

Homily—32nd Sunday OT; B-cycle

“...but one poor widow came and put in two copper coins, worth about a penny. He called his disciples and told them: ‘I want you to observe that this poor widow contributed more than all the others who donated to the treasury. They gave from the surplus of their wealth, but she gave from her want, all she had to live on.’”

Stepping out in faith. Would any of us have the faith of this poor widow who gave all of her money to the Church?

She gave her rent money, her prescription money, her grocery money to charity. Would any of us have the faith to empty out all of our bank accounts and savings like that?

(Now don't worry, this is NOT going to be another tithing homily! Just take a deep breath and relax.)

But I'll tell you, this poor widow has more faith than me, because I'm reluctant to do what she did.

As ordinary time begins to wind down, the readings in the lectionary always lead us to consider two things; faith, and endings.

Because during Advent we consider beginnings, notably the beginning of our salvation, the beginning of our faith.

So how do we increase our faith? Good question.

The widow in our gospel and the widow in our first reading who Elijah encountered, give us the first answer; charity.

Charity actually increases our faith because it forces us to rely more on God and less on our own strength.

The more wealth we acquire, the more we run the risk of becoming arrogant, because with wealth goes strength and influence.

So charity increases faith, and charity is a sign of faith. Is this always the case?

It is if the charity pinches a little bit.

It is if the charity is a sacrifice, because if it's not, we fall into the same thing that Jesus observed about the wealthy putting in their gifts for appearances sake. That doesn't involve faith. And this doesn't just involve money.

When we defer to someone in traffic who's trying to get into our lane, that's charity. When we go the extra mile for someone without being asked--.

When we show people respect and kindness and patience, even the people we don't particularly like; it's charity.

That increases our faith too because we are acknowledging someone else as a brother or sister, and not a thing, or in some way lesser than us.

In a nutshell, charity is NOT what we do in a strict sense.

Charity is not in and of itself, an action. Charity is an attitude.

Charity is a way of being, and letting that being REFLECT in what we do.

Look at the three readings we had today. The poor widow's contribution on a financial perspective is insignificant at best. What makes the act so laudable?

Because in the act, she shows her complete trust in God.

The poor widow in our first reading sacrifices the last little bit of food she has for her AND her son, to give to Elijah, because she completely trusts God.

So she's not only risking her own life by trusting God, she's risking her son's life!

Ask any parent to do that! Sure, I'll risk my own life, but risk my child's life?

Our second reading from the letter to the Hebrew's, talks about the High

Priesthood of Christ, but why is he the High Priest?

Because he offered himself up in sacrifice on the cross.

Christ's ultimate act of charity was his expression of the trust he had in the Father.

That's why charity, true charity, builds faith, because it forces us to put our trust in God, and in putting others ahead of ourselves fosters humility.

This is why when you look at the beatitudes, so many of them revolve around this same concept; blessed are the poor, the meek, the sorrowing, the lowly, the persecuted. Why? Why are they blessed?

Because the poor, the meek, the sorrowing, the lowly, and the persecuted HAVE to trust God, because the world has failed them!

And that is a consistent lesson taught all throughout the scriptures.

Those who trust in the world are doomed because the world will eventually fail

them. All treasures are temporary. Things wear out and break.
And even if that doesn't happen, we're all going to die someday.
Whether you're the richest king or the poorest beggar, we all end up the same
way, six feet under. Your health will deteriorate.
Your body will fail, and the world will quite literally consume you.
Our bodies will return to dust.

But even though we have no control over the world consuming our bodies, we can
determine whether the world consumes our soul. That we can control.

Don't let the world and worldly things consume your lives.

Practice charity not for charity sake, but practice charity as an exercise of trusting
God, and seeing God in other people.

That's what makes charity truly beneficial to us spiritually.

Brothers and sisters I pray today that we are never afraid to step out in faith, and practice
charity in all aspects of our lives.

May we trust God completely, and enjoy eternal life with him in heaven. AMEN.