

## Homily for Nov. 7, 2021

**This week marks the beginning of Vocations Awareness Week. Please pray for vocations. If you know what yours is, pray that you may grow in it. If you don't know what your vocation is, pray for God's guidance, and for listening ears and attentive eyes and an enlightened mind. Pray for everyone's vocations. And please pray for an increase in vocations to the Deaconate, Priesthood, and religious communities of Brothers and Sisters. Pray for Vocations to come from us, the people of Our Parish of Saint Lawrence.**

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**I am sure one of the first things that comes to mind as we read our Gospel today is that this was a good passage when asking for money – this United Catholic Appeal for the Archdiocese, or our Parish Annual Appeal a month ago. The Widow who gave all that she had, as little as it was, will be remembered throughout time.**

**In that sense, the question we ask is, “What lesson am I taking home with me from the Gospel today?”**

**Is the lesson today that I only need to give two copper coins in the collection? In which case I get to angrily warn the parish to never use the word “tithing.” (That word means ten percent. Biblically, it is used as a minimum benchmark.)**

**Or**

**Is the lesson today that I need to give from my livelihood? If so, it is not about the amount (two copper coins) or the same proportion (the same percent) as everyone else. If so, it is about giving out of my poverty, out of my livelihood, out of what I need to survive.**

**Wow!**

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**Why would the widow do this? Why would I do this? Because I love God, who loves me first, who loves me totally. Christ who loved me so much He died for me.**

**This is what Love is. This is the point of the Gospel passages in the last two Sundays. Do I love God first? Do I love God with all my heart, with all my soul, with all my mind, and with all my strength?**

**And in the end – that is not about money. Money is just a very tangible part of my life. It is also about my time, and how I organize my day. It is about walking with God and talking with God at my meals, in the car, at work, at home, at play, when I get up and when I go to bed. It is about God being first even in my conversations with other people. God first in my choice of books to read, shows to watch, and music to listen. Why love God this much? Why give to God this much? Why walk with God this much? Because he is always walking with me.**

**Unless I have strayed. And then, He is pursuing me. And Christ came specifically to pursue me, and you and all people. He is the Good Shepherd looking for His lost sheep.**

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**And the topic of Jesus' lesson is particularly about some of the temptations about being lost. They are temptations to forget to love our neighbor.**

**In one of the resources I read this week about the gospel passage, it emphasized the first section where Christ is criticizing the Scribes, who “devour the households of widows” (Mk 12:40). The example Jesus gives of the widow should be pondered in the context of these words. The implication of Jesus' words is not just that the Scribes are seeking recognition, but that it is a recognition that can be used to influence the poor and widows to give them authority over their estate, and of course take a percentage for themselves for their work. The criticism is about the temptation to exploit the vulnerable.**

**Further, that resource (and another) suggested that Jesus' pointing out the actions of the poor widow could be understood as a lament. Jesus' comments have a tone of sorrow, rather than praise for the widow's generosity. The widow, like other people of the day, has been taught by the Scribes the value of sacrificial giving. The temple offerings are designated to be used for the care of the needy. But there is a hidden implication that the scribes have been using some of the funds to enhance their own appearance.**

**His words are a saddening reminder that even good institutions and methods of donations can be abused, at the expense of those who are truly in need.**

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**Again, we remember last week's reading that Love of God and Love of Neighbor are connected in God's eyes. As disciples of Christ, we are always called to witness to the interconnectedness and unity of these two loves.**

**That, also, is our calling, our vocation. May we be aware of that call to love both God and neighbor. And in so doing, we can be more prepared to ask the other questions of where God may be calling us.**