

Commentary to the 32 Sunday in Ordinary Time

The Greater Need



We begin today's readings with the account of Elijah meeting a widow at Zeraphath from 1 Kings 17. There was a terrible drought at that time with a resulting famine. Sadly, the poor, then as now, suffered the worst. The widow that Elijah met was a younger woman, younger than most widows. She had a child, a son to care for. Her life was full of tragedy. Her husband must have died fairly recently. Then the drought and famine came. She was certain she would have to watch her son die of starvation. She also knew that soon afterwards she would die herself. And now this traveler, this Elijah, came asking her for food. There was a solemn law of hospitality in the ancient days that said that all travelers had to be cared for. It was a way of honoring God, for the traveler could be an angel of God like the time that Abraham cared for three travelers and entertained angels. You can read about that in Genesis 18. It was very clear to the ancients, if the widow refused to share what she had with Elijah, she would be committing a sin against God. She chose to do the virtuous thing. She gave that which she really needed. She gave from her need, all for a Greater Need, for the Need for God. And God rewarded her as she and her son survived the drought and famine.

We also come upon a widow in the Gospel reading for this Sunday from Mark 12. Jesus is sitting in the Temple with his disciples, in the area where people made donations to the Temple. Some would come with large sums of money and made sure that others would see them. The widow who came though was a poor woman. We don't know her age, but she was probably elderly. She put only a few

cents into the Treasury, but it was for her a huge sum of money. Perhaps she felt grateful to God that she was able to worship Him in the Temple and wanted to express her gratitude. Others would think that her donation was little. God's son saw it as truly generous. She gave from what she herself really needed, but caring for God's house meant more to her than her own needs. She had a Greater Need, the Need for God in her life.

The saints gave their lives to the Lord. Some were killed for the faith, the martyrs like Ignatius of Antioch, Lucy, and many others whose blood became the strength of the Church. Some of the saints were not killed, but were so devoted to spreading the faith that they grew closer and closer to God right until the moment of their deaths, people like Blessed Mother Theresa or St. Damian the Leper. The saints were determined to give their all to the Lord. They weren't satisfied with denying themselves things they wish they had or could do. No, they gave themselves totally to the Lord. Like the widows, they gave from their needs. They sought the Greater Need, the Need for Jesus Christ.

Most of us have received the sacrament of confirmation. We have 90 of our young people who are preparing for the sacrament now. We are also beginning classes for any adults, from seniors in high school up, who wish to receive the sacrament. Confirmation is a commitment to the Kingdom of God. It is a sacrament that allows us to be vehicles of the Holy Spirit for others. It is also a sacrament that demands that we sell out for God, put Him first in every aspect of our lives. It is a sacrament that calls us to recognize the Greater Need of our lives, our Need for Jesus Christ.

Thousands in our parish live out their sacrament of confirmation. For example, on First Fridays we have Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Many of the people who come need to stay home and relax, or do a myriad of chores, school related activities, etc. But they come because they know that the time they spent before the Blessed Sacrament would help others come closer to God as well as themselves. They need rest, or time to complete work, but they gave up the time they needed for a Greater Need, the Kingdom of God.

The same can be applied to all of you who spend so much time working in our Caritas Ministry. Our younger retirees and others give up every Tuesday morning so those who are homebound or in nursing homes can be brought to the Church for Mass and a luncheon. Others go to the hospital with flowers or bring communion to the sick. There are tremendous sacrifices made every week by the people who teach in our religious education programs. Most of them are not professional teachers. They are Moms and Dads, the busiest people in our parish. They are tired in the afternoons and evenings, but they have a greater need, the need to bring God to our children. The same can be said for those who work for the ladies who come to our Pregnancy Center. Because of their continual sacrifices, they have offered alternatives to abortion and are responsible for saving the lives of thousands of babies. We can say the same for those who care for the poor of our parish in community life. The people who

sing in our choirs sacrifice hours every week to lead us in prayer through music. And I could go on and on speaking about your generosity. Those who give their time, their talent, and their treasure are not concerned with what they need here and now. They are concerned with the Great Need, the Need for the Lord.

Time, talent and treasure. Those are the three main areas of stewardship. A steward is someone who is entrusted with that which belongs to someone else. We are entrusted with the Kingdom of God. As good stewards we give from our needs, our need for more time to do the necessities of life, and our need to use our monetary blessings to care for ourselves and our families. But there is a Greater Need in our lives. That is the Need for Jesus Christ.

We need Jesus Christ. We need the Lord. He gives meaning and purpose to our lives. We need Him more than anyone or anything else in our lives.

Fr. Joseph Pellegrino