

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Let my prayer come into your presence.
Incline your ear to my cry for help, O Lord.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.
We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.
Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us.
For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

Almighty and merciful God,
graciously keep from us all adversity,
so that, unhindered in mind and body alike,
we may pursue in freedom of heart
the things that are yours.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of
the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING

1K 17:10-16

A reading from the first book of the Kings.
Elijah went off to Sidon. And when he reached the city gate, there was a widow gathering sticks; addressing her he said, 'Please bring a little water in a vessel for me to drink.' She was setting off to bring it when he called after her. 'Please' he said, 'bring me a scrap of bread in your hand.' 'As the Lord your God lives,' she replied, 'I have no baked bread, but only a handful of meal in a jar and a little oil in a jug; I am just gathering a stick or two to go and prepare this for myself and my son to eat, and then we shall die.' But Elijah said to her, 'Do not be afraid, go and do as you have said; but first make a little scone of it for me and bring it to me, and then make some for yourself and for your son. For thus the Lord speaks, the God of Israel: "Jar of meal shall not be spent, jug of oil shall not be emptied, before the day when the Lord sends rain on the face of the earth."' The woman went and did as Elijah told her and they ate the food, she, himself and her son. The jar of meal was not spent nor the jug of oil emptied, just as the Lord had foretold through Elijah.
The word of the Lord.

RESP. PSALM

Ps 145:7-10

Response:
My soul, give praise to the Lord.
or
Alleluia!

1. It is the Lord who keeps faith for ever,
who is just to those who are oppressed.
It is he who gives bread to the hungry,
the Lord, who sets prisoners free. (R.)
2. It is the Lord who gives sight to the blind,
who raises up those who are bowed down.
It is the Lord who loves the just,
the Lord who protects the stranger. (R.)
3. The Lord upholds the widow and orphan
but thwarts the path of the wicked.
The Lord will reign for ever,
Zion's God, from age to age. (R.)

SECOND READING

Heb 9:24-28

A reading from the letter to the Hebrews.
It is not as though Christ had entered a man-made sanctuary which was only modelled on the real one; but it was heaven itself, so that he could appear in the actual presence of God on our behalf. And he does not have to offer himself again and again, like the high priest going into the sanctuary year after year with the blood that is not his own, or else he would have had to suffer over and over again since the world began. Instead of that, he has made his appearance once and for all, now at the end of the last age, to do away with sin by sacrificing himself. Since men only die once, and after that comes judgement, so Christ, too, offers himself only once to take the faults of many on himself, and when he appears a second time, it will not be to deal with sin but to reward with salvation those who are waiting for him.

The word of the Lord.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!
Even if you have to die, says the Lord,
keep faithful, and I will give you
the crown of life.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Mk 12:38-44

(For Shorter Form, read between > <)
>A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark.<
In his teaching Jesus said, 'Beware of the scribes who like to walk about in long robes, to be greeted obsequiously in the market squares, to take the front seats in the synagogues and the places of honour at banquets; these are the men who swallow the property of widows, while making a show of lengthy prayers. The more severe will be the sentence they receive.'
> He sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the treasury, and many of the rich put in a great deal. A poor widow came and put in two small coins, the equivalent of a penny. Then he called his disciples and said to them, 'I tell you solemnly, this poor widow has put more in than all who have contributed to the treasury; for they have all put in money they had over, but she from the little she had has put in everything she possessed, all she had to live on.'

The Gospel of the Lord.<

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father;
through him all things were made.

For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the
Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.

He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,

who has spoken through the prophets.
I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church.

