

November 11, 2012

**Homily given by Cincinnati Auxiliary Bishop Joseph Binzer
on the occasion of the
St. Leo the Great Parish 125th Anniversary Closing Mass**

Mother Teresa once told a story about a visit that two of her sisters made to a poor family. The sisters gave the mother a bag of rice and then the sisters began talking and playing with the children. But then they noticed that the mother had disappeared. A few minutes later, the mother returned slipping in the back door. "I took some of the rice to my neighbors," she explained. "They are hungry, too."

It may not be easy to be generous. Elijah meets a widow and her son. It seems that she had only enough food for their last meal; she had no security even before Elijah dropped in. Their food would be gone after that day. I think I know what my first reaction would have been, if I was down to my last meal and there would be no food after today, and a stranger showed up and asked me to give him some of what I had. I think my reaction would have been to tell the stranger to find his own food. But the widow took the risk, shared what she had, trusted in God and was rewarded by God. Something given to God freely was multiplied greatly.

It may not be easy to be generous. Some years ago, a friend of mine spent several days on a mission trip to Brazil. She was told before she began her journey that the people lived very simply, in huts, with a diet made up of starchy foods. She was amazed that the first night she was with several people from the village, and she was served chicken. In looking around, she noticed that only a few people were served chicken. The rest had their ordinary food. "We come together to celebrate your presence. We share our food. We have enough to eat. You're a visitor, a guest of honor", she was told. My friend wondered aloud if she would have been able to do the same.

It may not be easy to be generous. A poor widow comes to the temple and places coins in the box, together worth about a penny. By other standards, her contribution was minimal. But by the standards of faith and thanksgiving, the contribution was huge. It represented her surrender to God as she gave all that she had. What other people thought about what she gave didn't matter. She knew that God saw her heart. Something given to God freely was multiplied greatly. And on that day she was one of the most blessed. The words of Jesus are unforgettable, that she has given more than all the rest, for they gave out of their abundance, but she gave from her poverty, her whole livelihood.

What both widows gave was everything. God has no need of what we give; it is our giving that counts with him. It is our giving that changes us. What matters is the love of the giver. A handful of flour; a little oil; a few coins. And for us, maybe we can see that the widows symbolize Jesus Christ, who risked it all to give himself as a gift to the world. Once for all he came to take away all sin by his sacrifice. He was fearful of death in the Garden of Gethsemane. All his human security was gone: his followers, his friends; none of them could help. Out of his poverty, he put everything he had into the hands of his father. And the result, redemption for you and me. One life given; billions of lives changed.

For 125 years, people of St. Leo's Parish have been gathering to celebrate this feast at the table of the Lord, trusting in God, giving thanks to God, keeping Christ who has changed all our lives, at the center of our lives. It's the gift of faith that brings us here. What we receive as we receive Holy Communion doesn't seem like much, a bit of bread, a sip of wine. Still, our Lord feeds us, his body, his blood, his soul, his divinity, giving us the food we truly need, strengthening us for the journey ahead, not knowing what the future might hold, but believing that He walks with us. God always provides. 125 years ago, there were people who came here to this parish new to the United States. Today is the same, people who are here, new to the United States. All of us created in God's image and likeness, all of us asked to follow Jesus' example of taking what we have, as little as it may seem, and using it in service to others. This wonderful statement about St. Leo's Parish celebrates using God's blessings for service

We are a welcoming Catholic Community, grounded in Eucharistic prayer, celebrating our diversity and sharing God's love through ministries of serving and being present in our urban neighborhoods, while focusing on the spiritual and corporal works of mercy.

God sees into the depths of our hearts. It is our giving that changes us. It is our giving that changes us. What we give to God will always be multiplied greatly. Thank you for asking me to share in this very special day with you. I will always remember your kindness to me and to others. May God graciously bless all of you today and every day.