

October 25, 2011

Dear Friends,

A widow is someone who has lost her husband by death and has not remarried. Perhaps her husband was killed in battle or as a result of performing dangerous work. There must have been many widows in biblical times. They were mentioned along with the poor and the orphans because their situation was particularly sad. They had a special place in God's heart; to wrong them was a sin crying to heaven for vengeance: "You shall not wrong any widow or orphan" (Exodus 22:21).

Among the widow's mentioned in the Bible are Anna the prophetess (Luke 2: 37), the widow of Naim (Luke 7: 12) and the widow who put all she had in the temple treasury (Luke 21: 2-4).

Each widow, beloved by God, teaches us an important lesson. Anna devoted her life to prayer and God blessed her with the vision of the Christ child. The widow of Naim loved the child God gave her and received the same child back after his death. The poor offering of the widow in the temple was praised by Christ because the gift came from her heart.

St. Luke's depends upon the sacrificial offerings of our parishioners to support our parish and its many ministries. The example of the widow in the temple teaches us the correct spirit in which to give. Like her, we know that God will help us (see Exodus 22). Are our hearts large enough to encourage us to give back to God some of our blessings?

The widow was among many others who had gathered in the Court of the Women in the Temple. In the court there were thirteen collection boxes known as trumpets. They were so called because they were shaped like trumpets with the narrow part at the top and the wider part at the bottom. Each trumpet was assigned a special purpose such as providing wood that was used to burn the sacrifice. Jesus must have been standing near the trumpets when the poor widow approached. Widows wore distinctive garb (Judith 10).

There are two things that determine the value of any gift. The first is the spirit in which it was given. "A gift which is unwillingly extracted, a gift which is given with a grudge, a gift which is given for the sake of prestige or of self-display loses more than half its value. **The only real gift is that which is the inevitable outflow of a loving heart, that which is given because the giver cannot help it**" (William Barclay, *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 302).

The second which determines the value of any gift is the sacrifice which it involves. "That which is a mere trifle to one person may be a vast sum to another. The gifts of the rich, as they flung their offerings into the trumpets, did not cost them much; but the two coins of the widow cost her everything she had. They no doubt gave having calculated how much they could afford; **she gave with such utter reckless generosity which could give no more**" (p. 302).