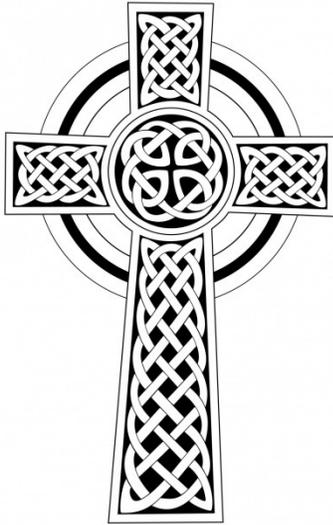


A Too Radical Generosity?

5th Wednesday of Lent



Mark 12:41-44

He sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. Then he called his disciples and said to them, 'Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.'

She stands as a study in contrasts. Among those parading their importance in the temple comes a poor widow to make her offering. The two coins barely clink as they drop into the alms bin. In practical terms her offering is totally meaningless. She would have been much wiser to have kept the coins to buy her next meal.

What can possibly explain such generosity? Certainly not obligation, obligatory giving is rarely, if ever, sacrificial. Only gratitude can explain such a gift. For whatever reason, to give less than quite literally everything she had simply would not have been adequate, and even that, I imagine, seemed inadequate fully to express the gratitude she felt within her heart for whatever it was that God had done for her.

The widow, though, is more than a study in contrasts, more even than a sterling example of sacrificial stewardship. She stands as a commentary on what is to follow in Jesus' own life. Her gift anticipates the one Jesus is about to make. As she "put in everything that she had, all that she had to live on," so Jesus would in a matter of days give all that he had, even his very life, in obedience to God's call. What is the measure of your gratitude?

Prayer

Take my life, and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee. Take my moments and my days; let them flow in ceaseless praise. Take my hands, and let them move at the impulse of Thy love. Take my feet, and let them be swift and beautiful for Thee.

Frances R. Havergal, 1874