

Alleluia, alleluia!
Happy the poor in spirit;
the kingdom of heaven is theirs!
Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Mk 12:38-44

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark.

This poor widow has put in more than all who contributed.

In his teaching Jesus said, 'Beware of the scribes who like to walk about in long robes, to be greeted obsequiously in the market squares, to take the front seats in the synagogues and the places of honour at banquets; these are the men who swallow the property of widows, while making a show of lengthy prayers. The more severe will be the sentence they receive.'

He sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the treasury, and many of the rich put in a great deal. A poor widow came and put in two small coins, the equivalent of a penny. Then he called his disciples and said to them, 'I tell you solemnly, this poor widow has put more in than all who have contributed to the treasury; for they have all put in money they had over, but she from the little she had has put in everything she possessed, all she had to live on.'

■ The Gospel of the Lord.

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Breaking Open the Word



THE SAVING WORD

THIRTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME / B

07 NOVEMBER 2021

SELF-GIVING AND GENEROSITY

In many cultures, philanthropy and generosity can lead to a person being honoured and esteemed. The biblical world was no exception. As Sirach 31:23 observes: 'People bless the one who is liberal with food, and their testimony to his generosity is trustworthy.' Groups that were identified as being especially in need of such generosity were widows and orphans. God was identified as having special concern for them (Psalm 68:5). This was not all that the scriptures had to say on the matter. Deuteronomy 24:21 enjoined farmers to leave some of their crops for widows and orphans to harvest and so ensure their survival.

Given this tradition, it is remarkable that two of our readings today highlight the extraordinary generosity of two widows. In foreign territory, Elijah meets a widow and her son and asks to share in what they expect to be their last meal before they die. The widow's extraordinary generosity meets a most unexpected reward. As Jesus watches people contributing to the completion of the Temple, a widow's generosity catches his eye. Like Jeremiah before him, Jesus wanted the Temple to be a place of true worship. This woman's desire to honour God touched his heart – this is what true worship looks like.

Decades later the letter to the Hebrews reflected on Jesus' own self-giving as the perfect sacrifice that embodied and perfected all others. Not only did Jesus give what he had, he gave to the point of death itself. This act of love was the culmination of all Israel's sacrifices becoming the timeless model for ministry and priesthood.

Christopher Monaghan CP

FIRST READING

1 Kings 17:10-16

A reading from the first book of the Kings
The widow made a little scone from her flour and brought it to Elijah.

Elijah the Prophet went off to Sidon. And when he reached the city gate, there was a widow gathering sticks; addressing her he said, 'Please bring a little water in a vessel for me to drink.' She was setting off to bring it when he called after her. 'Please' he said, 'bring me a scrap of bread in your hand.' 'As the Lord your God lives,' she replied, 'I have no baked bread, but only a handful of meal in a jar and a little oil in a jug; I am just gathering a stick or two to go and prepare this for myself and my son to eat, and then we shall die.' But Elijah said to her, 'Do not be afraid, go and do as you have said; but first make a little scone of it for me and bring it to me, and then make some for yourself and for your son. For thus the Lord speaks, the God of Israel:

'Jar of meal shall not be spent,
jug of oil shall not be emptied,
before the day when the Lord sends
rain on the face of the earth.'

The woman went and did as Elijah told her and they ate the food, she, himself and her son. The jar of meal was not spent nor the jug of oil emptied, just as the Lord had foretold through Elijah.

■ The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Ps 145:7-10. R. v. 2

R. Praise the Lord, my soul!

1. It is the Lord who keeps faith for ever, / who is just to those who are oppressed. / It is he who gives bread to the hungry, / the Lord, who sets prisoners free. **R.**
2. It is the Lord who gives sight to the blind, / who raises up those who are bowed down. / It is the Lord who loves the just, / the Lord, who protects the stranger. **R.**



3. The Lord upholds the widow and orphan / but thwarts the path of the wicked. / The Lord will reign for ever, / Zion's God, from age to age. **R.**

SECOND READING

Heb 9:24-28

A reading from the letter to the Hebrews

Christ offered himself only once to take the faults of many on himself.

It is not as though Christ had entered a man-made sanctuary which was only modelled on the real one; but it was heaven itself, so that he could appear in the actual presence of God on our behalf. And he does not have to offer himself again and again, like the high priest going into the sanctuary year after year with the blood that is not his own, or else he would have had to suffer over and over again since the world began. Instead of that, he has made his appearance once and for all, now at the end of the last age, to do away with sin by sacrificing himself. Since men only die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, too, offers himself only once to take the faults of many on himself, and when he appears a second time, it will not be to deal with sin but to reward with salvation those who are waiting for him.

■ The word of the Lord.