

32<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)  
(1 Kings 17, 10-16 / Mark 12, 38-44)  
11.11.2018

Dear brothers and sisters,

Today's gospel brings two kinds of 'religious' people together: the scribes who are criticised for drawing public attention to themselves, and a poor widow who is praised for her generosity shown in contributing what she had to the Temple treasury. There are a lot of contrasts between these two kinds of people: the scribes are ostentatious, the widow seeks to go unnoticed. The scribes are devious; the widow is sincere and generous. The scribes put all their efforts into promoting themselves and use their piety as a cloak for making a profit on the backs of vulnerable members of society; the widow contributes everything she has -her whole life savings- to the upkeep of the Jerusalem Temple. Because the widow contributes "out of her poverty", she is more generous than all the rich people who contribute large sums "out of their surplus". Looking at these contrasts can help us to discover that there is a scribe and a widow at work in each one of us, in varying proportions, depending on our personal history and the particular moment of our life journey.

The poor widow has placed her faith in God. She knows that God created her out of love. She knows that God takes care of her day after day, just as he took care of the widow of Sidon as we have heard it in the first reading. She knows that God will take her with him after her death. In the same way, as the Lord gives himself to her, she is ready to give herself to the Lord, not only all she has, but also all she is. She is confident in the steadfast love of the Lord for her, for she knows that he will not deceive her. She knows in whom she has placed her trust.

In contrast to the poor widow who has placed her faith in God, the scribes have placed their faith in themselves. They know the Law of the Lord and use their knowledge as power, as a means to promote themselves and to dominate others. They also need to be recognized and confirmed in their own identity by others. It is for this reason that they seek to be greeted obsequiously in public and to get the first places at home or in the synagogue. The scribes are not only self-promoting, but they are also dishonest and hypocritical in their relationship with the Lord. They use their piety not to honour God, but to serve their ambition and increase their assets at the expense of the poor. "They swallow the property of widows" who are impressed by the scribes' external form of piety.

Now let us consider ourselves. In whom do we place our faith? If we place our faith in ourselves, if we take the first place which should be God's place, we shall never know peace, we shall never experience real and lasting happiness, the happiness promised to us in the Beatitudes, we shall never know any rest. Soon we shall be filled with anguish and uncertainty. We shall become restless. - We shall be looking for the recognition of others. If we don't obtain their recognition, we shall become angry, filled with resentment. We shall not be able to satisfy our hunger and our thirst of the infinite which

God alone can fulfil. We touch here the source of a lot of peoples' depression and feelings of anger: often these stem from the fact that we have not got our priorities right. We place ourselves at the place of God, forgetting that we are not God, we are not our Creator and we are not able to save ourselves. God alone can give us true peace, real and lasting happiness, which is precisely what every human being seeks. In God alone we can find rest.

The fact that we place our confidence in God does not imply that we have not to be confident in ourselves, far from it. To be confident in ourselves is necessary and healthy. But that confidence is something which we cannot give to ourselves; on the contrary, it is something which we have to receive from the Lord, a gracious gift which we have to develop. In so doing, God has the first place; we have the second: Our priorities are right.

Today, the good news is that the Lord in whom we trust is always with us, taking care of us, just as he was with the poor widow. With the psalmist, we believe that:

“It is the Lord who gives bread to the hungry,  
and sets prisoners free.  
It is the Lord who gives sight to the blind,  
and raises up those who are bowed down.  
It is the Lord who loves the just,  
protects the stranger,  
and upholds the widow and orphan...” (Ps 145,7-9)

Let us welcome that certitude of faith in prayer! May we become more and more aware of it, keeping it in our hearts like a treasure! This is both a grace to ask for in prayer and to receive from the Lord, and a personal effort we have to make over and over again. Let us make our own the attitude of faith found in the poor widow! When we do this, blessings will be showered upon us!

Amen.