

## WSC REFLECTION GUIDE

**Readings:** 1 Kings 17:10-16  
Psalm 146:7-10  
Hebrews 9:24-28  
Mark 12:38-44

32<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time  
November 8, 2009

**Word:** **The Kingdom of heaven is for those who have the righteousness of Christ.**

**Theme:** **We have the righteousness of Christ when we give unselfishly, trusting in God's provision.** [Dispossession]

**Promise:** ***"For the Lord says, 'The jar of flour shall not go empty, nor the jug of oil run dry'..."*** (1Kgs 17:13b)

### Reflection:

The Gospel reading for this 32<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time presents a comparison between false religiosity and genuine devotion to God. The situation of two widows in the gospel and the first reading are similar. Both are hard-working women. Both are poor. Both put their trust in God and both are rewarded for their faith.

The Gospel provides us with a picture of what true religion and devotion to God is. While observing people putting money into the Temple Treasury, Jesus takes the opportunity to warn His disciples against the wrong kind of religion, naming three wrong motivations in his denunciation of the religious experts of his time: the desire for prominence rather than selfless service; the desire for recognition and esteem, rather than seeking to promote the good of others through humble service and love; and thirdly, the attempt to use one's position (even a religious position) for self-gain and self-advancement.

True religion, according to Jesus, is relating rightly to God and to one's neighbor with love, honor, and respect. The Lord puts his Holy Spirit within us that we may be filled with the joy of his presence, the joy of true worship, and the joy of selfless giving and love for others. True reverence for God frees the heart to give liberally, both to God and to neighbor.

Jesus taught his disciples a dramatic lesson in giving with love. Love doesn't calculate; it spends lavishly! Jesus drove this point home to his disciples while sitting at the temple, observing people offering their tithes. He praised a poor widow who gave the smallest of coins, in contrast to the rich who gave greater sums. How can someone so impoverished give more than those with ample means? Jesus' answer is very simple: love is more precious than gold! Jesus taught that real giving must come from the heart.

A gift that is given grudgingly, or for display, loses most of its value. But a gift given out of love, in a spirit of generosity and sacrifice, is invaluable. The amount or size of the gift is not as important as the cost to the giver. The poor widow could have kept one of

her coins, but instead she recklessly gave away all she had! Jesus praised someone who gave barely a penny – an insignificant sum – because it was everything she had, her whole living.

What we have to offer may seem insignificant, but if we put all we have at the Lord's disposal, no matter how little it may seem, God can make it abound for us and for his purposes. Do you know the joy and freedom of giving liberally to God and to neighbor with gratitude and love?

The same scenario is seen in the first reading in which a widow gives what literally was to have been hers and her son's last meal. This widow is from Zarephath, a coastal city on the Mediterranean, northwest of the Kingdom of Israel. Elijah traveled through this land during a famine. As usual during such times, the rich complain and the poor starve. The woman was poor. When Elijah met her, she was putting last scraps of food together before preparing to die with her son. Picture her as one of the starving women in Somalia or Rwanda, and or even among those who lost everything to Ondoy and Pepeng. Imagine what faith it would take to give this last morsel of food to a stranger who asks for it in the name of the Lord. By putting her trust in God, the widow Zarephath received enough to tide her over length of the famine.

The second widow placed two small coins into the Temple treasury. In fact, what she put is called a *lepton*, literally meaning a thin one, or the smallest coin at the time and worth 1/40<sup>th</sup> of one pence. But seeing this, Jesus told His disciples that her donation, while seeming insignificant, is the greater one, because she gave from her need, while the others gave from their plenty. By Jesus' standard, her donation is an act complete faith and trust in God.

What these two widows did is extremely difficult for most of us to understand, especially for those who do not tithe. Many of our members may have far greater faith than some have, but we must also admit that no matter how great our faith is, it is profoundly difficult to put our total trust in God. Perhaps we think that we can solve our own problems, conquer all obstacles ourselves. Certainly, we are all tempted to believe that the proper amount of cash applied at the right time, in the right places can heal a multitude of ills.

Most will agree that the great fallacy of our age is that money can solve our problems, but the fact is that among those who have been blessed with material success, the happiest are those who have no qualms about sharing their wealth. The radical message of today's readings is that we must place our confidence in God rather than in our material possessions. This demands humility, a virtue known to the humble person who recognizes his/ her profound need for God and where he / she stands before Him. Only the humble person is certain that the presence of God in his/ her life is fundamental to happiness.

The two widows gave from their substance. They put their trust in God shouting with their actions that His presence in their lives is infinitely more important to them than anything and everything they owned. They give us fine examples of the ideal Christians, humbly trusting in God to care for them.

Perhaps, some day, you and I will have that same profound faith and trust in God. But, then again, is not that one of the reasons we go to Church? We worship God to pray for faith. Let us now pray this simple prayer of giving to the Lord what He has allowed us to possess: "Lord Jesus, all that I have is yours. Take my life, my possessions, my time and all that I have and use them as you desire for your glory."

**Suggested Personal Reflection Guide:**

1. Did the Gospel reading help increase my faith in God? Are there still areas in my life that I need to surrender to the Lord so that I can worship God in spirit and in truth?
2. Am I now ready to give back to God what He has only entrusted to me? If not, what are the things I am prepared to do to increase my trust and faith in God?

**Next Week's Daily Mass Reading Guide:**

November 9, 2009 (Mon): Ez 43:1-2, 4-7; Ps 122:1-5, 8-9; 1 Cor 3:9-11, 16-17; Jn 2:13-22  
November 10, 2009 (Tue): Wis 2:23 - 3:9; Ps 34:2-3, 16-19; Lk 17:7-10  
November 11, 2009 (Wed): Wis 6:1-11; Ps 82:3-4, 6-7; Lk 17:11-19  
November 12, 2009 (Thur): Wis 7:22 - 8:1; Ps 119:89-91, 130, 135; Lk 17:20-25  
November 13, 2009 (Fri): Wis 13:1-9; Ps 19:2-5; Lk 17:26-37  
November 14, 2009 (Sat): Wis 18:14-16, 19:6-9; Ps 105:2-3, 36-37, 42-43; Lk 18:1-8

***"Ignorance of the Bible is ignorance of Christ. Read your Bible daily!"***