

32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B

GOSPEL

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In his teaching, Jesus said, 'Beware of the scribes who like to walk about in long robes, to be greeted obsequiously in the market squares, to take the front seats at the synagogues and the places of honour at banquets; these are the men who swallow the property of widows, while making a show of lengthy prayers. The more severe will be the sentence they receive.'

He sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the treasury, and many of the rich put in a great deal. A poor widow came and put in two small coins, the equivalent of a penny. Then he called to his disciples and said to them, 'I tell you solemnly, this poor widow has put in more than all who have contributed to the treasury; for they have all put in money they had over, but she from the little she had has put in everything she possessed, all she had to live on.'

(Mark 12:38-44)

DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- Every Jewish male was required to pay an annual half shekel offering towards the costs of the temple (see Matthew 17:24). Women were not obligated to make this offering, so the offering of the widow was not required but freely given.
- The Jerusalem temple was a massive structure with a large cohort of priests and attendants, and its upkeep must have been a very expensive exercise.
- The treasury was a part of the temple in Jerusalem, and its function was under the exclusive control of the Sadducees, an elite and wealthy group of families of high priestly caste.

EXPLORING THE WORD

Jesus is scathing in this text in his comments about people who parade their religiosity while living at the expense of the poor. Merely making a show is not how God wants to be honoured. Even the wealthy who contribute so generously to the temple treasury are only giving of their excess, from what they do not need. Instead it is the poor widow—who is under no obligation to contribute to the temple treasury—who puts all she has at the service of God. With nothing left with which to feed herself, she has totally put her trust and confidence in the fact that God will provide all she needs.

- Talk about people who have given everything for God, who have put all they have at the service of God.
- How far are we prepared to go?

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- When do you give your all? How generously do you share your wealth, your time, your attention?
- Make a generous contribution of time, money, energy or service this week. Seek no acknowledgement for this.
- Reflect on a time when you were the recipient of a generous gesture by another. What was revealed about the giver in this gesture? How did you respond? Reflect on occasions when we have been generous as a nation. When have we been less than generous? How did that make you feel as an individual citizen? Share your reflections together.
- Pray today's opening collect this week:

*Almighty and merciful God,
graciously keep us from all adversity,
so that, unhindered in mind and body alike,
we may pursue in freedom of heart the things that are
yours.*

