

Connecting With the Sunday Readings

Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Sometimes a Gospel passage unmasks all that is pretentious and false. This week we have such a text. The scene is the treasury, a place where people came to pay what they owed or what was expected of them. Whether this was at the Temple or at the government's place of business is not clear. What is clear, however is that it was a place to show off. The wealthy would enter with great fanfare, hoping to attract notice. The religious leaders would do the same. It seemed that they wanted public recognition. They wanted to impress. They wanted a reputation for being charitable. We can understand that. We all like a little praise especially when it comes to our personal generosity.

But there's more to this virtue than the amounts of money given before the eyes of others. Of course, if generosity is genuine, be it of the rich or not so rich, then let it be acknowledged. Many of our finest public projects, our great universities, our needed hospitals, medical and scientific research, the dealing with the major problems of the world relating to hunger and disease, depend on the magnanimity of the wealthy. But what about the rest of us? We get by financially month-by-month, even at times, day by day. How is generosity ascribed to us, the ordinary ones? How is generosity best judged?

A Gospel Word for the Home Mark 12:38-44

The answer is found in this wonderful Gospel story of the poor widow who dropped two coins into the collection container. Measured by the usual way, which is by the amount of the gift, it seemed small, perhaps even insignificant. But Jesus goes on to note that it was all that she had. In that sense, she gave her all. Her generosity was complete. In figurative terms, her donation was complete.

Jesus uses this wondrously concrete example to describe the kind of involvement he hopes for from us. We are to give our totality, all our time and energy, all that we are and possess to a life of generous love. He can make such a demand because it is exactly what he has done. He gave until he could give no more. In other words, the Gospel message is one of total self-gift. We are invited not to look at what we give, but at our hearts to determine whether our gift is adequate or not. The other side of this exchange between God and us is the great paradox that when we give all, we receive back all from God.

Thought for the Week

Our culture operates on a principle of careful investment. Years ago, a man won a large lottery prize. A considerable amount of money came his way. He was a bit of a gambler so he decided to take all that he had won and place it on a single bet that, if won, he would double his take. Here, it's not necessary to know whether he won or not, we simply want to focus on his gesture of "betting it all" on one game. He did not hold back. All or nothing was his view.

That's the way that Jesus looks at life. Give it all. No half measures. And when you give all, it really doesn't matter how much of anything is given. The "all" of the poor widow (which implies tremendous vulnerability back then) is much greater than what the rich person gave. Parents often feel that they are giving their all. When this happens, God is most pleased.

—by David Thomas, PhD, Co-Director, The Bethany Family Institute

Parent Survival

We hear a lot today about the concept of sustainability. In economic terms this means that our financial resources are enough for the long haul. In energy terms, it means that we use renewable energy like the wind as a source of power. In personal terms it means that we live in a way that sustains us day after day. We don't wear ourselves out so that there's nothing left to give.

In saying that we should "give our all," we have to be careful that after we have done so, there's nothing left for tomorrow. Our giving can be full and complete in the moment, but we also have to be energized for what will be demanded in the next moment. We need to have the desire and energy to keep going. In that sense we need a balanced life, a life where we are both giving and receiving. Only then will our gift to our children for instance, have the staying power that's needed for this long lasting challenge.

Car or Meal Talk

Who is a person that you know or know about who gave their all?

One-Line Prayer

God the Son, give us the wisdom to see, and the courage to give fully of ourselves in your service. Amen.