

## **GIVING WITHOUT GETTING: 32<sup>nd</sup> SUNDAY B**

Paul, a seasoned and experienced Jesuit priest, remembers that in the year he was ordained he was assigned to a parish in a big city. He was young, keen, energetic and enthusiastic. So, he says, *'his superiors put him in a place where they thought he would do the least damage'*. On arrival he unpacked his bags. He then made his way to the laundry to wash his clothes. On the way he met one of the older men in the community who said to him: *'You don't have to bother to do your own washing here. We have Mrs. Jones to do all that for us.'*

That same day Paul bumped into Mrs. Jones. She was 82, bent over and stiff with arthritis. She could barely walk. The very thought that a young fit man should make her wash his clothes made Paul's blood boil with a sense of injustice. He would rather run a marathon than add to her burdens in life. So for several weeks he kept washing his own clothes and even felt a bit smug about how considerate he was to a dear old lady.

Then one day his superior took him aside. He was a wise and gentle man. He said: *'Paul, I have to ask you to give your clothes to Mrs. Jones to wash.'* Paul's instant response was: *'But why? Surely this is a terrible bit of priestly privilege and a horrible imposition on a poor old sick woman!'* As Paul kept protesting, he could see that in a quiet way his Superior was getting madder and madder. Finally his Superior brought the discussion to a close with the demand: *'Look, Paul, that's enough. I simply want you to give your clothes to Mrs. Jones to wash. OK? Just do it.'*

So, a bit baffled and bruised by this conversation, Paul just did it. He brought down all his dirty clothes and gave them to Mrs. Jones. She seemed delighted. So he asked her how she felt about having to wash all the clothes of all the priests in the community. She said very simply, *'I love it. It's my way of serving Jesus.'*

He left her presence feeling very humble, and thinking of the words of Jesus in our gospel today: *'they have all put in money they had over, but she from the little she had has put in everything she possessed, all she had to live on.'* Clearly Mrs. Jones was one of those special quiet achievers of this world, a real unsung treasure, with so much love to give, that despite all obstacles, she would keep giving 100%, would keep giving her all, until she could give no more.

In keeping with the gospel message, let us acknowledge today the work and ministry of all those *'quiet achievers'* who faithfully serve the needs of our parishes and of our local neighbourhoods, mostly out of sight, and never looking for even one word of praise. The people, mostly elderly, who get together to pray the rosary every day! The greeters, who meet and welcome us each Sunday! Those who clean the church! Those who arrange the beautiful flowers around the altar! The volunteers who serve

the cuppas! The ones who run the piety shop! Those who wash and iron the altar cloths and the altar servers' robes! The sacristans who put out everything needed for our liturgical celebrations! The ushers and collectors! Those who make and serve the sandwiches and cakes for the special occasions! The ones who count the collections! Those who go out collecting food and clothing for the St Vincent de Paul Society! The visitors from Vinnies to poor and struggling persons, and especially to the new arrivals and refugees! The receptionists and volunteers in the Parish Office! The catechists who bring the light and love of Jesus Christ to children after school and to children's liturgies on Sundays! The housie workers! The coaches of the parish sports teams! The musicians and singers! And all others whom I have unintentionally overlooked! Our parishes could neither survive nor thrive without them.

In all the hustle and bustle of the Temple that day, with people moving around left, right, and centre, who could possibly have noticed that poor humble little widow quietly putting into the collection for the House of God? Who could have noticed her putting in all the money she had, and then quietly departing the scene, without keeping even a single cent for herself and her own needs? Who could have noticed her? Jesus did. He noticed her, he appreciated her, he admired her, and he praised her.

He also notices, appreciates, admires, and recognizes every good deed done by every parishioner as done to himself. He knows that what you do you never do for show or recognition or fame, but only to love, help and serve others as much as you can and as often as you can. So, in the rest of our Eucharist today, let us give praise and thanks to God for all the good deeds done by so many of you to so many others, and let us praise and thank God for filling your hearts with so much kindness, generosity, and fidelity!

[bgleesoncp@gmail.com](mailto:bgleesoncp@gmail.com)