

[Readings: 1 Kings 17:10-16; Psalm 146; Hebrews 9:24-28; Mark 12:38-44]

There is a big difference between God's economy plan of salvation, and our basic human economic practices. We human beings are lovers of "quid pro quo," economics: you give me something, I give you something; you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours. This kind of economic plan is incompatible with God's.

The widow, who gives everything out of her poverty, is a reminder of our need for an economic conversion. The scribes use their religious knowledge and importance to curry favor with their co-religionists. They treat religion as a way of "building up their brand," enjoying long dinners at the homes of widows.

Jesus sees the rich people approach the treasury. They give huge sums of money. In essence, they're "[building up their brand](#)." Religious people "gotta" give alms. And they do. The poor widow is different.

In giving her two coins, she gets nothing in return. There will be no invitation to a dinner honoring those who have donated. She will not get her name on a building in the Temple complex. And yet, it is the [poor widow](#) who has given everything. She has given her whole self in giving away all she has.

Remember that contestant on the game show "Jeopardy" who waged everything he had on a Daily Double question? He would push his hands away from him in a gesture that said, "I'm all in." That's what donating the two coins to the Temple treasury symbolized. It means that she is "all in."

Jesus' observation of the widow has its roots in today's Old Testament First Reading. A widow gives drink and feeds Elijah. She has nothing. But through her generosity to a prophet of God, her flour and oil do not go dry for a year. She is "all in."

This is what God wants from us. God wants us to give not out of our surplus, but out of our basic sustenance. God doesn't want us to give away everything we have; God wants us to dedicate everything we have received from Him to His greater glory. He wants us to be "all in" with our time, talent and treasure. With all that we have, and all that we are.

Jesus chastises the Scribes and the Pharisees, the leaders and doctors of the Law, because they were concerned more about external details than with internal conversion. I wear long robes when I celebrate Mass. I am given places of honor at banquets. I am called by lofty titles. But that should not be what I am all about. It's not what's on the outside that counts; it's what is happening on the inside. Where is my heart? What are my intentions? What do I treasure?

Among the many prayers I say every morning, the Prayer of St. Ignatius Loyal fits in with the theme of today's readings:

"Take, Lord, receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, my entire will." Of course, the more He takes my memory, the older I get, the more I am forgetting things! "Take, Lord, receive all I have and possess. You have given all to me, now I return it. Take, Lord, receive all is your now. Dispose of it, only according to your will. Give me only your love and your grace; that's enough for me."

Abiding in God's economy is risky. It means that we don't save any part of ourselves for a rainy day. The Kingdom of God that Jesus inaugurates requires us to spend our whole selves. And if we do, God will give us more.

This is not a return to our own economic logic. We can think that if we give out of our poverty, out of our lack, that we should expect a tangible reward.

In thinking this way, we may fall back into "quid pro quo." I have given you everything, Lord, and now YOU owe ME.

No! In giving everything, we get something even more remarkable. We discover that in our poverty, in our total abandonment with Christ, we receive a new source of wealth. And what is that new source? Spoiler alert! We receive union with our beloved God. After all, on the cross, it is Jesus who gives out of His nothingness. Out of His pain, His suffering, His condemnation by men and women, He gives everything. Jesus is "all in."

He is the Great High Priest of the Letter to the Hebrews, Who sacrifices Himself once and for all. In His death, He puts an end to our own human economy of "quid pro quo."

And therefore, like the poor widow, we must follow the example of Jesus Christ. We must [give everything back](#) to the Father through the Son in the unity of the Holy Spirit. We must hold nothing back. Our sorrows. Our joys. Our weakness. It must be offered back in love to God. Not so that we can get something out of it. But because God's economy, marked by pure gratuity, is the way toward an unimaginable happiness.

Think of a time when someone did something for you that was totally unexpected. It's a wonderful feeling to get help when you really need it or to have someone do a huge favor for you. To receive assistance from another person also involves giving up control and depending on another. To have such an experience calls forth a profound sense of gratitude. That's what Jesus did for the world. He gave himself for others so that all may live. All you have to do is accept that offer.

This week is the Week of Prayer for Vocations. May all of us pray that, like the widow, we will be "all in" as ordained, consecrated, married and single believers. They and we will be the future saints, who even now, give themselves to us, as we give ourselves to them. They intercede for us because their existence is wholly for God and therefore wholly for us. Let us long to join their company, their economy of gift beyond gift. Are YOU "all in?" AMEN!