

# Pecuniary Generosity to God

32nd Sunday of the Year – Year B

*1 Kings 17:10-16*  
*Psalms 146:7, 8-9, 9-10*

*Hebrews 9:24-28*  
*Mark 12:41-44*

"Money is the root of all evil!"  
Lucky for us, it is only the root.

In all fairness, however, 1 Timothy 6:10 reads -- "Love of money is the root of all evil." However, if you were to ask anyone affiliated with any organization of any time in any place in history, from the great generals of ancient times (who had to pay their soldiers), to St. Peter in the Acts of the Apostles, to Mother Theresa, to the noblest of non-profit causes, all would agree that prayers and good wishes are important and appreciated, but very little can be done without funding. While extremely seductive, money itself is not "all evil." Rather, how we make use of it constitutes vice or virtue.

On one hand, we admire generosity to noble causes and charitable organizations. "Giving to the poor" is held up as a noble gesture. Indeed, when wishing to "identify" our generosity to God one sees the poor among the first with whom He, Himself, identifies: for "as often as you did it for one of my least brothers, you did it for me" (Mt 25:40).

How often, however, do we identify

generosity to God with generosity to our religious institutions?

On at least two occasions in Holy Scripture, we see this in the generosity of two poor widows. One, in the midst of a great drought gave the last of her sustenance to Elijah the prophet; the other, as observed by Jesus, gave her last coins for the Temple of Jerusalem.

Since the widows, themselves, were the poor ones, giving the last of what they had, we cannot associate the gesture of either widow with generosity to the poor. Rather, we see in their gestures a recognition of and deep faith in the presence of God in His religious instruments (the prophet) and institutions (Temple worship), and a profound generosity in supporting God's work through them.

In the case of Elijah, no doubt he was one of a company of prophets. However, as the Book of Kings relates, the corrupt King Ahab and his pagan Queen Jezebel had slain the true prophets of God. Those prophets who remained likewise were corrupt, promoting the false worship of Ba'al. Nevertheless, the poor widow of Zaraphath recognized God's action



## The Widow's Mite

---

in and through the preaching of the prophet Elijah. Because of her faith and generosity, Elijah survived the drought to continue his work as a true prophet of God.

In the Gospels, we are treated to numerous examples of the wayward nature of some Pharisees and priests. No doubt, there were those among them whose honor was, at the very least, questionable. The poor widow, however, did not focus on the human imperfections of Temple ministry, but gave all she had out of love for God, whose presence in the Temple was offered worship by the priests who served.

The Second Vatican Council declares, "the Church, endowed with the gifts of her founder and faithfully observing his precepts of charity, humility and self-

denial, receives the mission of proclaiming and establishing among all peoples the kingdom of Christ and of God, and she is, on earth, the seed and the beginning of that

kingdom" (*Lumen Gentium*, 5). While we, the followers of Christ, answer the call to "give to the poor," we are also called, in imitation of two poor widows, to recognize God's presence in our religious institutions; to exercise monetary generosity from our treasure to the Church, which con-

tinues to be the prophetic voice of God in our midst, and through which Christ's continues His sacramental work of sanctification.

Fr. William Nicholas  
*Catholic San Francisco*  
November 9, 2012

The poor widow, however,  
did not focus on the human  
imperfections of Temple  
ministry, but gave all she  
had out of love for God