

# CONNECT! SUNDAY REFLECTION

32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time | For Sunday, November 11th, 2018

## Something to Give, Everything to Trust

Written by Anna Carter

1 Kings 17:10-16

Hebrews 9:24-28

Mark 12:38-44



Have you checked the news? What else has arrived in your inbox this morning or late last night? The networks will be abuzz with election results and forecasts they portend. By the time you read this, we'll have a sense of our country's political trajectory for the next couple years.

How easy to focus our concerns on the mighty and the games they play. How easy, too, for those in power to have inflated senses of their identity and role. Jesus warns against these tendencies in the beginning of today's Gospel. *"Beware of the scribes,"* he tells us, *"who like to go around ... and accept greetings ... places of honor."* Elsewhere in the Gospel, Jesus cheekily notes that these proud players have *"already received their reward."* Our eyes, our Lord recommends, ought to fall elsewhere.

This is not to say that we ought not to be concerned with politics or culture or the metaphorical hand baskets that seem to be dancing down the wide way, or those who blithely carry them. Our faith demands that we are deeply, intimately concerned with the people around us and with transforming the world in which we live. But Jesus is about flipping the paradigm. He inverts the hierarchy of values that gives bluster and might pride of place. He turns his disciples' attention to the poor widow.

The Gospel continues with a scene at the temple treasury. It must have been pay day because there is quite a bit of traffic for the group to observe. *"Many rich people put in large sums,"* we learn. Jesus is silent at their material generosity. Then we have another comer. This woman has lost her husband. In that historical time period, it meant she'd lost her livelihood. A second marriage or the generosity of neighbors or her children were the only options for additional subsistence. If she had hoarded what had remained, it would be understandable. With the future uncertain, ought we not be practical? Don't we have the right to cling to what we possess, to fortify our high ground, come what may? *"Clink clink."* The widow hears the sound of two small coins knocking against all the rest. Her livelihood is in the temple treasury, not her surplus. In a world where there is little to be had, she trusts. She gives.

The first reading tells a similar story. The prophet Elijah arrives, tired and thirsty, at an ancient city's gates. The widow he finds has little to offer. In fact, her resignation to poverty is so deep that she fully expects to die the next day, along with her young son. Elijah makes an outlandish prophecy. She ought to share the last of her water, use the last of her flour, to make a cake. She is safe to do so, for God will not fail her. Her resources will not run dry. If the widow had doubts or protests, history doesn't record them. *"She left and did as Elijah had said."* Perhaps she thought she had nothing to lose. In a world where her jars had run nearly dry, she trusts. She gives.

As I write this, I don't know who won Tuesday night. But I do know that many people feel they've lost something. Perhaps there are little family values to be had, not enough money to go around, never quite the respect due to another as a fellow human being. Many of us reading this are not the scribes, the Pharisees, the playmakers in the halls of power. How easy it can be to let our eyes travel to their flowing robes, to hail and hope, or to disparage and despair ... at least until the next election cycle.

The second reading from the letter to the Hebrews compares the priesthood of Jesus to the Levitical priesthood of the Jewish people. The priests of old offered repeated animal sacrifices on designated times and places or for particular life events. Over and over, around and around, this cycle went. Until Christ. *"Once and for all he has appeared at the end of the ages to take away sin by his sacrifice."* Once and for all we have been saved. Our trust is not in vain. We are given real hope in the love and mercy of Jesus Christ.

No matter who won on Tuesday, I know some of us will feel like we've lost. In a world that isn't quite as it should be, none of us have enough of something. We are the widow, one way or another. So will we cling, possessive and wild-eyed, to what we think remains? Or will we relax our grip on fear and control? Will we look our neighbor square in the eye? Will we open our hands in charity, mutual respect, and kindness? Will our eyes lift to heaven, to the One who promises to *"bring salvation to those who eagerly await Him?"* Will we trust? Will we give?

*"Clink clink"* go the coins.

Anna Carter

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## PRAYER

Jesus Christ,  
I abandon myself, my life, my country  
into Your secure, nail-scarred hands.  
Do with me what You will.  
Whatever you may do, I thank You:  
I am ready for Your future. I accept it even now.  
Let only Your will be done in me,  
and let desire for Your loving will fill Your children.

Into Your hands I commend my life:  
I offer it to You with all my love.  
I offer all of my livelihood, not my only surplus.  
I surrender my fears, anxieties, and discouragement  
to You without reserve, and with boundless confidence,  
for You are my savior, now and forever.

Amen.

—Adapted from the *"Prayer of Abandonment"* by Bl. Charles de Foucauld