

From The Pastor

As you can see, the back wall is under construction. We hope to finish this project in two weeks or so, given unforeseen surprises. Thank you for your patience and understanding. We have taken down the statue of St. Vincent for safekeeping, as well as the pictures, etc. These items will return as soon as the work is completed. As mentioned, we will not have coffee and donuts or the pancake breakfast on Sunday morning until this work is completed.

Food collection baskets will be placed on or around the altar this weekend as we begin our Thanksgiving food drive for needy families. You did a fabulous job last year in the generous amount of food collected. Many new faces participated in sorting food and packing boxes. This was a great help and a wonderful way to put your faith into action. Please begin to bring in food for this cause so we can serve those less fortunate than ourselves.

You may have noticed the new hymn boards in the front of church. I hope you find these helpful in more fully participating in the liturgy. You know the old saying, 'the one who sings prays twice'. After a long search for the right boards at the right price, we purchased these boards from St. Mark's parish. I hope you like them.

Ready or not, we find ourselves racing towards the end of the calendar year and the Church year. Advent is only two-weeks away. As such, the Sunday readings turn to themes of end times, and what it means to be about God's Kingdom. As we have said, everyday is the day of the Lord. Every day of our lives matters. Are we living and acting on the faith we profess by the way we put our gospel values into action.

The readings today focus on two widows. Both are very poor, yet play vital roles in revealing what it means to be about the things of God. Both are good stewards of the faith God has given them. Despite their poverty and vulnerability, they act generously in the name of God. What they give in the name of God, through faith, is returned to them a hundred-fold.

We are familiar with these stories. It is a time of drought in Israel; a drought through which God will reveal his glory. To do this, God needs the cooperation of people. Elijah the prophet makes his plea to the widow for water and a little bread. The widow reveals her circumstance of poverty, yet obeys the prophet. Recall the passage where Jesus says, 'anyone one who gives a cup of cold water to a prophet for my sake, will receive a prophet's reward'. Perhaps the widow has this in mind, or maybe not.

See the story as a model of stewardship. All we have belongs to God. God has given all we have. All is gift. The core of our belief in God calls for sharing what we have from God, especially to serve his purpose.

How does the widow do this? First, she gives out of her poverty. This is an act of faith. She has no extra to give without worry or real loss. She gave from her need to serve the ministry of God through the prophet. In her giving, God now has something to multiply and give back to her. Second, notice that she gives the first portion to Elijah even before she feeds herself or her son. She is giving the first fruits to God. This is the call of biblical stewardship. Give to God from the first portion and not only from what is leftover. In her giving God rewards and fulfills the promise of the prophet. Her flour and oil do not run dry until the drought is over. God fully supplies her need. By her faithful giving, she triggers the miraculous giving back that only God do.

God has already given to us. When we give back to God by our sharing with others, we give God something to multiply to give back to us. God looks for the seed of our giving, whether it is time, talent, or treasure. When we give to God, God has something to multiply and give back to us thirty, sixty, or a hundred fold. God cannot be outdone in generosity. If we give God little, there is little for God to multiply and give back to us. Don't be thinking only about money. It is about the heart and self-giving. The widow honored God by honoring God's prophet. Materialistically, she gave very little. In faith and trust, she gave all and was greatly rewarded.

The next paragraph after this passage tells the story of how this widow's young son dies, and she pleads with Elijah on his behalf. Elijah hears her plea with empathy, and speaks her prayer to God. God hears the prayer and restores the boy to life and gives him back to his mother. Her faithful giving has come back to her in a miraculous way. Twice! God multiplied what she gave exponentially and returned it to her.

The story of the widow in the temple is the same. She gives from her want, and she gives to God first. She is affirmed by Jesus as having given more than all the rest. In the Kingdom, her reward will be great. The reward is not to be accounted as cash back, like a store rebate. Here we are talking about the reward of love. The women gave in love and love was returned. This is the fullness of what God can give, and has given in the life, death, and Resurrection of his Son. Let's learn to give more when it seems like we have less. God somehow manages to multiply it as only God can.

Father John Esper