

32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Today's Gospel explores the theme of generosity. As we come together today to celebrate the self-giving love of our Lord Jesus, let us remember all those who have made sacrifices for us.

1 Kings 17:10-16

The starving prophet Elijah begs a poor widow for food and she shares her last meal with him.

Hebrews 9:24-28

Jesus' offering of himself surpasses any sacrifice a Temple high priest might have made for the sins of his people.

Mark 12:38-44

Jesus observes how some people take advantage of others. He watches a widow donate her last pennies to the lucrative Temple cult.



"For they have all put in money they had over,
but she, from the little she had put in all she had to live on".

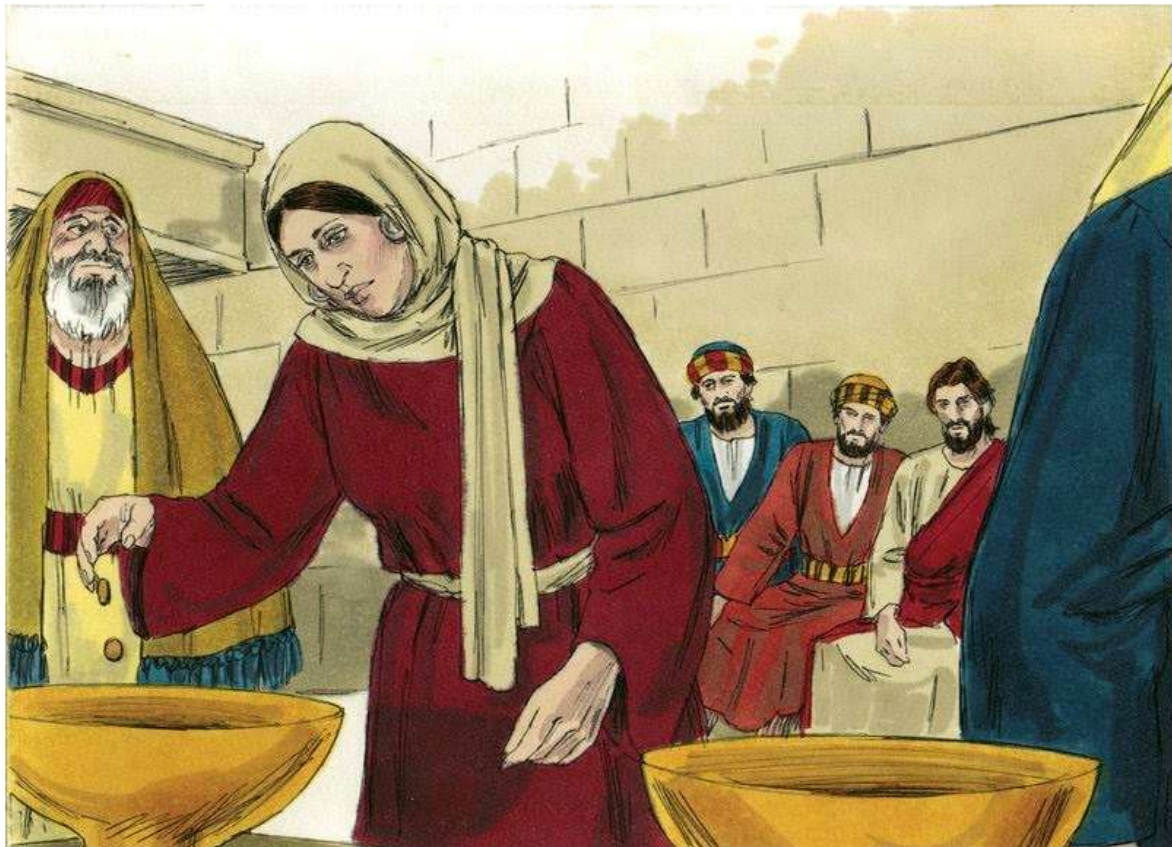
Jesus reproached the scribes who were making a public show of holiness and using their office for prestige rather than for service. They ignored the Law of Moses that required aid for helpless widows and orphans. Because they knew God's will, they were more culpable than people who were ignorant of the Law. Jesus contrasted their behaviour with that of a poor widow. He observed that many rich people placed large donations from their surplus wealth in the temple treasury. This poor woman gave two tiny coins (leptons), all that she had to live on.

Reflection

The FIFA World Cup normally takes place every four years. If you are a football fan, it is a long time to wait. The hype, however, begins to build up many months

beforehand. This was especially so for the 2018 World Cup. It was the first time the tournament had been hosted by an eastern European country, and there was concern among many about the government's record on human rights. To many fans, however, the prospect of travelling to Russia seemed thrilling. More than three million set off to Moscow, imagining that affordable tickets and cheap accommodation would be easily available. After all, Russia was a big country, with eleven host cities as match venues.

