

Our star of the day is a poor widow. The poor widow in could hardly have ever dreamed that her trip to the Temple that day would be remembered by Christians for centuries. In her, we find the true model of what it means to put our total trust in God.

The gospel shows us that Jesus was a people watcher. The gospel tells us Jesus deliberately took a seat in full view of the collection box in the temple and watched the people as they dropped in their money offerings. He watches what we put in. (Kinda like the Little Sisters of the Poor when they take up the collections themselves.)

Watching people for Jesus meant not only seeing how they physically looked and acted, but he also had the ability to see into their hearts. That way, Jesus knew what people were thinking, and what truly motivated them to give.

When we give a gift to someone, we take great care to remove the price tag, but when we bring our gifts to God, we can't do that. God sees what is given cheaply and what is given from the heart.

God also knows that there are some who gives the least, in terms of money, often is the one who gives the most in terms of love and sacrifice. That is what Jesus is looking for.

The Lord remarks that the little she gave represented her very self. People can be very generous to the Church. Some give money, a great deal of money. Others give their hands, their strength, their time, their energy and their loyalty. And some, unfortunately, absolutely nothing.

+Once upon a time a little boy set off for church with two coins. His mother told him, "One coin is for church, and one coin is for you, for candy after church."

The little boy went merrily along his way chanting, "A coin for God and a coin for me, a coin for God and a coin for me."

Suddenly he tripped and fell, one of the coins slipped from his hand, rolled along the pavement and down the sewer drain. "Oh no," said the boy, "There goes God's coin."

The widow had two small coins. The little boy had two coins. They both had a choice to make. It is significant that the widow had two coins.

One coin is a simple "yes" or "no." But two coins create more complex options. If she had just one coin, she could simply give it or not give it. But when she has two coins, she faces more choices. She could keep both. She could give one and keep the other. But she gave both.

It was not the total amount that was significant. It was the total giving. The gospel says that in giving both coins she gave "out of her livelihood." A way of life. A total commitment of sacrificial giving.

Sacrificial giving refers to giving from our substance rather than from our abundance. In other words, what makes giving sacrificial is when we are giving from what we will miss, rather than giving from leftover crumbs, or what we would not miss anyway.

What is real giving? I think it's giving to God in a way that causes us to be more dependent on him. The Lord's emphasis is not on quantity but quality. This difference holds true throughout the spiritual life.

+It is not the number of prayers we say that is important but the sincerity with which we pray them.

+It is not the number of hours spent in a church that is important but what we are doing while we are in the church.

The Lord's emphasis is on depth, sincerity and honesty. This is the heart of true religion. Otherwise religion is reduced to external motions and empty gestures.

It is significant that the woman was a widow. The Lord could have chosen any poor person who made such a donation. But he made his point with a widow. In Scripture, widows are images of complete trust in God, because in the gospel times there was no Social Security, no food stamps, no welfare checks.

The widow had lost all her earthly security without the husband and had to place her trust in God.

Secondly, God loved such widows not simply because they were in great need, but because they had grown in faith under their trial. Many important things in life are learned only through sorrow. Loss and grief reveal what is passing and what endures, and they teach us that God's love is our only lasting treasure. Others may learn these truths, but widows have lived them.

Lastly, this widow in the gospel, having suffered a great personal loss, was still sensitive to the needs of others and was moved to help them despite her own situation. Wow! That is a true witness to us who fear giving when our stocks fluctuate.

She teaches us the folly of selfishness. She challenges us to see beyond self-pity, to have compassion for the needs of others and to depend ultimately on God.

It was these virtues of the widow that Christ honored when he remarked, "This poor widow put in more than all the other contributors to the treasure...she, from her poverty, has contributed all she had."

This gospel is about much more than donating money to charity. It is about the giving of alms as a giving of self, as an expression of a faith commitment. It is about discerning the ultimate values in life.

The two coins represent a total gift. The widow is an image of total trust in God.

If we give as the widow in the gospel, we give because it is not really ours. Life, and all that we have in life, are gifts from God, gifts for which we are held accountable. We are not owners. We are stewards.

The little boy thought that one coin belonged to God, and one belonged to him. The poor widow understood that her two coins, as everything, belonged to God. She was only a steward of his many gifts.

"Amen I say to you, "This poor widow put in more than all the other contributors to the treasure...she, from her poverty, has contributed all she had, her whole livelihood."

this poor widow gave more than all the others. They contributed from their surplus wealth. But she from her poverty, her whole livelihood."

And yes, Jesus *noticed*.