

Homily – Mark 12: 38-44
32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B
6th November 2021, Vigil Mass - Riverstown

Mahatma Gandhi, revered in India as the Father of the Nation was once going from city to city, village to village collecting funds for the Hand Spinners Association. And during one of his tours he addressed a meeting in Orissa, a State in Eastern India. Now, after his speech a poor old woman got up. She was bent with age, her hair was grey and her clothes were in tatters. The volunteers tried to stop her, but she fought her way to the place where Mahatma Gandhi was sitting. “I must see him,” she insisted and going up to Mahatma, she touched his feet. Then from the folds of her sari, she brought out a copper coin and placed it at his feet. Gandhiji picked up the coin and put it away carefully.

Now, the funds were under the charge of Jamnalal Bajaj, a close associate of Mahatma Gandhi. And later in the day, he asked Gandhiji for the coin, but Gandhiji refused. “I keep cheques worth hundreds of thousands for the Hand Spinners Association,” Jamnalal Bajaj said laughingly, “yet you won’t trust me with a copper coin”

“This copper coin is worth much more than those thousands,” said Mahatma Gandhi. “If a man has several hundred thousands with him, and he gives away

a thousand or two, it doesn't mean much. But this coin was perhaps all that the poor woman possessed. She gave me all she had. What a great sacrifice she has made. And, that's why I value this copper coin much more than all the large sums of money others have contributed.

In the Readings of today, we come across two widows who refused to cling to what was theirs, and who gladly gave away all that they had.

Now, in the Scriptures, being a widow meant being without any financial resources or security. The social structure of the day was this: "if your husband died, all the property went back to the husband's family. The widow was left with absolutely nothing, usually not even a place to live". In short, being a widow meant being poor and vulnerable.

In the First Reading taken from the First Book of Kings, a poor widow who has barely enough food for herself and her son welcomes the prophet Elijah as a man of God, shares her food with him, and then receives her reward in the form of a continuing daily supply of food.

Well, this widow by giving her last resource to God was making an act of deep faith telling the Lord: "I trust You. I trust that when I give You everything, You

would provide me what I need”. Yes, when we give our last penny to the Lord, it changes things because, there you are no longer in charge, and you are no longer in control. Instead, you are handing your very life to God and you are depending on Him for everything.

Mother Teresa of Calcutta used to say: “If you give what you don’t need, it isn’t giving.”

One day Mother Teresa was walking down the street when a beggar came up to her and said, “Mother, today for the whole day I got just thirty cents. And, I want to give them to you.”

Mother Teresa thought for a moment: “If I take the thirty cents, he will have nothing to eat tonight, and if I don’t take it, I will hurt his feelings”. And so, she received the money from the beggar. And she says: “I have never seen such joy on anybody’s face as I saw on the face of that beggar at the thought that he too could give something to Mother Teresa”. And she continues: “That gift means more to me than winning the Nobel Prize. It was a big sacrifice for that poor man, who had sat in the sun the whole day long, and received only thirty cents. Thirty cents is such a small amount and may be, I can hardly get anything with that. But as he gave it up and I took it, it became like thousands because it was given with so much love. God looks not

at the greatness of the work, but at the love with which it is performed.”

And that is what we see in the offering of the poor widow in the Gospel of today. Unlike the wealthy who gave large sums of money, the poor unnamed widow of the Gospel had dropped two small coins into the collection box. And Jesus says: “That woman has given more to God than anybody else”. At times, some of us give from our surplus rather than from our substance. If we give money, we look to see what we can afford to give. But the type of giving that the Scripture is talking about today is in a sense a total gift of self, relying not on ourselves, but on the Lord.

May be, the paradox of our time in history could be this: that we spend more, but have less; we buy more, but enjoy it less. We have bigger and fancier houses but smaller families and broken homes; more conveniences, but less time; we have multiplied our possessions but reduced our values. Aren't we in a time of tall men, and short character; steep profits, and shallow relationships? May be, we've learned how to make a living, but not a life; we've added years to life, and not life to years.

One day, little Ann who was just 5 years old was trying to decorate a box to gift it to her dearest dad James. But

James on seeing his little daughter wasting a roll of gold wrapping paper became angry and punished her.

Nevertheless, Ann brought the gift to her dad the next morning and she said, “This is for you, Daddy.” He was a bit embarrassed by his earlier overreaction. And now, he opened the box only to see it was empty. And he was angrier and yelled at her: “Don’t you know that when you give someone a present, there’s supposed to be something inside of it?”

But, the little girl looked up at him with tears in her eyes and said, “Oh, Daddy, it’s not empty. I blew my kisses into the box. And they are all there for you, Daddy.” James was crushed. He put his arms around his little girl, and he begged her forgiveness. He kept this precious gift by his bed for years. And, whenever he was discouraged, he would take out an imaginary kiss and remember the love of the child who had put it there.

Well, when Jesus calls us to follow Him he says: “I want you to give me everything”. He wants us to say: “Lord, you can have everything about my life. Not just my surplus, but my everything”. Remember dear friends, God deserves not a tip but a tribute. God bless you all, **Amen.**

