

THIRTY-THIRD SUNDAY ORDINARY TIME

Last Sunday's readings focused on the two great commandments: to love God with our whole being and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Our second reading for the past five weeks has been taken from the Letter to the Hebrews with its beautiful reflection on the perfect sacrifice of Jesus our High Priest.

Today's Gospel brings those themes together by giving us a tender example of loving God in a sacrificial way.

The poor widow contributes all that she has to live on to the temple treasury.

Both she and the widow in the first reading must have had great trust in God's providence in order for them to make such heroic gifts.

As does our Responsorial Psalm today, the Scriptures remind us again and again of the faithfulness of God.

It is this divine generosity that should inspire our steadfast discipleship and our faithful stewardship.

By holding up the example of the widow and her heroic generosity, Jesus is challenging the temptation to give only from what we have "left over" after we take care of all of our personal needs and desires.

Jesus is always trying to shake us from our tendency toward complacency.

As followers of Jesus, we are called to imitate his total self-gift in all that we do.

I think back to four weeks ago when we had the Gospel of the encounter of Jesus with the rich young man.

Jesus did not try to make him feel guilty, rather, Jesus looked at him with love and called him to a deeper level of discipleship.

Jesus looks at us in the same way every day.

Today is known as Stewardship Sunday.

It is an opportunity to reflect on the many gifts God has given to each of us.

This should cause gratitude to fill our hearts.

It is out of this deep sense of gratitude that we make a return to God through the practice of stewardship.

When we talk about stewardship, we often refer to the stewardship of time, treasure, and talent.

More recently we talk about the stewardship of prayer.

All four areas of our lives should be included in our response to God's generosity.

During my two and a half years as your pastor I have been impressed by your faithful stewardship.

During this coming period of transition as you await the arrival of your new pastor, Fr. Leo Guajardo, I am sure that you will remain steadfast in your discipleship.

Remember the first reading.

Elijah, when asking the widow to bake him some bread, told her "Do not be afraid."

Do not be afraid to give of yourself generously to God.

God will never be outdone in generosity.

Whatever sacrifices you make will be greatly rewarded.

Through the sacrifice of Jesus, we have been given the greatest gift of all: the forgiveness of our sins and the promise of salvation.