Monday of the Thirty-fourth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (*Lk* 21:1-4): When Jesus looked up he saw some wealthy people putting their offerings into the treasury and he noticed a poor widow putting in two small coins. He said, “I tell you truly, this poor widow put in more than all the rest; for those others have all made offerings from their surplus wealth, but she, from her poverty, has offered her whole livelihood.”

“She, from her poverty, has offered her whole livelihood.”

Fr. Àngel Eugeni PÉREZ i Sánchez
(Barcelona, Spain)

Today, as it happens so often, small things go by unnoticed: small alms, small sacrifices, small ejaculatory prayers; but what, at times, may look small and unimportant, frequently represents the warp and also the culmination of master works: be it great works of art, be it the maximum good deeds of personal saintliness.

Because these small things go mostly unnoticed, their bona fide intention is not in question: we are not to seek either recognition or human glory for them. Only God will discover them in our hearts, in the same way as only Jesus could see the poor widow's generosity. It is more than certain that this poor woman did not sound the trumpets to announce what she was doing, and it is even possible she was ashamed and felt ridiculed in the eyes of the wealthy who while offering splendid gifts to the Temple treasury, were making sure others admired their generosity. Yet, that woman's unselfishness in giving the two small coins despite her poverty, deserved the Lord's praise: “I tell you truly, this poor widow put in more than all the rest; for those others have all made offerings from their surplus wealth, but she, from her poverty, has offered her whole livelihood” (Lk 21:3-4).

The widow's generosity is a good lesson for us, Christ's disciples. We can be as extremely generous, as the wealthy people who were “putting their offerings into the treasury” (Lk 21:1). But, none of this will be worth our while if we only give “from our plenty,” without a loving or generous spirit, without offering ourselves as well. Saint Augustine says: “They looked at the great offerings from the wealthy and they praised them for that. And, even if they could see the widow later on, how many did notice those two coins...? She gave whatever she had, for she had God in her heart. But she had plenty, for she had God in her heart. It is better to have God in our soul than gold in the safe.” Quite true: Let us be generous with God and He will be even more so with us.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “Never keep an account of the coins you give, since this is what I always say: if, in giving alms, the left hand is not to know what the right hand is doing, then the right hand, too, should not know what it does itself.” (Saint Joseph Benedict Cottolengo)

- “The Scripture invites us to consider almsgiving with a more profound gaze that transcends the purely material dimension, teaches us that there is more joy in giving than in receiving.” (Benedict XVI)

- “The tenth commandment forbids avarice arising from a passion for riches and their attendant power.” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, Nº 2552)