

Reflection Questions

- Can you recall what your personal “bottom” was like?
 - How do you maintain awareness of this?
 - How does this benefit your recovery?

- Recall moments where God’s divine timing has made a difference in your life.
 - Was the outcome different from what you expected?
 - How were others a part of delivering God’s grace in your life?

- How is God inviting you to give all of yourself?

32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time



Widows were especially vulnerable individuals during biblical times, particular due to a lack of social support and cultural norms. Along with orphans, widows tend to represent those on the margins of society that are powerless and the least among all. God, however, holds a different view of those that are unable to care for themselves and have fallen upon hard times.

The first reading this week describes a widow who has hit rock bottom. Isolated and desperate, she is greeted at her home by the prophet Elijah who asks for a favor:

*"Please bring me a small cupful of water to drink."
She left to get it, and he called out after her,
"Please bring along a bit of bread."
She answered, "As the LORD, your God, lives,
I have nothing baked; there is only a handful of
flour in my jar and a little oil in my jug.
Just now I was collecting a couple of sticks,
to go in and prepare something for myself and my
son;
when we have eaten it, we shall die."*

Bishop Robert Barron explores the incredible timing of Elijah's intervention as he notes, "There is a very important biblical principle on display here—namely, the divine comes into our lives often precisely at this moment of our greatest vulnerability and need. When the ego is riding high, confident in its own power and resources, it rarely reaches out to God. But, when the ego is knocked around, wounded, and powerless, that is when God often comes in."

As people in recovery, we have likely experienced this divine timing come as we've hit our own personal bottom. Coming to this point is often necessary for us to pursue a new way of life. When we feel powerful, we are more likely to keep God at bay. When we come to the end of our rope, we are more likely to persevere through some of the challenging spiritual work of the twelve steps. It helps when we are pulled from our isolation and surrounded by others that can share the fruits of recovery.

Notice how Elijah approaches the widow from Zarephath. Rather than providing her with something, he asks her to give him a cup of water and a portion of her remaining bread. This proves to be a spiritually significant paradox that foreshadows Jesus's approach to the woman at the well. In times of desperation, God asks us to give of what we have. As the Prayer of Saint Francis suggests, "It is in giving that we receive. It is in pardoning that we are pardoned. It is in dying that we are born to eternal life." The widow from Zarephath and her son are saved by the grace and guidance of God which prevents the jar of flour from going empty and the jug of oil from running dry. All things are possible for God.

Last week we heard Jesus recite an important Jewish prayer when asked which is the first of all the commandments. "The Lord our God is Lord alone! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength." We see this principle put into practice by those that are in a place of humility and in proper relationship with God.

This week's gospel reading contrasts the offering of a widow with the status and honor sought by religious authorities. Jesus taught the crowds around him:

"Beware of the scribes, who like to go around in long robes and accept greetings in the marketplaces, seats of honor in synagogues, and places of honor at banquets. They devour the houses of widows and, as a pretext recite lengthy prayers. They will receive a very severe condemnation."

He sat down opposite the treasury and observed how the crowd put money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. A poor widow also came and put in two small coins worth a few cents. Calling his disciples to himself, he said to them, "Amen, I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the other contributors to the treasury. For they have all contributed from their surplus wealth, but she, from her poverty, has contributed all she had, her whole livelihood."