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## 32nd Ordinary Sunday - 7 November 2021

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# 7 November 2021

## Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reflection by Joe Tedesco

### Introduction

Two widows feature in the readings for this Sunday. Generous despite their poverty, they hold nothing back when opportunity is before them to give and, in so doing, they become examples of what deep trust and fidelity looks like.

### Penitential Act

Use one of the *Roman Missal* texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you teach us how to be poor in spirit. Lord, have mercy.

You call us to be humble in faith. Christ, have mercy.

You lead us to the Father. Lord, have mercy.

### First Reading

#### 1 Kings 17:10-16

Elijah encounters a poor woman who is asked to share what little she has; her very last scrap of food. Elijah encourages the woman to fear not and to instead trust in God's goodness.

### Second Reading

#### Hebrews 9:24-28

In Christ, we have one who has offered himself once and for all. This self-emptying act affords us a mediator with God that lasts for all time.

### Gospel Reading

#### Mark 12:38-44 or Mark 12:41-44

The Gospel reading comes in two parts. The first features an ostentatious scribe, whose showy religious conduct is more performance than substance. The second features a widow whose humble giving appears insignificant, but is of more worth than anyone else's giving that day.

## Reflection

Some years ago, my path to my regular work would take me past a popular busking spot. The public square offered many talented people an opportunity to show off their abilities. Singing, magic acts, juggling and other feats thrilled passers-by. On one occasion, there was a mixed acrobatic act where, among other entertaining activities, two jugglers were tossing various objects back and forward to each other with amazing skill. Of course, the gathered crowd all clapped and cheered the deeds, myself included. Along with admiration, I was entertained and relaxed while viewing the act. Then something happened; one of the performers asked for a volunteer from the crowd. Actually, he didn't so much ask for a volunteer as volunteer someone ... that someone was me. Suddenly I wasn't so relaxed. Of course, I could have said no. But the pressure was on, I had already become not just a viewer, but an object of viewing as the not insubstantial crowd turned to face me for my reaction. I was nervous at the turn of events, but I said yes anyway. Now suddenly I am no longer viewing the act, I am the act, well, more so than I was a few moments ago. My job wasn't particularly risky for me at least, but it seemed so to the performer and to the act itself. I had to throw clubs and then a juggling knife at one of the performers while they were juggling themselves. Long story short, I did my part well enough, the performer thrilled me and the crowd a bit more and we all went away happier for the occasion. The point of the story is that there was quite a difference between being able to passively watch the show and suddenly being asked to be involved, to do my bit, so to speak, and join in on the activity.

When we look at today's Gospel reading, there is something going on that is not quite the grand performance just described, but is eye catching nonetheless – at least it is to Jesus. The Gospel talks of Jesus spotting a woman who put a small amount into the temple treasury (probably a collection receptacle where people contributed to the temple upkeep). Like any given day at the Jewish people's most sacred place, she was one of many who were doing likewise. The difference was that hers was a particularly small amount – especially so in contrast to the rich who's offerings were particularly large.

It is possible that Jesus could have mentioned the event to anybody. Commonly in Mark there is always a crowd nearby which Jesus addresses and interacts with. We have heard Jesus address 'the crowd' or the 'many followers' right through this liturgical year of Mark (see two weeks ago as an example where the Gospel reading opens with Jesus leaving Jericho "with his disciples and a large crowd" 10:46). However, this time, Jesus draws his disciples over and gives them a distinct teaching. When Jesus calls his disciples over, especially so in Mark, it is often for notably important instruction; something that deserves particular focus and is especially necessary for those who wish to live a life as Christ's followers.

As such, this invitation to the disciples to reflect on the example of this woman is also made to us, and if we are paying attention it leaves us in a dynamic state, a choice is before us. A bit like that day with the street performers, the conclusion to this story is being left to us. We can simply admire the woman, cheer her on from a safe distance and remain one of the crowd. Or, on the other hand, we can do what Jesus is in fact implying by drawing attention to the woman in the first place – we can do likewise. It is not a show to watch and admire, but a way of life we are being asked to emulate.

