

Thirty Second Sunday in Ordinary Time 2006

November 12, 2006

1 Kings 17:10-16, Mark 12:41-44

Homily: S. Agnes Lanthier, OP

Two women are introduced in today's liturgy. Both were widows and both were poor. And both have a gift to share with us.

In the First Book of Kings, we read the story of the Prophet Elijah's meeting with a widow who was a victim of a prolonged drought, I wondered what she thought of the old man who first asked her for a small cup of water. Then he called after her to bring him a bit of bread. When she told him her pitiful story, he told her not to be afraid, but to bring him a small cake. After she had taken care of his needs, he said that she could then feed herself and her son.

What did she think? Did she know he was a prophet? Even if she did, and even though he was polite in his requests, I would imagine his orders must have been difficult to accept especially that of the "small cake" After all, she was facing death by starvation.

The vow of obedience came to my mind as I read this passage. I thought back on some of the assignments I had received when only the vow I had taken helped me to accept them. And the power of the Holy Spirit did the rest. The widow believed the words of Elijah that the jar of flour would not go empty, nor the jug of oil run dry. She obeyed. And God did the rest..

In the Gospel we see Jesus sitting opposite the treasury and observing those who put their contributions into it. "A poor widow came and put in two small coins worth a few cents." Calling his disciples, Jesus remarked that she had contributed more than all the others because she had given her whole livelihood.

My first reaction was: how could she be so stupid, especially if she had a family to care for? On second thought, her faith and trust in God that He would care for her could have been so great that she just knew He expected her to give all the money that she had. Reading her heart, Jesus must have known what a prayerful and beautiful person she was. She was truly poor in spirit.

The vow of poverty came to mind. We give up all by our vow. For me that was very little, especially regarding material possessions. As the years go by, we come to realize that the *all* which God really asks of us in making the vows is a total giving of ourselves—soul, mind and body—and all that this sacrifice might entail. Only then do we, like the poor widow, give our whole livelihood—only then are we truly poor in spirit.

*Blessed are the poor in spirit
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven*