

Fr. Rudy's Reflections
The Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time
November 10, 2024

Jesus and the Widow

My Brothers and Sisters in the Risen Lord,

In a world that often celebrates the rich and famous, there are countless unsung heroes who quietly make extraordinary sacrifices. Think of the elderly woman who volunteers tirelessly at the food bank, giving not just her time but also the little money she has, without seeking recognition. Her simple acts of love and generosity go unnoticed by the world, but they reflect a profound spiritual richness. In contrast, there are those who, driven by the desire for attention, boast about their charitable donations, making sure everyone sees their name on the donor list or social media. Their giving may be generous in quantity, but it lacks the depth and sincerity of true self-giving.

This Sunday's Gospel offers a powerful reflection on these contrasting attitudes. Jesus is teaching near the Treasury, and he calls attention to the poor widow who drops two small coins into the collection. Unlike the wealthy patrons who contribute from their surplus, this widow gives "her whole livelihood." Jesus praises her because, in giving all she had, she reveals a heart fully devoted to God, trusting him to provide for her needs.

At the same time, Jesus condemns the behavior of the scribes, who, though religious leaders, are consumed by pride and greed. They crave honor and recognition, wearing long robes and seeking the best seats at banquets, while devouring the homes of widows. They may appear righteous, but their actions betray their self-centeredness and lack of compassion.

Pope Francis, in a homily in 2015, spoke about the difference between quantity and fullness of life: "Today Jesus also tells us that the benchmark is not quantity but fullness. There is a difference between quantity and fullness. You can have a lot of money and still be empty. There is no fullness in your heart." The widow's offering, though small in quantity, is full in spirit and love. She holds nothing back from God, demonstrating what it means to be "poor in spirit"—to rely entirely on God's grace.

We might ask ourselves: What consumes our whole lives? Where do we put our energy, our finances, our time, and our patience? Do we expect results or recognition in return? If we are consumed by honor, power, social media, beauty, or money, they will eat us alive, leaving us spiritually empty. True fullness comes from a heart that is willing to give everything for God and others, even if no one notices.

Jesus invites us to follow the example of the widow—to give not from our excess but from our essence, to offer our lives in love, trusting that God, who sees in secret, will reward us with the fullness of his grace and joy.

Yours in Christ,
Fr. Rudy