow, or was the widow sent to help Elijah. (See Luke 4:25-26)?

WIDOW

A widow is a woman whose husband has died and who has not remarried. If a man died in Bible times, his widow often suffered at the hands of the powerful (Job 24:21). This was especially true if she had no family to provide for her and her children.

God was concerned about the plight of the widow (Ps 68:5; 146:9). Through the Mosaic Law, God provided her with the opportunity to glean in the fields, orchards, and vineyards after the harvesters had taken most of the crop (Deut 24:19-22). She shared with the Levite in the third-year tithe (Deut 26:12). True believers followed the model that God had established. Job noted that he had shared his food with widows (Job 31:16). James wrote: “Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world” (James 1:27).

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Reading II: Hebrews 9:24-28

Give It All Away! A wise man once said: “You give but little when you give your possessions. It is only when you give yourself that you really give.” Chapter 9:1-10 of the Letter to the Hebrews continues the contrast between the ancient practices of the Levites and the death of Jesus and His resurrection. Essentially, Hebrews presents two points: 1) The Jews sacrificed animals. Consequently, Jewish sacrifices had to be repeated, and they were not effective. 2) Jesus, the High Priest, lived among us and offered Himself as a sacrifice. His sacrifice is eternally valid.

Jesus gave His own life in obedience to God. Now everyone can enter the sanctuary. This is not a man made sanctuary, but one prepared for us by God Himself and sanctified by the blood of His Son, Jesus. Regarding His life, we might say that; Jesus gave it all away! Jesus appeared once on this earth to take away our sins by His sacrifice (vv. 27-28). He will appear a second time not to take away sins, but to bring salvation to those who eagerly await Him. As we wait, we should not be laden with the trappings and possessions of the world. We must be prepared to give away all we have in an instant, just as Christ gave away all He had for us. DISCUSSION QUESTION: Compare the sacrifice of the widow in the first reading with the sacrifice of Jesus described in the second reading.

Gospel Mark 12:38-44

Give It All Away. *Take my heart; Take my life, as a living sacrifice; all my dreams; all my plans; Lord I place them in your hands.* These lyrics from the beautiful contemporary Gospel song, *I Give Myself Away* by William McDowell, show what it means to “give it all away.” The song reflects a complete submission to the will of God. It encompasses the concept of poverty of spirit given to us in the Beatitudes (Matt. 5:1-12)

The Gospel presents two contrasting images, the denunciation of the scribes for their preoccupation with wealth and position and the widow who gives out of her poverty. The denunciation of the scribes forms the conclusion of the conflicting stories in Mark’s Gospel between Jesus and the Jewish authorities. The function of those stories was to show the deepening rift between Jesus and the established Jewish leadership, which prepared the way for the decision to kill Jesus.

Jesus warns the people to be aware of the scribes who pray long and loud prayers in order to appear holy. (vv. 39-39) The scribes always sought special recognition in public squares and in the synagogues. Since they claimed a superior knowledge of the Law, less knowledgeable people had to greet them first and give them the best places. In the synagogue, the scribes claimed the most prominent seats, which were those on a platform facing the people. They wore long ornate robes that reflected wealth and excess. At the same time, because they “devoured the houses of the widows” (v. 40) their prayers were hollow. The word for “widow” in Hebrew means “one who is silent.” She was totally dependent on either her oldest son or her family, if she could return to them after the death of her husband (Lev. 22:13; Ruth 1:8). Since she could not inherit property, she was at the mercy of those who interpreted the law. Jesus said that the scribes abused their power over these helpless women. The Law of Moses stated: You shall not wrong any widow or orphan or stranger.” (Exod. 22:21.)

The demonstration of the hypocrisy of the Jewish authorities ends with the image of the widow, who puts less money in the box than the wealthy ones. Note that she gave from her poverty, and therefore, gave all she had. The widow gave away her livelihood. She gave herself away (v. 44). Her offering is an example of poverty in Spirit, that is, a total dependence on God (Mat. 5:3). Note that there is no mention of reward for her. How could she survive? What was she thinking? Mark provided this image as a model of trusting faith. By giving everything away, the widow imitated Jesus who gave everything away for us. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: What will you give away? What do you have to lose?

Pray About It!

Monday

Read 1 Kings 17: 10-16. Pray for the spirit of generosity.

Tuesday

Read Hebrews 9:24-28. Go without something that you really like for at least one day.

Wednesday

Make a financial contribution to the St. Vincent De Paul Society or Catholic Charities of New Orleans.

Thursday

Read Luke 4: 24-26. Visit someone who is ill.

Friday

Attend Mass and receive the Eucharist.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church Teaches

2582 Elijah is the “father” of the prophets, “the generation of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob.” Elijah’s name, “The Lord is my God,” foretells the people’s cry in response to his prayer on Mount Carmel. St. James refers to Elijah in order to encourage us to pray: “The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective.”

2583 After Elijah had learned mercy during his retreat at the Wadi Cherith, he teaches the widow of Zarephath to believe in The Word of God and confirms her faith by his urgent prayer: God brings the widow’s child back to life.

Resources: Give it All Away; bemorewithless@gmail.com Copyright © 2012 Be More with Less; Widow - from Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Copyright © 1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers); 1 Kings- Alice L. Laffery, R.S.M. The Collegeville Bible Commentary Old Testament, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville Minn. pp. 308-309; *The Gospel of Mark*, Peter S. Williamson and Mary Healy, General Editors, Baker Academics, (c) 2008. All rights reserved 248-250. – Mark - Philip Van Linden, C. M. *The Collegeville Bible Commentary, New Testament* The Liturgical Press, Collegeville Minn. pp 928-929 *The Collegeville Bible Commentary, New Testament* – Hebrews – George W. McRae, S. J., The Liturgical Press, Collegeville Minn. pp. 1252-1253.; English translation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church for the United States of America copyright © 1994, United States Catholic Conference, Inc. —Libreria Editrice Vaticana.; I Give Myself Away. <http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/williammcdowell/igivemyselfaway.html>

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