

**THIRTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
(YEAR B)**

November 7, 2021

1 Kings 17:10–16 • Hebrews 9:24–28 • Mark 12:38–44

I.

Last Sunday, following the 9:00 a.m. Mass,
the middle-school parishioners put on a great All Saints Day party on the plaza.

There were tables with information about a given saint,
which they narrated for other parishioners who stopped by.

Many people remained after Mass to enjoy coffee and to chat with one another.

But it was an even younger parishioner—a 2nd grader—who stole the show.

During that time,
she approached me with a big smile on her face.

She told those around me that, the day before,
she received the Sacrament of Penance for the first time.

She was very happy, and proud.

It was a remarkable and beautiful testimony regarding Confession,
and a witness to the power of grace.

Grace is the presence and activity of God,
and it has that effect:
it causes someone to flourish.

Grace impels to tell others about God,

In this way,
a person goes beyond himself or herself

II.

Grace brings about a generous response.

This is because God himself is generous.

Today's readings present examples of generosity,
as seen in the life of two widows.

Despite their difficult circumstances,
each woman is generous.

It's their generosity that reflects their dependence on God.

God will provide what they need if they give away what someone else needs.

The prophet Elijah tells the widow of Zarephath
(which is in Lebanon):

“Do not be afraid.
Go and do as you propose.
But first make me a little cake and bring it to me.
Then you can prepare something for yourself and your son.
For the LORD, the God of Israel, says,
'The jar of flour shall not go empty,
nor the jug of oil run dry,
until the day when the LORD sends rain upon the earth.'”

For many people, I think, dependence on God is an elusive concept:
How can I learn to trust him?

How do I go about depending on God?

We tend to think of trust and dependence as a matter of intuition:

“I **feel** that I trust God, or I **feel** that I don't trust him—
but I'm not entirely sure.”

Our emotional state is not a reliable indicator of our closeness to God.

Instead, there's a more reliable way to gauge how we trust him.

This way, following the example of the widows in today's readings, is to be generous.

Generosity can be measured, without succumbing to scrupulosity or technicalities, by asking three straightforward questions:

1. How do we spend our time?
2. How do we use our talents?
3. And how do we spend our treasure?

Trusting in God, and depending on God, means spending time with him in prayer—quality time.

I think it's feasible for each person to spend 15 minutes in prayer each day.

Trusting in God, and depending on God, means using our abilities to live out our faith in all aspects of life: at home, at work and at school, in the ballot box, and so forth.

Trusting in God, and depending on God, also means contributing financially to the work of the Church.

That's reflected, in each Mass, in the Preparation of the Gifts.

Parishioners bring forward bread and wine, which symbolize the entire work, sacrifices, and contributions of the community, which are generously offered to God.

God, in turn, "one-ups" our generosity by changing our gifts into the Real Presence of his Son.

Financial contributions are the only way for the parish to operate.

They also assist the poor, as when parishioners participate in the Cathedral's monthly service project.

Generosity is both a response to the grace of God and a reflection of God himself.

There is a remarkable sign of generosity in the parish this weekend, as those adults preparing to enter the Catholic Church officially become candidates for the Sacraments of Christian Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist.

There are two categories of candidates.

The first category includes unbaptized persons, who are called “catechumens,” meaning, “hearers of the word.”

In due time, they will be baptized, confirmed, and receive First Holy Communion.

The second category includes persons who were baptized in another Christian denomination.

Their becoming Catholics is called “reception into the full communion of the Catholic Church.”

In due time, they will make a profession of faith, and will receive Confirmation and First Holy Communion.

In both cases, it’s evident that the grace of God is at work in their lives, and is leading them to the Catholic Church.

The Church prays that they will continue to respond generously to this grace.

They are giving the parish community a compelling witness of trust in God and dependence on him.

We see in them a reflection of who God and what he does in each person’s life.

Generosity takes us beyond ourselves.

Inspired by grace and accompanied by grace, we reflect God himself.