

FR. JOHN'S HOMILY

Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time, November 7, 2021

Thomas Merton, a Trappist Monk, great writer, and mystic of the church wrote about an experience he had at a busy shopping district. In the midst of the busyness of the world he had a mystical experience. He writes: *“I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realization that I loved all those people, that they were mine and I theirs, that we could not be alien to one another even though we were total strangers. . . I have the immense joy of being human, a member of a race in which God . . . became incarnate. Only if others could realize this! But it cannot be explained. There is no way of telling people that they are all walking around shining like the sun. . . . Then it was as if I suddenly saw the secret beauty of their hearts, the depths of their hearts where neither sin nor desire nor self-knowledge can reach, the core of their reality, the person that each one is in God’s eyes. If only they could all see themselves as they really are. If only we could see each other that way all the time. There would be no more war, no more hatred, no more cruelty, and no more greed.”*

This experience of Thomas Merton gets to our True Self, and living out of this Truth. The amazing thing about his experience is that it happened at a shopping district, not in the monastery, or in prayer. He had a moment of seeing others through the eyes of God. A great consolation being loved by God and seeing others through God’s eyes. We might not ever experience God in the same way as Merton, however we do see ourselves, others, and God through our own faith experiences. The measure you measure with will be measured back to you.

For example, the virtue today is Generosity. We can only reflect God’s generosity to the extent that we practice God’s generosity ourselves. You can only know this and experience this when you yourselves have placed your trust in God. The giving of our time, talents and treasures rightly due to the Lord, willingly and cheerfully, is the way to tap into God’s generosity. The opposite is also true. If we are selfish and greedy, then we too reflect that upon the life of those around us. Today we are invited into God’s world of Generosity.

My family taught me to be a good steward of all things because of our faith. There did come a time when the Lord invited into this heart of Generosity. Shortly out of college and making some good money, I am listening to a nun at Church share about her experience from a missionary journey. She then asked us to bow our heads and ask Jesus what He wanted us to give. I did, and Jesus said to me, “ALL of it”. I only gave half when the offering was taken up. And by the way that was very generous. However, it is not what Jesus asked of me. At the end of Mass, and looking into the eyes of the nun, I reached in my wallet and gave her the rest. It felt good, but I didn’t know what I was going to do for the rest of the week. That week was filled with many of God’s surprises, and I knew that He was watching over me. The late Sister Henrietta, former Superintendent of Catholic schools, was right, *“God cannot be outdone in Generosity”*, and it is true. The only way to find this out is the trust in the Lord.

Today's scripture readings feature two widows. Both were insignificant because they were widows, poor, and no one to take care of them. And yet today we are centered upon these two widows because of God. God is getting our attention and teaching us how to put our trust in Him.

We hear about the first widow in 1 Kings, one who shows hospitality to a stranger who is the Jewish prophet, Elijah. Not only does she show hospitably to him, but even shares all she has left to eat, the last of her food for her and her son. And now one more, this Prophet. She has nothing else to give and yet willing to share her all. In turn she receives a very unexpected reward. During this time of famine, she will discover that her food jar and jug will remain full. God is generous to those who share His generous heart. The widow of Zarephat discovered that the God of this Prophet Elijah is a generous God.

In the Gospel, Jesus is sitting opposite of a beautiful gate in the temple courtyard. Jesus watches the people giving to the treasury of the temple. People were required to give their support to the priests and temple ministries as required by law. As Jesus is watching, the wealthy are giving large sums of money. Then, Jesus sees a Jewish widow walk up and give nothing really. She puts in two small coins, a very insignificant amount, but not to God. Jesus sees that she gave all she had. She doesn't even keep one coin for herself. We don't know what happened to her afterwards, but with God's eyes upon her, we know she was taken care of. You cannot outdo God in Generosity.

She gave everything. She puts her complete trust in God. Jesus, seeing her, being so generous is touching that generosity of God Himself. We know this generosity is the Heart of God our Father. Jesus recognized generosity especially coming from Faith. I wonder what the Lord sees when we come up before Him and give our offering.

We know God is generous and He wants more from us than our money, He wants our hearts. Our giving is motivated by gratitude to God for what we have, recognition of the fact that all things really belong to God, and the realization that giving is the living out of love.

God's interest is not in the amount we give, but it is in the love of our giving. Mother Teresa reminded us of this, "*it is not how much we give, it is how much love you put in the giving*". God sees our humble faith of giving. Do we give to God the first fruits of our abundance, or do we give God only what is left after we have taken good care of ourselves? Giving first to him recognizes that we also trust him to provide for our needs.

God acts and sees differently. He sees us. He sees our hearts. The widows today are great examples of God's generosity. We too can find this out only if we, like them, give God what He asks of us. Trusting in God words, helps us to see the world through the generosity of His heart. The widow generosity foreshadows Jesus' generosity of self-giving.