



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

ANGELUS

Saint Peter's Square

Sunday, 11 November 2018

Multimedia

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

Today's Gospel episode (cf. Mk 12:38-44) concludes the series of Jesus' teachings given in the Temple of Jerusalem and highlights two contrasting figures: the scribe and the widow. But why are they counterposed? The scribe represents important, wealthy, influential people; the other person — the widow — represents the least, the poor, the weak. In reality, Jesus' resolute judgment of the scribes is not about the whole profession, but refers to those of them who flaunt their own social position, embellish themselves with the title of 'rabbi', that is, teacher, who love to be revered and take the best seats (cf. vv. 38-39).

What is worse is that their ostentation is, above all, of a religious nature, because they pray — Jesus says — and “for a pretense make long prayers” (v. 40), and use God in order to gain respect for themselves as the defenders of his law. This attitude of superiority and vanity causes them to have contempt for those who count for little or who find themselves in an unfavourable economic position, such as widows.

Jesus exposes this perverse mechanism: he denounces the oppression of the weak carried out misleadingly on the basis of religious motivations, declaring clearly that God is on the side of the least. And to really impress this lesson on the minds of the disciples he offers them a living example: a poor widow, whose social position was irrelevant because she had no husband who could defend her rights, and therefore she became easy prey to unscrupulous creditors, because these creditors hounded the weak so they would pay them. This woman, who goes to the temple

treasury to put in just two coins — all that she had left — and makes her offering by seeking to pass by unobserved, almost as if ashamed. But, in this very humility, she performs an act laden with great religious and spiritual significance. That gesture full of sacrifice does not escape the gaze of Jesus, who instead sees shining in it the total self-giving to which he wishes to educate his disciples.

The lesson that Jesus offers us today helps us to recover what is essential in our life and fosters a practical and daily relationship with God. Brothers and sisters, the Lord's scales are different from ours. He weighs people and their actions differently: God does not measure quantity but quality; he examines the heart; he looks at the purity of intentions. This means that our "giving" to God in prayer and to others in charity should always steer clear of ritualism and formalism, as well as of the logic of calculation, and must be an expression of gratuity, as Jesus did with us: he saved us freely. And we must do things as an expression of gratuity. This is why Jesus points to that poor and generous widow as a model of Christian life to be imitated. We do not know her name; however, we know her heart — we will find her in Heaven and go to greet her, certainly; and that is what counts before God. When we are tempted by the desire to stand out and give an accounting of our altruistic gestures, when we are too interested in the gaze of others and — might I say — when we act like 'peacocks', let us think of this woman. It will do us good: it will help us to divest ourselves of the superfluous in order to go to what truly counts, and to remain humble.

May the Virgin Mary, a poor woman who gave herself totally to God, sustain us in the aim of giving to the Lord and to brothers and sisters not something of ours but ourselves, in a humble and generous offering.

After the Angelus the Holy Father added:

Dear brothers and sisters, yesterday in Barcelona, Fr Theodoro Illera del Olmo and 15 companion martyrs were beatified. They included 13 consecrated and three lay people. Nine religious and lay people belonged to the Congregation of Saint Peter in Chains; three women religious were Capuchins of the Mother of the Divine Shepherd and one was a Franciscan of the Sacred Heart. These new Blesseds were all killed for their faith, in different places and on different dates, during the war and religious persecution of the last century in Spain. Let us praise the Lord for these courageous witnesses of his and give a round of applause for them!

Today is the centenary of the end of World War I, which my Predecessor [Benedict XV](#) defined as 'useless slaughter'. For this reason today, at 1:30 pm Italian time, bells will ring throughout the world, those of Saint Peter's Basilica too. The historical page of the first global conflict is for all a severe warning to reject the culture of war and to seek every legitimate means to put an end to the wars that still draw blood in many regions of the world. It seems that we do not learn. As we pray for all the victims of that enormous tragedy, let us say forcefully: let us invest in peace, not in war!

And, let us take as an emblematic sign that of the great Saint Martin of Tours, whom we commemorate today: he rent his cloak in half in order to share it with a poor man. May this gesture of human solidarity indicate to all the way to build peace.

Next Sunday the World Day of the Poor will be celebrated, with many initiatives of evangelization, prayer and sharing. Here too in Saint Peter's Square a healthcare unit has been set up which, for a week, will offer treatment to those who are in need. I hope that this Day may foster increased attention to the needs of the least, of the marginalized, of the hungry.

I thank all of you who have gathered here from Rome, from Italy and from many parts of the world. I greet the faithful from Mengibar and Barcelona, Spain, the group of the Immaculate Heart of Mary from Brazil, and that of the World Union of Catholic Teachers. I greet the acli tourist centre of Trento, the faithful from San Benedetto Po and the confirmands from Chiuppano. I also greet the many Polish people I see here. There are so many!

I wish everyone a happy Sunday. Please, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch!
Arrivederci!