This point may seem obvious. Of course the woman is acting as an exemplar and a model for would be listeners. Perhaps it is obvious, but how often do we view such a scene with distant admiration rather than embodied actualisation? Though it may not seem overt, there is an open invitation here that goes unsaid. Not only to watch and admire, but to follow and do. Like those performers that day in the square, Jesus is not only asking us to ‘watch the show’, but to join the activity. It will be scary, it will be challenging and it might take us out of our comfort zone. In a nutshell, it will be ‘substantial’. That is what Christianity entails – giving of our substance.

A few weeks ago, in the readings of the 24<sup>th</sup> Sunday, we heard Jesus in another special ‘teaching moment’ proclaim the iconic words “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me” (Mk 8:34). These words appear near the centre of Mark’s work and points to the primary mission of Jesus which was to, quite literally, carry his cross and encounter the humility of death as a criminal. This points to the ultimate marker of what it is to be a disciple of Christ.

Keeping that in mind and returning to our Gospel reading today, the example of the woman is a marker of what ‘taking up our cross’ looks like. It is giving of our substance, it is giving that which matters to us and that we actually need rather than of our excess and what does not really matter. It is the harder path, no doubt. In fact, if such readings are anything to go by, if it’s a bit painful, if it feels risky, if it starts to pinch on our livelihood (to use the wording from the Gospel), then it likely has all the features of the sort of life that Jesus is, in essence, asking us to live.



**Jar of meal  
will not be emptied,  
jug of oil will not fail.**

1 Kings 17:14

# Prayer of the Faithful

## Introduction

The Lord is our light and our help, so let us bring all our needs in humility and faith.

## Petitions

We pray for the Pope and all Christian leaders, that they may be effective in helping the world to achieve peace and eliminate the pandemic.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for world leaders that through wisdom they may act justly so that all nations can achieve freedom from the pandemic and return to economic safety.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who are sick, lonely, or oppressed that they may be strengthened by God's help and aided by their loved ones.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for musicians and all who sing God's praises in the presence of the Lord, that they may be gathered into the liturgy of heaven.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those facing poverty and homelessness that we may use our gifts to help them to carry their crosses.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for our community gathered today. May we learn to give what is most important to us for the betterment of our neighbours.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

## Conclusion

In the light of faith and hope we know that you grant our needs through the power of the Spirit and in the name of Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

## **Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva**

### **GA**

A touching place. J. Bell. 469  
Christ, be our light. B. Farrell. 404  
Now in this banquet. M. Haugen. 197  
Prayer of Saint Francis. 490  
Take this moment. J. Bell. 485  
The cry of the poor. J. Foley SJ. 36  
We remember. M. Haugen. 446

### **AOV1**

In the breaking of the bread. B. Hurd. 58  
Praise, my soul, the king of Heaven. H. Lyte/ J. Goss. 78.  
The cry of the poor. J. Foley SJ. 83  
We remember. M. Haugen. 81

### **AOV2**

Christ, be our light. B. Farrell. 3  
Prayer of Saint Francis. S. Temple. 126

### **AOV4Kids**

To live like Jesus. M. O'Brien/ D. Pudney. 160

### **CWB**

Come to me, all who labour. Gregory Norbet OSB. 660  
Draw near and take the body of the Lord. Tr. John Mason Neale. 668  
Prayer of St Francis. Sebastian Temple. 793  
The beatitudes. Peter Kearney. 817

### **CWBII**

*Sunday by Sunday hymn suggestions*  
The glory of the cross we sing. John Ainslie. 310  
Draw near and take. Trans J. M. Neale. 482  
Prayer of Saint Francis. Sebastian Temple. 555  
What does the Lord require? Albert Frederick Bayly. 642  
*Additional selections by Chris deSilva*  
The beatitudes. Peter Kearney. 456  
Shepherd me, O God. Marty Haugen. 597

### **S&S1**

Shepherd me, O God. Marty Haugen. 59

## **Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy**

Psalms 145: *Praise the Lord, my soul!/Alleluia!*  
Psalm 145: Noel Ansell. CWB 416  
Psalm 146: Praise the Lord: Noel Ansell. GA 83  
Psalm 146 (145): Jenny O'Brien. JOBB pg. 88  
Praise the Lord, my soul! Marty Haugen LPB pg. 150

## **Music selections by Michael Mangan**

You are my shepherd (FWS) [Communion]