I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness
of sins

and I look forward to the resurrection of
the dead and the life of the world to come.
Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Look with favour, we pray, O Lord,
upon the sacrificial gifts offered here,
that, celebrating in mystery the Passion of
your Son,
we may honour it with loving devotion.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I
shall want.
Fresh and green are the pastures where he
gives me repose,
near restful waters he leads me.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Nourished by this sacred gift, O Lord,
we give you thanks and beseech your mercy,
that, by the pouring forth of your Spirit,
the grace of integrity may endure
in those your heavenly power has entered.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

"FROM THE LITTLE SHE HAD, SHE PUT IN EVERYTHING SHE OWNED"

MARK 12:38-44

SAY

Lord, teach me to be generous, to serve you as you deserve, to give and not to count the cost, to fight and not to heed the wounds, to toil and not to seek for rest, to labour and seek for no reward, save that of knowing that I do your will.

There are two parts to today's Gospel. The first is about the kind of religion that should be avoided, the second is a more positive example based on the example of a woman.

The religion of the scribes is shallow outward show. Jesus highlights six common failures of this kind of religion. Jewish men wore a prayer-shawl at morning prayer with four tassels at the corners. There were no particular instructions about the size of the shawl but some people drew attention to their piety by making them larger and showier. The scribes, professional students of religion, used their display of piety to advance themselves socially. Widows have often been prey to religious con-artists who can turn on the spiritual charm in a show of mock sympathy. Because they are misusing religion, Jesus says, they will be submitted to a more searching judgment.

The story of the poor widow is one of the most attractive in the gospels. All ancient temples had treasuries to receive the donations of the visitors. There were thirteen bronze receptacles, shaped like trumpets, in the temple court in which the faithful could make their offerings. The clinking of the large amounts of coinage donated by the wealthy would probably have drawn admiring glances. The poor widow's two small coins fell almost silently, unnoticed by any save Jesus. He points that she has made the greatest offering of all. While wealthy gave from their surplus and would probably not miss it, her offering, small and all as it was, probably meant that she had to cut back on some of the essentials for herself and her family. ■

DO

Find out how much your parish contributed this Lent to fund-raising for the developing world. Can your family make a generous offering in time for Christmas?

REFLECT

When I was a young priest, a bishop came to our church to preach a mission appeal. A man who worked as a night security man on a building site, asked me to give something from him to the bishop. I introduced them to each other and left them to chat. Later, the bishop called me. The man had pressed something into his pocket as he said good-bye and it was only some hours later, the bishop discovered it was the man's unopened wage packet for the week.

In the time of Jesus, the widows of urban labourers and agricultural workers were at the bottom of the social heap. Their husband's daily wage was just about enough to feed the family. With that gone, they now depended on relatives or neighbours for help. Caring for the widow and orphan was a regarded by the bible as an essential act of charity for the covenant community of Israel.

The woman in this story is not so much a symbol of powerless poverty but of generosity. God measures the generosity

of the heart not by the amount that is given but by the spirit in which it is given. Giving spontaneously and generously was, from an early date, a mark of Christian belonging. Writing to his new converts, Paul asks them to set aside something each week for the relief of the poor in the Jerusalem community: "each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2Corinthians 9:7). Generous giving remains a hall mark of the Catholic community at its best. Each Lent, for example, Irish Catholic school children and their families contribute about 7 or 8 million euros to overseas relief through the Trocaire Lenten collection. Beautiful churches or flourishing Catholic schools were often founded, quite literally, on 'the pennies of the poor.'

In remembering the story of the widow, we remember her sisters and brothers and their children throughout history, who contributed to the life of the Church, not just from their surplus but from what they had to live on. ■

LEARN

Jesus is critical of empty outward religion. He wishes his followers to learn the inner religion of the heart.

How we deal with real wealth and property can be a sign of our spiritual health. If we are generous like the widow, we may feel the pinch of giving but we will never allow it to stint our generosity.

We remember with gratitude those whose pennies laid the foundations for the Catholic life we now enjoy.

PRAY

Many churches have plaques or signs recommending us to pray "for benefactors." Pray this week those who have been generous to our local community, those whose names are remembered but also those, who like the widow, gave from what little they had with a generous heart but whose names are forgotten.