

## Ordinary 32B – 2021

From: Fr. Tony (<https://frtonyshomilies.com/>)

### **"So why should I do anything for you?"**

There is a story told of a wealthy man who had never been what anyone would call a generous giver. His Church was having a big expansion program and financial campaign, so they resolved to visit him. In order to succeed where they had so often failed, they appointed a committee to study the situation. Finally the committee called on the prospect and told him that in view of his resources they were sure that he would want to make a rather substantial contribution. "I see," he said, "that you have considered it all quite carefully. In the course of your investigation did you discover that I have an aged, widowed mother who has no other means of support?" No, they hadn't known that. "Did you know that I have a sister who was left by a drunken husband with five small children and no means of providing for them?" No, they hadn't known that. "Did you know that I have a brother who was crippled in an accident and will never be able to do another day's work in his life to support himself and his family?" No, they hadn't known that. "Well," he thundered triumphantly, "I've never done anything for them, so why should I do anything for you?" (Ray Balcomb, *Stir What You've Got*). — That makes the point in a sadistically humorous way. It's not a matter of giving 'til it hurts, but giving 'til it helps. To be sure, like that man, most of us never give 'til it hurts, much less giving 'til it helps.

### **"I would give it to the poor."**

A government social worker was visiting New England farms. He had the authority to give federal dollars to poor farmers. He found an elderly widow farming a few acres. Her house was clean but tiny. There did not appear to be much food in the house. The windows had no screens to keep out the summer flies. The exterior needed a paint job. He wondered how she could survive. He asked, "What would you do if the government gave you five hundred dollars?" Her answer was, "I would give it to the poor." — Do most Catholics give a fair share of their income to the Church and to charities? A Gallup poll answered that query. In a recent year, American Catholics gave 1.3% of their income to parish and charities. But Protestants gave 2.4% and Jews 3.8%. A survey reveals while 44% of Baptists tithe giving to their parishes and charities, only 4% of Catholics do. Many Catholics are more generous to waiters than to God. They give up to 20% of their bill. That is double-tithing. Our comparative tightness with our dollars comes despite Rousseau's admonition. "When a man dies, he carries in his hands only that which he has given away." (Fr. James Gilhooley).

### **"They died from the cold within."**

Dr. Thomas Lane Butts tells the story of six people who froze to death around a campfire on a bitterly cold night. Each had a stick of wood they might have contributed to the fire, but for reasons satisfactory to themselves each person refused to give what they had. A woman would not give her stick of wood because there was an African-American person in the circle. A homeless man would not give because there was a rich man there. The rich man would not give because his contribution would warm someone who was obviously shiftless and lazy. Another would not give his stick when he recognized one not of his particular religious faith. The

African-American man withheld his piece of wood as a way of getting even with the whites for all they had done to him and his race. And the fire died as each person withheld his/her piece of fuel for reasons justifiable to them. This story was originally told in a poem that ends with these tragic lines: "Six logs held fast in death's still hand was proof of human sin; They did not die from the cold without; they died from the cold within." (Rev. Siegfried S. Johnson) -The wealthy people in our story were cold within, but this poor widow glowed with her love for God and for His Temple.

**Supersize your vision and you will supersize your giving.**

John Maxwell tells us that during World War II parachutes were sewn by machine and packed by hand. It was a tedious, painstakingly repetitive process. Workers crouched over sewing machines and stitched for eight hours a day, producing an endless line of fabric, all the same, boring color. They folded, packed and stacked the parachutes. How could they maintain peak concentration in the midst of such boring labor? Every morning they met in a large group and were made to ask, "How would I feel if the parachute I am packing today were tomorrow strapped to the back of my son, my husband, my father, my brother?" — These workers worked sacrificially and uncomplainingly, because someone had helped them connect their little contribution to the larger picture, to the larger mission of saving lives. It's easy to lose the larger picture of the Church's mission in the day-to-day work of the Church. We need constantly to be reminded to connect what we are doing to the larger scope, the larger mission of the Church. Supersize your vision and you will supersize your giving.

**"Find someone in need and do something to help that person."**

Dr. Karl Menninger, the famous psychiatrist, once gave a lecture on mental health and afterward answered questions from the audience. "What would you advise a person do to," asked one man, "if that person felt a nervous breakdown coming on?" Most people expected the doctor to reply, "Consult a psychiatrist." To their astonishment, he replied, "Lock up your house, go across the highway, find someone in need and do something to help that person." -The Gospel message for this Sunday is about giving. Christ praises the poor widow who drops only two small coins in the coffer of the Temple, unlike the others who "put in their surplus money" (v. 43). The poor widow received the praise of Jesus because she put her last money, though she was poor. As Jesus said: "she gave all she had to live on." The message of Jesus is very clear: Every person is capable of sharing no matter how poor or needy he is. (Fr. Benitez).

**"You called me your bother."**

Walking along a street in Russia during a famine, the great writer Leo Tolstoy met a beggar. Tolstoy searched in his pockets to look for something he could give. But there was none. He had earlier given away all his money. In his pity, he reached out, took the beggar in his arms, embraced him, kissed him on his hollow cheeks and said: "Don't be angry with me, my brother, I have nothing to give." - The beggar's face lit up. Tears flowed from his eyes, as he said: "But you embraced me and kissed me. You called me brother - you have given me yourself - that is a great gift." (Fr. Benitez).