

32 Sunday B

November 7, 2021

St. Patrick

It was Jesus' final visit to the Temple in Jerusalem. In four days, according to St. Mark's Gospel, he will be hanging lifeless from a cross, having uncurled his fingers from around his own risky offering, to give up the two copper coins of his life.

It's odd whom Jesus notices. He points out to the disciples—and to us—that poor widow who put in everything she owned, two copper coins, into the stewardship box. No one else noticed her. Jesus did.

Why did Jesus notice her in the first place? She reminded him of someone—himself. This nameless widow could have put in one coin, keeping the other to help her get by. But she withheld nothing from God. Neither did Jesus. The widow's daring risk points to Jesus' daring risk. Her sacrifice of **“all she had to live on”** points to the Lord's sacrifice of his very self on the cross (1).

Friends: Let me be clear—Jesus doesn't tell us to imitate her. Actually he doesn't even praise her. But Jesus does *notice* her. Leaving the Temple for the last time, he wants *us* to notice her.

In the midst of this almost two years of the terrible pandemic, we might not notice those who have made a similar daring risk of their lives. We might not see those health care workers who give **“all they have to live on”**—their very lives—in order to offer care and healing to those with COVID-19, or its variants. Each day they don't know if this invisible enemy might grab their health—and their lives. Over these months some have, in fact, lost their lives, giving **“all they had to live on.”** That same daring risk might also be seen in city bus drivers, or teachers...or?

We might not notice them. Yes, that widow may have been onto something. If we're stingy with our faith, we'll never really get the cross. No one who has drunk the extravagance of God's mercy will be prone to stinginess (2). We have models of that extravagance who stand out in the midst of this pandemic, and in everyday life. There are examples all about us...if we notice them.

Jesus notices the nameless widow. She gave all that she had to live on. So did Jesus. It's tough when Jesus messes with our heart.

- (1) See Barbara Brown Taylor, "The One To Watch," *The Preaching Life* (Cambridge & Boston: Cowley Publications, 1993), with excerpts quoted in www.sermonmall.com/SRRSample/1109SAMv.html.
- (2) For a reflection on extravagance in this Gospel account, see Matthew Kelty, O.C.S.O., "The Wine of Extravagance," homily given at Gethsemane Monastery, Kentucky.

General Intercessions

November 7, 2021

32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Grant us the generous spirit of the Gospel widow's sacrifice, that we might truly follow Jesus in his sacrifice for us; we pray to you, O Lord—

During this Vocations' Week, send laborers into your vineyard through an increase in ordained ministry, religious life, and lay ministry; we pray to you, O Lord—

Protect all first responders and health care workers in the midst of this pandemic; sustain our care in protecting others from the virus; we pray to you, O Lord—

As we observe Veterans' Day this week: Strengthen all veterans, especially those who suffer from physical or mental wounds; we pray to you, O Lord—

Move us to reach out to those who are homebound, isolated, or lonely; we pray to you, O Lord—

Welcome into the light of your face all who have died in the service of our country, and all those named in our Book of Remembrance; we pray to you, O Lord—

(for the 8:30 a.m. Mass only--)

Bless Noli on the day of his baptism that he might radiate the light of Jesus in his life; we pray to you, O Lord—

