Saturday of the Ninth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (*Mk* 12:38-44): In the course of his teaching Jesus said, "Beware of the scribes, who like to go around in long robes and accept greetings in the marketplaces, seats of honor in synagogues, and places of honor at banquets. They devour the houses of widows and, as a pretext, recite lengthy prayers. They will receive a very severe condemnation."

He sat down opposite the treasury and observed how the crowd put money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. A poor widow also came and put in two small coins worth a few cents. Calling his disciples to himself, he said to them, "Amen, I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the other contributors to the treasury. For they have all contributed from their surplus wealth, but she, from her poverty, has contributed all she had, her whole livelihood."

"A poor widow also came and put in two small coins"

Fr. Enric PRAT i Jordana
(Sort, Lleida, Spain)

Today, as in Jesus' times, some pious persons —and even more so, some religious "professionals"— may be tempted by a kind of spiritual hypocrisy. This is evidenced through self-conceited attitudes, which we try to justify by our feeling better than all the rest: after all, we are the believers, the ones who practice..., the pure ones! If nothing else, at times, deep inside our hearts, we may feel like that; without, however, "making a show of being praying" or, even less, trying to "devour anybody's goods".

In sharp contrast with the masters of the law, the Gospel presents a simple and almost insignificant gesture on the part of a poor widow that provokes Jesus' admiration: "A poor widow also came and put in two small coins" (Mk 12:42). The actual value of her donation is almost nil, but the woman's decision is admirable, heroic: she gives everything she has.

With this gesture, God and the others went ahead of her and of her own needs. She fully let herself in the hands of Providence. She had nothing else to rely upon because, quite willingly, she had given it all to the service of God and to the attention of the poor. Jesus valued her generosity and her desire to praise God and help the poor, as the most important offering of all that had been made —perhaps, most ostentatiously— in that Temple.

Salvation is to be found in the nucleus of our own conscience, when we decide to open ourselves to God and live at the disposal of mankind; and when the election value is not given by the quality or quantity of the work made, but by the purity of intention and loving generosity.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “You must give what will cost you something. This, then, is not just giving what you can live without but what you can't live without or don't want to live without. This is what I call love in action.” (Saint Teresa of Calcutta)

- “The widow who, out of her poverty, cast into the Temple treasury ‘all she had to live on’ (Mk 12,44). Her tiny and insignificant coin becomes an eloquent symbol: this widow gives to God not out of her abundance, not so much what she has, but what she is. Her entire self.” (Benedict XVI)

- "The Church's love for the poor is a part of her constant tradition. This love is inspired by the Gospel of the Beatitudes, of the poverty of Jesus, and of his concern for the poor. Love for the poor is even one of the motives for the duty of working so as to ‘be able to give to those in need’ (Eph 4:28). It extends not only to material poverty but also to the many forms of cultural and religious poverty.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, Nº 2444)