

Today's readings invite us to reflect on the theme of humble and sacrificial giving. They encourage us to surrender our lives to God with a generous and trusting heart, serving others with love and selflessness. As we listen to the Scriptures today, let us consider what it truly means to offer ourselves to God and how we can live out this call in our daily lives.

In the First Reading from the Book of Kings, we encounter a poor widow who, in the midst of a severe famine, is preparing her last meal for herself and her son. She has just a handful of flour and a small amount of oil left. Yet, when the prophet Elijah asks her for a portion of what she has, she does not hesitate. Despite her dire situation, she gives everything she has to the man of God. And in return, God miraculously provides for her and her son, ensuring that their food will not run out until the end of the famine. This woman, in her poverty and vulnerability, demonstrates a profound faith and generosity that allows God to work in her life in extraordinary ways.

Similarly, in the Gospel from St. Mark, we hear of another widow, one who, though poor and destitute, places her last two coins into the temple treasury. Jesus, observing this, praises her for her offering, saying that she has given more than all the others, because she gave from her poverty, not from her abundance. While others gave large sums out of their wealth, this widow's offering was a true sacrifice — all she had, her very livelihood, was placed in God's hands.

These two widows, one in the Old Testament and one in the New Testament, show us what true generosity looks like. Their acts of giving go beyond just a financial or material contribution — they represent a complete surrender to God, an abandonment of self and trust in His providence. What they give is not just their possessions, but their very lives. These women point to the supreme sacrifice that Jesus Himself would make on the cross — offering His life fully for our salvation.

The self-giving of these widows echoes God's love for us. God, in His great generosity, gave His only Son for us. In the same way, Jesus gave His life freely for us on the cross. This is the ultimate sacrifice — one that goes beyond material possessions or worldly status, asking us to offer our hearts and lives to God in love and service to others.

First, let us reflect on the widows and widowers in our own parish community. Even in prosperous societies, the loss of a spouse is not just an emotional trial but also a

difficult economic and social burden. Widows and widowers often face financial hardship, isolation, and the challenge of raising a family on their own. Yet, in the face of these struggles, many continue to serve the Church and the community selflessly. They often participate actively in parish life, praying for others, visiting the sick, and contributing to the welfare of the parish. We are called to support and encourage them, to recognize their unique contribution, and to value their experience. They often know better than anyone the deep sacrifices and the need for God's grace in times of hardship. Let us be a community that embraces and honors them, offering prayers, support, and friendship.

Second, today's readings challenge us to reflect on how we judge others. In the world, we tend to place great value on outward signs of success: wealth, status, education, appearance. We often measure a person's worth by what they have or what they can offer in material terms. But Jesus teaches us that God's criteria for judgment are very different. Jesus does not see as man sees. He does not look at the outward appearance, but at the heart. What truly matters to God is the love, humility, and sacrifice behind our actions. It is not the quantity of our gifts that matters, but the quality of our sacrifice. Just as the widow gave all that she had, God is asking us to give our hearts — to surrender ourselves completely to Him. The offering He desires from us is not just our material goods, but our lives, our time, our love, and our service.

It is not enough to give from our excess or our convenience; God calls us to give sacrificially, to step outside our comfort zones and offer ourselves fully, as Jesus did. Whether it's our time, our talents, or our resources, the question is not how much we give, but whether we give with a heart that trusts fully in God's provision.

As we reflect on these powerful examples of sacrificial giving, let us examine our own lives. Are we willing to give God our whole selves, just as the poor widows did? Are we prepared to trust in God's provision, knowing that He will never abandon us, even when we feel that we have nothing left to give?

In the Eucharist, we see the ultimate example of God's sacrificial love. Jesus gives Himself fully, His Body and Blood, for our salvation. As we receive Him today, let us renew our commitment to give ourselves more fully to Him, to love others selflessly, and to live lives of humble, generous service. May we, like the widows in today's readings, offer our whole lives — our hearts, our time, and our gifts — to the glory of God and the service of His people. Let us pray for the grace to live lives of loving sacrifice, that we may be true disciples of Christ, following Him with generous and humble hearts.