

HOMILY SUNDAY 32-B (Homily 02)
“The Challenge of the Widow’s Mite”
(1 Kg 17:10-16; Psalm 146; Heb 9:24-28; Mk 12:38-44)

“To die for a good reason is something you can live with.”

This anonymous quote can be adapted to deepen its meaning: To give something up out of faith in God and love for others leads to the fullness of life.

The readings today urge us to a faith strong enough to accept some degree of sacrifice in our lives as an expression of love and working for justice.

The theme of faith-filled sacrifice runs through all three readings today. In the first reading, the widow of Zarephath trusts the prophet Elijah and sacrifices what little flour and oil she has left to make a meal for him before herself and her son, and is rewarded with a supply of food that does not run out.

In the gospel, Jesus warns against the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees then notices the poor widow who out of her love for and faith in God sacrifices what little she had to live on. It is interesting that Jesus was watching people put in their donations, but he took special note of her, because of her faith and the nature of her gift that came out of her necessity and not her excess.

The second reading takes us to the ultimate sacrifice of Christ who gave his life on the cross to redeem us from sin, and will come again to save those who believe in him.

The word sacrifice, taken from the Latin *sacrificium*, meaning to make sacred, refers to objects offered to God as an act of propitiation or worship. The term is also used metaphorically to describe selfless good deeds for others or a short term loss in return for a greater gain.

The Catholic Encyclopedia states that by sacrifice in the real sense is universally understood the offering of a sense-perceptible gift to the Deity as an outward manifestation of our veneration for Him and with the object of

attaining communion with Him. Strictly speaking however, this offering does not become a sacrifice until a real change has been effected in the visible gift (e.g. by slaying it, shedding its blood, burning it, or pouring it out). Christianity knows but one sacrifice, the sacrifice which was once offered by Christ in a bloody manner on the tree of the Cross.

When Jesus said “Take up your cross and follow me” he was referring to the faith and love his followers would need to have to follow him into the fullness of life that reaches a level of selfless, unconditional love that reaches to the heart of God. That expectation will always remain the ultimate test of the Christian’s faith in God, expressed by a selfless love for others.

I saw that kind of faith-filled love in my brother Louis and his concern for his wife Judy and his kids as he lay dying of cancer. I experienced that kind of sacrificial love in the slums of Meru when I accompanied Bro. Harley Mapes OMI and the pre-novices on their regular Tuesday visit to the people who live there. Not only was I impressed by their courageous ministry to the slum people, but also by the generosity of the poorest of the poor who shared with us a meal of tea and rice for us as volunteers before we returned to the comfort of our home a four kilometre walk away.

It is this kind of faith-filled sacrificial love to which we are called as followers of Jesus in our daily lives. And it is the Eucharist, which we call the unbloody sacrifice of Jesus that nourishes us and empowers us to go and live out that love of God shared with us in Christ to all that we meet.

So let us pray today that our celebration of this memorial meal and thanksgiving sacrifice will help us to live out a sacrificial faith that will make God’s love more real to the needy of our world.