

My Dear People of God,

Last Sunday's readings focused on the greatest of the commandments. In response to the question on which is the greatest of the commandments, Jesus said: "*The Lord our God is Lord alone! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.* The second is this: *You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*" This Sunday, the readings offer us practical examples and illustrations of living out these commandments in the two stories of the widows. The focus of these stories is on giving: giving to God and giving to neighbor. It is a call to unselfish giving.

In relation to giving, people generally tend to give out of their abundance, but there are still several other reasons behind their giving. Many people give out of genuine generosity. They see others who are needy, and they want to help. Others give out of guilt; they may feel that sharing what they have will satisfy some kind of debt they owe. Then there are people who give for tax purposes; they know that they will be better off financially if they give from their excess. Finally, we all give openhandedly to those we love, and we do this regardless of whether we have adequate resources or not.

The generosity depicted in the readings for today is a different kind of giving. It is a religiously inspired giving and it comes from a knowledge of and dependence on God. It is based on a recognition that: ***the Lord our God is Lord alone and you shall love the Lord with your whole and your neighbor as yourself.*** In other words because God is Lord alone, there is no other like Him, I can give Him my all. This kind of giving, requires that we reach deep into ourselves, that we almost strip ourselves of our hold on to life and trust that God will take care of us.

The two examples of this unselfish giving in our readings today are widows, two individuals who are in disadvantaged positions in the society. In the first reading, the prophet Elijah visits and requests a widow to provide him a drink and water to drink. In response, the widow informs the prophet, that all she had was only a little flour and oil left, enough for the last meal for her and her son before they die. Then the prophet spoke to her saying: "*Do not be afraid... For the LORD, the God of Israel, says, 'The jar of flour shall not go empty, nor the jug of oil run dry.*" She trusted in the words of the prophet and did as commanded. Indeed and in return the jar of flour did not go empty nor the jug of oil run dry as she had supplies for a whole year!

In the second example, Jesus compares the generosity of the wealthy and that of the poor widow. Jesus does this, not publicly but in private conversation with the inner circle of His disciples. He did not evaluate the contribution itself, but rather he spoke of the source of the offering. The wealthy donated from their surplus; they gave what they did not need. Which was good thing to do. The widow on the other hand, donated all the little she had. Her total giving implied and manifested her total trust in God. Therefore, though little, her offering was much better!

My dear brothers and sisters, God will not be outdone in generosity. Sometimes, we become beneficiaries of the obvious blessings that flow from our faith and trust in God, as was the case in

the story of the widow of Zarephath (in the first reading) who was granted a year's supply of flour and oil. At other times, we simply continue living life as usual, like the widow in the temple (presented in the gospel reading) who was unaware of the commendation that Jesus had given her. Those who are truly generous do not look for reward. Rather, they carry out their generous giving and place their trust in God's hands. In both cases, the stories are as much about generosity as about trust in God. The generosity of both widows, is a result from their trust in God.

The question for us to ponder this week therefore is about our generosity to God and to one another. Does our giving manifest our trust in God? Do we only give of our excess or are we open to giving our all?

God bless

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