

CONNECT! SUNDAY REFLECTION

32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time | For Sunday, November 7, 2021

The Gifts That Cost Us

Written by Colleen Jurkiewicz Dorman

1 Kings 17:10-16

Hebrews 9:24-28

Mark 12:38-44 or 12:41-44



"I have nothing baked; there is only a handful of flour in my jar and a little oil in my jug. Just now I was collecting a couple of sticks, to go in and prepare something for myself and my son; when we have eaten it, we shall die."

I have been a freelance reporter for regional and community papers for the past ten years. The majority of my work has been researching and composing human interest pieces, and those assignments have allowed me to witness and learn about the efforts of extraordinary people who are devoted to making their own corner of the world more beautiful, more just, and more loving.

Many of these pieces, naturally, have focused on individuals of means who use their wealth to help others. But in contrast, I've also had the pleasure of writing about very ordinary people — those who really have no wealth to offer at all, or who are actually giving of themselves in spite of a scarcity of resources. Oftentimes the story I write has centered on their volunteer or community fundraising work, but sometimes it simply highlights a single act of sacrifice or kindness.

The contributions of the wealthy people I have written about are noble, and I was (and am) very happy to highlight them. We should admire and emulate any act of charity or philanthropy. But if I'm being honest, theirs are not the names that linger in my memory. Theirs are not the stories that challenge me to look in the mirror and ask myself: am I giving until it hurts?

When I wake up at the beginning of a long, demanding day, I usually feel completely unequal to what I know God will be asking of me. *I have so little to give, I think. I have so little strength.* In these hopeless moments, it is easy to explain away the obligation to give anything at all. Surely God doesn't expect it of me. *Surely He knows it would be too much to ask — too much love, too much patience, too much effort.*

In these moments, I call to mind the gifts I've written about that really cost the giver — and I almost never remember the million-dollar donations.

I remember the [father who forgave his daughter's murderer](#) — not because it brought him peace, he told me, but because the murderer himself needed forgiveness. I remember the graphic designer who left the business he helped to found because of his partner's insistence on taking an abortion clinic as a client. I remember the [autistic man](#) whose ministry offers fellowship and counsel to other autistic Catholics, even in the face of his own anxiety. I remember the young deacon with a stutter who found it difficult to preach but did so anyway because the Gospel must be shared, and he had a duty to share it.

And I always, always remember the families of our country's veterans — [the ones who came home](#) and the [one who did not](#).

[Today's readings](#) remind us that the gifts we offer to God from our poverty are far more precious than those we offer from our abundance. We can be talking about a poverty of money, a poverty of time, a poverty of patience, a poverty of goodwill, or even a poverty of faith. Whatever it is, we think we don't have enough, so we think we have nothing to give. But how precious are the gifts that really cost us — the ones that we fear we cannot afford.

How precious was the “small cupful” of the widow's water, and the “bit of bread” she offered Elijah. How precious were the two small coins the widow gave at the temple. How precious was the last drop of blood that fell from the side of Christ as he hung from the cross. These were the gifts that meant everything.

- Colleen Jurkiewicz Dorman

PRAYER

From the fear of being asked to give more than I have, deliver me, Jesus.

— “The Litany of Trust” by the [Sisters of Life](#)