

Thirty-Second Sunday Nov. 8, 2009

A. Introduction - a call in baptism = a call to generosity (besides the calls to maturity, holiness, service, and community) - two widows responded to that call

1. There is a line (fine?) between a person who is frugal (not wasteful, not spending freely or unnecessarily, saving, economical = frugality = thrifty, careful economy) AND a person who is called a tightwad / miser / a stingy person
2. In the land of literature: two great examples
 - Ebenezer Scrooge – cold-hearted, tight fisted, greedy man
 - Silas Marner – miser ... hoarder George Eliot's novel
 - at the end of their stories ... some transformation
3. What is certain is that the people in the scriptures today ... not tightwads / not frugal
 - widow from Zarephath = though her jar was nearly empty / her jug nearly dry ... gave what she had to the prophet Elijah
 - widow in the Gospel: impressed Jesus ... she gave, not from surplus, but from her poverty
 - Jesus: in the book of Hebrews ... gave his life ... the ultimate sacrifice ... the ultimate expression of generosity

C. Several reflections on generosity

1. Generosity is based on gratitude: a recognition of what God has given to us
 - 168 hours this past week (“the best things in life are free”)
 - our individual talents and gifts
 - the opportunities of our country: freedom / education / faith
 - for some, not all, money that goes beyond covering our necessity (surplus)
 - Ps. 166:12: “What return can we make to the Lord for all that the Lord has done for us?”
 - what return?: we can asked the two widows and Jesus
2. Danger: the dulling effect of habit (Hildebrand)
 - grow accustomed to and cease to appreciate ... gratitude becomes dormant
 - a great love or friendship
 - our beautiful country
 - some special grace
 - thankful as first ... then slip into lack of appreciation
 - commitment: not to take things for granted ... end the day ... thanksgiving litany: for a phone call, an affirmation, a challenge, a special grace
3. In 1991, movie came out entitled “The Doctor” ... heart surgeon (Jack MacKee – Wm. Hurt) asks a young woman (June Ellis – Elizabeth Perkins) with a brain tumor: “Do you pray? Is that what holds you together?” June answers: “I pray. I meditate. I eat chocolate. I go dancing.” ... What held that two widows together: their sacrificial generosity.