

Fr. Nick Dant's Homily, Saint Matthew Catholic Church, Indianapolis
Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time, Nov. 10-11, 2018, Cycle B

Our Old Testament Reading from the First Book of Kings and our Gospel passage from Mark present us with stories about poor widows. Both widows sacrifice everything they had for the sake of God's work in the world. With all the food she and her son had left – in the midst of a great drought and famine; with no hope for future food, the widow of Zarephath reaches out to share her food with the Prophet of God, Elijah. Not knowing Elijah to be a prophet of God, she unwittingly, by helping to keep Elijah alive, helps God to continue this work of salvation. Undoubtedly, she thought, if she and her son were going to die, at least they would not die selfish.

The Gospel passage from Mark, we have come to call the story of the widow's mite. This poor widow, as she passes the temple treasury, throws in two small coins, called lepta, the smallest coins in circulation in the Roman Empire. They are worth only a few cents, but as Jesus noted: "she from her poverty, has contributed all she had, her whole livelihood" for God's work. Thus the widow's donation is far greater in God's eyes than the donations by wealthier people, who put in more.

In fact Jesus warns us not to fall for the pretensions of the wealthy. Beware, Jesus says, the scribes and the wealthy put on a show of being God fearing and pious, but for many of them their hearts lie elsewhere. They do not put God first like the poor widow, but are only concerned about taking care of their own needs first, while only giving to God from their surplus. The scribes and the wealthy do not give sacrificially! The poor widow gave her last coins and entrusted her well-being to God.

To give sacrificially to God is a challenge for any people in any age. We can say to God: don't you realize we have practical needs to care for: food, clothing, shelter, children to educate, retirement to plan for, health care and many other necessities. Yes, God knows what we need, but the question still stands – are we giving singly to God and his work? Could we do better? Am I truly doing all I can do?

The stories of the widow Zarephath and the poor widow of the Gospel story perhaps are a well-timed heads-up for us on this Intention Weekend for the UCA of the Archdiocese. Just a few weeks back we completed our Parish Stewardship appeal: "Answering the Call of Jesus to love and serve." This weekend we are being asked to make a commitment to the ministries' needs of the Archdiocesan wide Church. Just two weeks ago Deacon Kerry Blanford, formation director for our Deacon program, spoke to us about the wonderful works our UCA commitment supports, and you can read in more detail about these ministries in the brochure sent to you in the mailing from Archbishop Thompson. There are basically three areas.

Jesus is inviting us this weekend to evaluate the way we give to support God's work, and if we are truly giving in the spirit of the widow of Zarephath and the widow of the Temple Treasury!