

Homily: 32<sup>nd</sup> Sunday: Cycle B: 2024: 1 Kings 17: 10-16; Ps. 146; Heb 9: 24-28; Mk 12:  
38-44

*“Only One Shot”*

1. **God’s all-encompassing love is for all human beings**, from the greatest to the least among us. What a truly amazing reality! But a real obstacle to receiving that love is deliberate sin and disobedience which is rather obvious, but less obvious but just as real an obstacle is: **stinginess of life, heart, and soul**. The first thing to note is: **God is more interested in receiving the free self-gift of ourselves rather than in receiving our possessions.** After all, our possessions ultimately belong to Him anyway. The only thing that doesn’t automatically belong to Him is our heart - which we are free to give to Him or not. What we give must be from of our heart or it is an empty gift; that is what Jesus is criticizing the **Pharisees** for: they do the “right things” externally for other people to see, but in reality, their hearts are far from the Lord. Something to think about in our own life: how much do we give back to God in terms of our time, our talent, and our treasure (money and possessions)? These self-offerings show the gift of ourselves to God, if they come from our heart, from the motivation of love for God and neighbor. The widow in the Gospel today shows us this in a powerful way. She gave all she had - her whole livelihood as Jesus says. **This doesn’t mean we all have to be destitute.** What it means is we must daily increasingly give our all to God, and to strive to live a simple life and give more away to help others. As time goes on, if we are growing in the spiritual life, we see that we are to be more detached in our heart from the things of this passing earthly life, to utilize them but not be controlled by them, to make use of all the gifts God has given us to store up **treasure in Heaven**, by living a life of self-giving love for God and neighbor.
2. The **radical trust** of the widows both in the first reading and in the Gospel are an example we are called to follow. **Do we trust in God’s Providential care for us? Or do we try to rely on our own resources too much**, which ironically leads to anxiety, worrying, and lashing out at the people around us? The perennial truth of theology is that grace builds upon nature; so yes, God does expect us to develop our gifts and talents and to contribute to the common good of our Church and

world, but what about when difficulties arise? Do we trust in the Lord to get us through the trials and tribulations of life, to realize that “all things work for the good of those who love God” (see Romans 8)? **God is truly in charge, He guides and directs each moment of each day (His Providence), but always integrated with the mystery of our human freedom.** How that exactly works we will not fully understand until we get into eternity. We are not puppets on the divine stage, but free human agents called to love in truth: God and neighbor. Developing a true life of prayer is the key to putting this into practice, which I think it is safe to guess, both of these widows had in abundance. Also Our Blessed Mother Mary, who was a widow early on in life, is **the** model for us of openness and trust in God’s design for her life; it all flowed from her deep interior union with the Trinity, which enabled her to trust God with her whole being in the midst of often great spiritual darkness, e.g., in the stable at the Nativity, fleeing into Egypt to protect Jesus from the murderous King Herod, and beneath the Cross. Remember to pray regularly her 7 Sorrows Rosary as well as the regular Rosary. We need to always turn to her in love, asking her to help us to do **the same**: to beseech God to give us the grace to love Him with a purer heart and to love more deeply our fellow human beings. Praying the Rosary daily and wearing her Brown Scapular and Miraculous Medal, (please wear the one we gave you this past May), helps us to always remember this beautiful reality.

3. **Yes, we are called to make the supreme gift of our life to God** (see Romans 12: 1-2). **We only have one shot**, as the letter to the Hebrews lays out today, *“Just as it is appointed that human beings die once, and after this the judgment, so also Christ, offered once to take away the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to take away sin but to bring salvation to those who eagerly await him.”* This is the Scriptural basis for the Catholic **rejection** of the pagan religious doctrine of re-incarnation which is taught by many Eastern religions which then flowed into the New Age religions of the post-Christian West, which open ppl up to the demonic in manifold ways; pray ppl get out of those spiritual traps. We are not going to come back as a chicken, a dog, a cat or another human being. **This is it,**

**people!** We will be judged by God based on this one life. Our eternal destiny depends on it; that's why earthly life is **serious** business in the Catholic worldview. Not that we are not called to have some enjoyment in the good things of this world, but to always put them in proper perspective, in that, all things need to serve **our eternal end** of being with God forever in Heaven, and not allowing the good things of this life: be they our families, the beauties of the natural world and friendships, our livelihoods, the non-sinful pleasures of body and soul, to distract or cause us to fall away from what needs to be the treasure of our heart: **our inner communion with God and the gift of our Catholic Faith which leads to Him** – and to pray and work for holy detachment when necessary. Because we only live once, all of our actions in this life have an eternal significance - nothing is insignificant even the smallest thing! See the **near-death experiences** of people who come back to earthly life and point to this essential truth - seeing one's whole life in an instant, both the good and bad parts. Remember 20% to 30% of those experiences were not positive - souls on their way to Hell, but God in His mercy gave them another chance here on earth. This was the secret of the saints: they tried to do everything big and small, in light of eternity, with the same love for God and their neighbor in Him; and so, in time God was able to transform them in His own holiness. It also made them the most **joyful** people who ever lived. Why? Because if every action is important and God is always with us to help us choose the good, then we are never bored, but amazed by God grace and patience with us. **Boredom** is a sign we need to grow more spiritually, its understandable when one is a child but as an adult it should be a spiritual wake-up call. *Why am I bored? Why am I not tuned into God and His truth more?* All of us are called to the same gift of sainthood: to love God and neighbor with a pure heart in a spirit of joy and wonder. May the Lord help us more profoundly each day to give to Him our entire life, and to grow in love of neighbor with a magnanimous heart, like the 2 widows and Our Lady, instead of a stingy one like the Pharisees. Truly that is the narrow path to Heaven. God bless you. †