

Homily: 8 November 2009 (32nd Sunday of Easter)

We all recognize that generosity is good. As a matter of fact, we recognize that it is very good to be generous. It is something that we all see as good, not only when someone is generous to us, but when someone is generous in general.

We are presented today, with two ways of being generous: the way of the scribes and the way of the widow. See, the scribes were experts in interpreting the Law of Moses, and the Law of Moses was the core of the Jewish culture. The scribes knew the Law inside and out. As a result, the people of ancient Israel respected and revered the scribes...but...Jesus was not very impressed with them.

Without a doubt, the scribes worked long, hard hours and they invested themselves into very worthy projects. They worked to promote the Law of Moses. Sadly though, their natural intellectual gifts and elevated position in society, pretty much went to their heads. Instead of exercising their leadership at the **service** to the people and their neighbors...they chose to **flaunt** it and to stroke their egos...increasing their comforts and reputations. Basically, they thought of themselves as more important because they gave more time, more energy, more money than everyone else...but this was a **one-dimensional** view of generosity. See, the scribes had forgotten that all the externals of giving were actually already **gifts from God** that God had already given them in the first place.

See, what God truly desires from them...and from us...is something more than the visible things...God wants our **love**...and this is what the widow gave.

The widow didn't just share **some** of her abundance...she gave her wealth to God, saying, "Lord, you are my good shepherd, and I will follow you wherever you lead." **That** is a prayer that the scribes never prayed...that is where their generosity was lacking. They saw what they were doing as doing **God** a favor...the widow understood that it was **God** who was the one doing favors...and that is the kind of generosity that God wants to see flourish in each of our hearts.

This is the type of giving that we are called to live out...and...now get this...this is the type of living that we live right here at mass. See, what we do at mass is reflective of what we believe and should live. You see, every mass, the children bring forward the gifts of food and put them where? At the foot of the altar. And, when we have the collection, what do we do with it? We bring it up to the altar. And, the bread and the wine is brought up from the back of the church and put where? On the altar. Interesting. So all these things are brought to the altar...why? Well, it all comes down to what an altar is. I think that we have forgotten what the point of an altar really is. This altar and every altar throughout the world is built to make offerings to God. In the Jewish tradition, the offerings were brought to the temple and placed on the altar so as to give to God...and this is a tradition that we carry right here into our lives today...right here at this altar.

We bring forward all of these gifts to offer them to God...to give to God...but...here is the big point of it all...we are not supposed to **just** bring up our physical gifts...but we are meant to

spiritually present, right here, every single Sunday...everything that we have everything that we are...we are supposed to give to God right here, our love.

As the song begins for the preparation of gifts, that is not a bathroom break time, that is not an intermission, but it is the beginning of an offering of our lives to God. It is a time to think about everything that we have done for the past week, the good, the ill, the successful, the unsuccessful, everything, and give it to God.

All of this points to the one great offering of Jesus Christ on the cross. The cross was the altar for the Lamb of God. The cross is God's altar, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ to God...and look at what happened with this sacrifice...Jesus Christ brought about his own glorification **and** the glorification of humanity. And this happens for our sacrifices as well. If we are willing to lay down our lives at the altar of God, it is a sacrifice, just like that widow. It takes us giving our all to God. Yes, it is a sacrifice, but if we are willing to lay down our lives at this altar, we are going to receive from God a glorification beyond our imagining because God will take that sacrifice and give to us something so much more incredible.

If you want proof, just look at the bread and the wine offered on the altar. That bread and wine is brought from our gifts, placed on this altar, and then God takes that gift that is so generously offered...and that gift becomes the body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus Christ. God takes this simple offering of bread and it becomes our savior...imagine what God can do with our simple offering of love.

We are all called to imitate that widow and make our offerings not only be of the material gifts, which are good, but also we must include the ultimate offering to God...our love.