

Homily. 32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time. Year.B. 10/11 November 2018.

Last week I was visiting an old lady, a parishioner who's in care at Canossa. She said to me that she thought that she didn't have anything left to give anymore. She wasn't talking about money here, but about giving of herself, about making a contribution to the quality of people's lives and the life of the Church. I said to her that she might be a bit wrong about this. I pointed out to her that she could still pray for us, couldn't she; that she still read the Parish Newsletter and thought of us all with love and hope. I also reminded her that she'd directed me to another two parishioners in Canossa I would otherwise not have known about or seen. This was her giving I said, and despite how small it might have seemed to her, it'd made a difference to me and to the lives of others.

The widow in the gospel hadn't much to give either, just a couple of small value coins. However, Jesus noticed her sacrifice, drawing the attention of His disciples to her actions. As He said, her giving deeply impressed Him because from the little she had she gave her all, whereas other wealthier people gave from their surplus, no meaningful sacrifice at all. The truth of the matter is that when we stop giving and sacrificing for the good of others we stop living and loving. If this happens, and sadly too often it does, then we enter into a death spiral, an endless all-consuming selfish black-hole for the human spirit that gobbles us up until we emit no light and offer no life to anyone.

In the first half of St. Mark's gospel we heard Jesus criticise the powerful comfortable and wealthy Scribes for their self-absorption, their egotism.

Their main interest was in external show, the impression that they could make in the eyes of others. Worse still, as Jesus said, they often did this at the expense of the poor, all so that they could keep up appearances, maintaining their public persona, status and life-style. The widow, much like many people in Nursing Care and countless silent, invisible others in our society, only had a little left to give, but she gave it all doing so with all of her heart. She knew the Great Commandment of love, not like the Scribes did as mere words in a book, but as a reality to be lived and practiced. For all of their flash and sparkle those Scribes couldn't outshine the poor widow nor could their gaudy robes and honours blind the clear seeing eyes of the Lord to what was in their hearts.

Each and every one of us, the Church which we form and the society we make have a million problems and short comings. But, so what? There's nothing new in any of this! There were problems before we came on the scene and there'll be short comings long after we've departed. This is simply the nature of living in our ever changing and passing world, the reality of being a people on a journey to somewhere else. What matters is that we don't stop contributing and giving what we can; that we don't cease and so seize up in our loving and sacrificing for the betterment of all. To do such a thing would be to die. In a way it'd be like killing ourselves, killing off the life-force within us before our time.

This simply can't be allowed happen to us as Christians who build our lives on the faith we profess in the self-giving death and resurrection of Christ, the very heart of the Eucharist we celebrate and receive. On this Centenary of the Armistice hundreds of thousands who gave their all for

what we have, enjoy and too often take for granted, bear witness to this truth. They came from every city, town, village and farm, to serve here and overseas, enduring horrors we pray that we'll never have to know at first hand. Too many survived only hours or a few days on the various fronts of war giving themselves totally before vanishing from our sight.

They haven't disappeared from our memories though, and mustn't be allowed to do so. In a Christ-like way they are remembered by us and live on, their sacrifice ennobling us still, as the self-gift of Jesus for us ennobles us with God's grace and love. Friends, let's learn this lesson and resolve here and now to put the Scribe within us away for good. In doing so we'll come to better resemble the widow of the gospel story, the brave men and women of our wars and Jesus Himself, seeing with His eyes and doing as He commands of us today.