



The Holy Scriptures
are our letters
from home

32nd Sunday Ord. Time, Yr B

Lectio Divina

Lectio: Jesus is on the way to the Cross. He is committed, revved up! Though he knew the religious authorities were out to get rid of him, he confronted them and their misunderstandings confidently and directly. First he was upset at their lack of productivity – he curses a fig tree that withers. Then he clears the Temple; the ‘head office’ of the religious authorities had been overcome by commerce. Then Jesus confronts the chief priests, the top authorities, asserting his own authority. Teaching a parable, he appears to be supplanting the religious authorities’ role as teachers¹. When Pharisees, a lay group, challenge him about paying taxes, he shows how Civic and State matters are not in conflict. Sadducees, who don’t believe in resurrection, are put in their place as Jesus discredits their teaching. Finally, a teacher of the Law tries to catch Jesus out about the Commandments. Jesus confirms the teacher’s own understandings – they have brought him close to the Kingdom of God. Jesus has exhausted all the legitimate grounds that the religious authorities had thought they could use as grounds to get rid of him (cf Mk 11:1-34). What could they do now? They would have to find false grounds to get rid of him!

In a few verses, Jesus teaches in the Temple how he can be both Lord and Son (Mk 12:35-37a). This was not what the religious were wanting to hear! But the people gladly listened to Jesus (Mk 12:37b).

► So we come to our text. With the people gladly listening, Jesus warns them to be aware of the self-pretentious religious scribes. As Jesus has just confronted the other religious authorities’ misconceptions, similarly the people should beware of what the scribes teach. The rich² are presented as miserly and inauthentic. The second part (shorter form), the Widow’s Mite, is an example to the people of how they should be both generous and authentic.

Read: **Mark 12: 38 – 44** (Shorter form Mk 12:41-44)

Meditatio: Do I delight in listening to Jesus especially as he speaks to me through the Gospel? Do I ‘close my ears’ to Jesus because he may challenge me to repent i.e. re-think my life, my understandings and my choices? Have I dressed up to impress people? Have I been offered seats of honour? Do I ‘practice what I preach’? Have I ever exaggerated my capacities or gifts? For me does the length of a prayer matter? Have I participated in a prayer vigil, in Easter Vigil? Am I generous and authentic? Do I support my Parish financially? Do I give to the Church or good causes from ‘what I have over’? Do I give generously so as to be noticed e.g. expecting thanks, even public acknowledgement, etc.? Do I think that even the smallest donation, e.g. in a Telethon, should be acknowledged? Do I understand that Jesus can ‘read my heart’ and know my motives? How much would I be ready to give to help others – Jesus gave his life for my salvation? Have I known poor people who were happy despite their poverty? Am I inspired by the wealth and privilege of rich people or by the generosity and honesty of ‘poor widows’?

Oratio: Pray for teachers of the faith, may their lives reflect their teachings. Pray that we will be known by our generosity and authenticity. Pray for the support of widows and orphans. Pray that everyone will have enough to live on. Pray that we will give generously to the support of our parishes and our priests. Pray that the word of God may inspire and excite us. Pray that our prayers will come from our hearts and never from a desire to be noticed. Pray in thanks for Jesus’ giving of his life for us on the Cross. Pray for members of religious Orders who have taken the vow of poverty. Pray that trust in God’s care will enable us to give even more generously to the needy and to the Church. Pray that we will not accept nor exhibit honours we haven’t earned.

Contemplatio – Dwell in stillness, simply aware of the boundless expanse of mercy that surrounds you.

After your prayer – Be generous and authentic.

✍ Fr Joe

Mark 12: 38 – 44 (Shorter form Mk 12:41-44)

(Shorter form in bold)

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 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 rich² 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.’

Notes:

1 Jesus’ parable also challenged the lack of productivity of the religious authorities (cf Mk 12:1-12). This mirrors Jesus’ cursing of the fig tree (cf Mk 11:12-14 & 20-21).

2 I think that ‘the rich’ (Mk 12:41b) are meant by Jesus to be synonymous with ‘the religious authorities’ who considered themselves as rich with authority.