

THE WIDOW'S TWO MITES

By Metropolitan Bishop

This is a wonderful story that occurred during the presence of the Lord Jesus in the temple:

“Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans. So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood’” (Mk 12:42-44).

The questions that might come to mind at reading this moving narrative are:

- 1) How could a poor widow donate to the treasury of the Lord’s House when she is in need of assistance?
- 2) How could she offer *all that she had, her whole livelihood*; the law only required her to give the tithes (ten percent)!
- 3) Why did Christ the Lord consent to this widow’s action, allowing her to depart having no provisions, being poor and widowed?
- 4) Why did He not order His disciples to give her monetary assistance, now that she had nothing, having *“put in all that she had, her whole livelihood”*?

The story started this way: *“Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many who were rich put in much. Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans” (Mk 12:41-42).*

Christ the Lord wanted to alert His disciples to a lesson in offering, giving them an idea of His standards, which differ from general human standards.

He wanted them to understand that in His viewpoint the value of a person’s act is not based on the size of this act, but on the person’s feelings and intentions behind the action; any virtue without love and humbleness is not accounted a virtue before God.

No doubt this widow’s heart was filled with love for God, therefore she gave *all that she had, her whole livelihood*, literally living the commandment: *“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind” (Mt 22:37).*

In her humbleness she was not ashamed to present an extremely meager amount amid the wealthy who possessed much and presented abundantly. She exposed herself to derision and ridicule by others because the force of her love made her offer what she had, even if it appeared minimal in the eyes of others.

This woman sincerely lived the commandment despite her personal circumstances. Despite her extreme poverty she wanted to receive the blessing of giving and offering the tithes. But, what could her tithes amount to? Perhaps there was no coinage equivalent to one-tenth of two mites, but even if there were, she wanted to present reverence to the Lord of Hosts which surpassed the limits of giving, the tithes... therefore she *“put in all that she had, her whole livelihood”*, while the tongue of her heart said, *“Accept O Lord my humble offering which does not befit Your Magnificence... but, this is all I have.”*

The Attitude of Our Lord Jesus Christ

This woman’s contribution was very great in the sight of the Lord, therefore He did not object or prevent her, nor did He hurt her feelings by handing her charity at this specific point in time...

...The angels praised with the praises of blessing... the scene was so outstanding that it moved heaven, just as Jacob's ladder was thronged by His pure angel ascending and descending. This wondrous scene was recorded in the Holy Bible as a moral lesson to the church throughout all generations.

It was a love sonnet delighting Christ the Lord's heart, to which He wanted to direct His disciples' attention, so they would stand in bewilderment at this awesome scene, which was magnified and glorified by His presence.

The poor widow exited in all the reverence of holiness, surrounded by legions of angels who were won by this widow's love and humbleness.

This poor widow who was rich in love and humbleness symbolizes the church who was widowed after being expelled from Paradise, to whom the Lord spoke on the mouth of Isaiah the prophet saying: "*Do not fear, for you will not be ashamed; neither be disgraced, for you will not be put to shame; for you will forget the shame of your youth, and will not remember the reproach of your widowhood anymore. For your Maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is His name; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel; He is called the God of the whole earth. For the Lord has called you like a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, like a youthful wife when you were refused,' says your God. 'For a mere moment I have forsaken you, but with great mercies I will gather you. With a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment; but with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you,' says the Lord, your Redeemer*" (Is 54:4-8).

No doubt the Lord greatly provided for this poor widow after she left the temple, personally supplying her care after she offered Him *all that she had, her whole livelihood*.

Likewise the church, through the Virgin St. Mary, offered in full love and humbleness *all that she had*, a rational human body and spirit. The Lord took a perfect humanity from Virgin Mary with which He entered into a new covenant with humanity. This human body and spirit which the Lord took is symbolized by this widow's two mites, which bear the greatest values in the Lord's eyes, "*more than all those who have given to the treasury*".

Likewise, we hear the Lord recite this poetic sonnet on the mouth of Isaiah the prophet: "*O you afflicted one, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay your stones with colorful gems, and lay your foundations with sapphires. I will make your pinnacles of rubies, your gates of crystal, and all your walls of precious stones. All your children shall be taught by the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children*" (Is 54:11-13).

After the Lord's birth from Virgin Mary by the work of the Holy Spirit, Christ the Lord became *all that she had, her whole livelihood*. Not only to St. Mary, but also to the whole church Christ the Lord was Himself *all that she had, her whole livelihood*; as we recite in the Litany of the Gospel, "For You are the life of us all".

The day of Redemption came and Virgin Mary willingly offered her only-begotten Son (humanly) to the Cross, and the church offered *all that she had, her whole livelihood* into the Lord's treasury... and the Lord accepted humanity's gift to Him... which is simultaneously the Father's gift to humanity... it was the greatest gift... it was Jacob's ladder... and it was the Father's pleasure.