

4th November 2021

Dear Parishioners,

In the Gospel this week Jesus points out the value of the widow's mite.

This reminds us that God values things very differently to how the world values things. God sees the heart and sees with true judgement, whereas the world tends to see and judge by appearances and by its own value systems. We might see a prosperous world while God sees a world in ruins; or we might see a world stricken by suffering while God sees a world full of charity. We see the world through the lens of the media, while God sees the world in truth. God's knowledge of what the real crisis is in the world at the moment is no doubt very different from our own ideas.

Jesus was watching people give offerings in the Temple. He could have erected a glorious Temple for Himself in an instant, without the need of any donations. Jesus could have built a perfect Church free of imperfections, just as He could have brought in a perfect world free of suffering and imperfections. However, without redemption from sin through participating in His suffering, this would have only been the outward appearance of a perfect Church and a perfect world. It might look good, but it would have remained corrupt, spiritually dead without faith, hope and charity. A glorious looking Temple and a prosperous nation would look and feel great to us, but when Our Lord saw the old widow, poor, no doubt ill and ragged, and at the twilight of her earthly life, he saw in that heart and soul the brick and mortar to build a Church on, and He saw the stuff a glorious Kingdom could be made from. He judges with truth and not by appearances. So, Jesus came not to solve the world's political problems, but to redeem us from sin and fill us with faith, hope and charity.

In the coming week we have the feast of St Martin of Tours. The famous story of St Martin is that he gave half his cloak to a poor beggar and on his return home, Our Lord Himself appeared to him wearing that half-cloak. In some ways it was such a simple act of heartfelt charity that we are all capable of, yet it so rare and we find it so difficult to do. Something similar happened with St Catherine of Sienna. A beggar came to her asking for clothes. She said she would go fetch some, but the poor man was insistent that he needed it immediately. Such importunity would not be greeting with so much patience by us as by St Catherine I imagine. She gave him her outer garment. He was still not satisfied. She modestly managed to give him her under garment. Still he was not satisfied as apparently a friend needed clothes too. St Catherine could spare no more of her own clothes, but searched her house and gave the man whatever of the servants clothes she could find. Finally, the man went away satisfied. Despite being so tested, St Catherine did not resent the poor man, but remained entirely loving, generous and detached from worldly possessions. Then Our Lord Himself appeared to St Catherine, and for her charity promised her that for want of warmth, she would never be in need of more than her simple habit she had left to wear. So, not only was the Eucharist her only sustenance for the last seven years of her life, but she never again needed any more clothes than that habit.

Jesus Christ, King of Kings, as far as I know as never appeared to a world leader like our Prime Minister and said, "Well done, that was a really prudent policy in regards to..." But He did appear to St Martin of Tours for his charity. It's that charity that is of true value in God's eyes, and it's that charity that builds up the Kingdom of God. Policies are easy, charity is difficult! Let us pray that God will give us the grace to have the heart of the widow and St Martin of Tours.

Fr John Paul