However, it was every scammer's dream. Many fans fell victim to cybercriminals who posed as ticket agents, or who took over the accounts of hoteliers to steal people's bank details. Russians alone were targeted by 25 million cyberattacks. People had been too trusting, too carried away by football mania, willing to believe in special offers that turned out to be too good to be true. The tournament left a question on people's minds: was corruption spoiling "the beautiful game"?



A similar question worried people in Jesus' day. Corruption was spoiling the beauty of God's Temple. At festival times, a vast crowd of pilgrims headed for Jerusalem, looking forward to the Temple worship. United in belief, they came longing for forgiveness, often desperate for healing. As with football fans, enthusiasm made some of them a target for exploitation. The Temple had vast wealth and not everyone who officiated there was honest or unselfish.



The disciples may have been in awe of their magnificent surroundings, but Jesus looked beyond that. He pointed out religious leaders parading in flowing robes, lapping up the wide-eyed admiration of visitors and persuading vulnerable people to give money in expectation of a blessing. He noticed something else. At first sight it appeared unremarkable: people dropping coins into one of the trumpet-shaped collection boxes. Worshippers were expected to make sacrificial offerings for their sins; the offering of the poor was a pair of pigeons. Jesus certainly knew what those her two tiny coins (leptons) meant for this particular widow: it was all she had. He seemed saddened that the moral and religious life of his nation had come to this. He was reminded, perhaps, of the widow of Sidon in our first reading. She also gave her all, but there was a difference: she was not being exploited by unscrupulous people. She had been asked for help by a starving man in time of famine. There was just enough food for one last meal, yet she allowed herself to be moved by a fellow human being in distress and shared it.

Jesus deplored the way the Temple took advantage of people. “Beware”, he said, in case we should ever be tempted to do the same, or seek to benefit from the suffering of other people by giving in order to attract attention to ourselves. Generosity is not about us: true generosity focuses on other people. It allows a cry for help to melt our hearts in compassion.




Jesus still watches at the treasury of our hearts. Just as he invited his disciples to look – *really* look – at what was going on around them, Jesus calls us to recognise human distress when we see it and to be moved to respond. It may be with money, but practical help and companionship are often what's needed.

The prophecy came true for the widow who shared a meal with Elijah: her flour jar was never empty, her jug of oil never ran dry.

May that be true of our own hearts.

GOSPEL WORDSEARCH

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St Anthony Novena

Every Tuesday 12.25pm

You can begin the Nine Tuesdays any Tuesday

S V P

Quietly working away in St Francis is a very small group of brothers and sisters of St Vincent de Paul.

“Befriending” is at the core of what The St Vincent de Paul Society does. Our dedicated group is part of an interactional Catholic voluntary network dedicated to tackling poverty by providing practical assistance to people in need. Its 10,000 member are motivated by their faith, and they visit vulnerable or isolated people across England and Wales and offer them friendship and practical support.

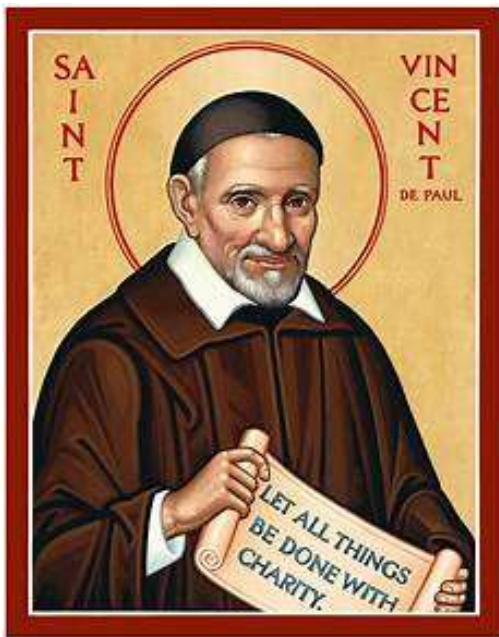
The **SVP's outreach is substantial:** last year, its 8,857 visiting members made 475,064 visits and spent 625,084 hours visiting people in need and gave out over 25,000 food parcels. The charity also runs two hostels for men on bail and released on parole or licence, helping them to move on to independent accommodation and reintegrate into the community.



FREDERIC OZANAM

The SVP was founded in 1833 by a group of students (Frederic Ozanam and his friends) in Paris, to serve the poor of the city. They were inspired by the example of St Vincent de Paul.

SVP was started in the UK eleven years later, in 1844.



The SVP in Stratford has a long and wonderful history but always works quietly, humbly and simply in the background. The Covid-19 has meant that a lot of its activity has been curtailed including the meetings. It is also, at the moment, very lacking in numbers . We hope to get back to regular meeting in the New Year and also we want to have a recruitment drive in 2022. Meantime you can always register an interest by phoning the Parish Office. 0208 534 1964 Mon-Fri 9.30am to 3pm.

The SVP is very grateful for the consistent generosity of the people of Strafford.