

Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Once a chicken and a pig, while taking their evening walk, saw the church sign that said, “Help feed the hungry.” The chicken said, “That is a good idea. Let us help. I will give eggs, and you give ham.” The pig said, “Giving eggs is easy. It does not cost you much. But giving ham is a total commitment.”

In the first reading and in the gospel reading, we meet two widows who are ordinary, hardworking, and poor. They put their trust in God rather than in material things. The poor widow in the first reading gave to Prophet Elijah the last of her food. She put her trust in the words of Prophet Elijah, and she gave everything she had. For her trust, she experienced a great reward. Her jar of flour and jug of oil did not run dry for the whole year. It is not what we take up, but what we give up that makes us rich.

The poor widow in the gospel of today dropped two small coins into the temple treasury. Though her contribution was very insignificant, Jesus found it praise worthy because she gave all she had.

The radical message of today is that we must place our trust in God rather than in material possessions. What these two widows did might appear very difficult for us. It becomes easier for us based on where we are today in our faith and humility. Only a humble person recognizes the profound need for God. Only he/she acknowledges that God is fundamental to happiness. Those two widows showed by their actions that God was more important than everything else they owned.

It was their faith that enabled them to be generous. It should be our faith and love that enable us to give. When we have a deep faith and love for God, we recognize that all our blessings come from God. So our giving becomes an act of thanksgiving to God. Every charitable act is a stepping stone toward heaven.

According to a Gallup Poll, American Catholics tithe 1.3% of their income, Protestants give 4%, and Jews give 5%. The Bible teaches us to tithe 10% of one's income. That is very frightening for many. But those who do it testify that God has never let them down. Most of us are too fearful of finding out whether that will be the case. So, we shall die wondering.

Our giving should not be merely out of an obligation—but out of love and gratitude to God for all He has given us. We give to God in return as good stewards. Rousseau once said, “When a man dies, he carries with him only what he has given away.” What we keep we lose, and what we give away we gain.

Many of us are more generous to waiters than to God. We tip up to 20% of the bill. We would be embarrassed to give to the waiters what we give to God. While we give 20% to a waitress, God gets less than 2%. God deserves not our tip but our tribute. Let us not be afraid. Let us give to God what belongs to Him. In the Eucharist we celebrate Christ's total giving. May He give us the strength to share what we have with Him and others.