

Beloved in Christ, today I want us to meditate on the **widow's mite**. Widow's mite has been a well-known biblical expression all over the world. What makes the expression so important is the **love, faith and sacrifice the poor widow made** in her offering that drew the attention of Jesus (Mk.12: 43-44 and Lk.21: 3-4). The widow's mite is another example of the poor ones in the Gospel whose detachment from material possessions and dependence on God that leads to divine blessedness (Mt.5:3 **Blessed are the poor in spirit...**). The First Reading and the Gospel today portrayed widows who acted with **sacrificial love, with trust and with generous hearts**. Although in biblical society widows formed part of the vulnerable class in the Torah, these widows are exceptionally good.

In the first reading, we heard that when Elijah approached the widow for some water and food, she points out the extreme of the situation for herself and her son. With the **very little she has left**, she is about to **prepare a final meal before they die of hunger (1Kgs.17:12)**. Elijah promises the poor widow that if she is generous with the little she has, God will provide for her **"jar of flour not to go empty and her jug of oil not to run dry" (1Kgs.17:16)**. She trusted that if she was faithful to God, God would be faithful to her and provide for her needs. The episode illustrates a more widespread biblical pattern. People who act hospitably and generously, trusting in a divine promise in the face of evidence to the contrary, people who act hospitably and generously find that the Lord provides with a generosity that is overwhelming (cf. Gen 18:1-15 and Mt.25:31-40).

There are two different ways we can interpreting the corresponding "widow's mite" in the **Gospel** (Mark 12:38-44). If we set aside the part of the text immediately preceding the description of the widow's action, that is, Jesus' condemnation of the scribes for their religious flamboyance, then the widow's action provides an extreme example of religious generosity and trust in God. As Jesus points out, it is not the amount that is contributed that counts before God but, **the totality of personal trust and self-giving that the amount represents**. For some, it was just what they had left over after making good allowance for their comfortable lifestyle. For the widow, it was absolutely everything: keeping nothing for herself, she could rely now only on the divine providence to whom she had surrendered all. By donating them to the Temple, she placed her trust in God's providence, **confident that if she was faithful to God, God would be faithful to her**. In this way, the widow becomes an example of faith to be admire and possibly to emulate.

Again, the widow's mite can be a warning against the way in which religion can be falsely interpreted and promoted that may serve to oppress rather than liberate the poor and the vulnerable, for whose cause and whose life Christ shed his blood on the cross. We can admire the widow's generosity and faith while remaining critical of the religious system that drove her to such extremes. We can be spiritually rich too, like her, if we will learn to trust in God in all things. If we are generous and faithful to God, God will be faithful to us and provide for all our needs. Let us have the desire to become simpler and more in accord with God's will. Do we trust in God's providence, or are we like some Americans who say "In God We Trust," but really don't? If we are faithful to God and do his will as best we can, God will be faithful to us and provide for all our needs!

Finally, my dear people of God, our Lord Jesus used the widow's mite to teach us a very important lesson that in God's sight the value of our offering lies more in **upright intention and generosity of spirit than in the quantity we give**. The poor widow trusted all she had to God in her poverty and contributed to show appreciation to God. The woman exhibited total trust and total dependence on divine providence. Let us remember that pride and greed block our way to God, but humility and poor in spirit open heaven for us. Let us also remember that every person will reap only what he or she sows... Let us not grow tired of doing good, for in due time we shall reap our harvest. Amen!