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THE WIDOW'S MITE

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Today's Gospel

Jesus 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."

MARK 12:41-44

Reflection

The story of the *widow's mite* in today's gospel reminds me of a movie I watched a few months ago while on a four-hour flight. The name of the movie was **26.2 to Life**. It was a documentary about a handful of inmates in San

Quentin who were a part of the 1000-mile club – a running club that practiced year-round for an annual marathon inside the prison walls. Throughout the film, we learn of the lives of these men and the crimes they committed. In addition, we come to know the community of volunteers who show up each week to coach these men on how to train and run a marathon – yet the life lessons are so much deeper.

How does this relate to the *widow's mite*? It is the faith, perseverance, and determination to find God no matter the circumstances of one's life. The widow in Mark's gospel responds with faith, hope, and trust as she gives what little she has into the treasury. This story never ceases to inspire me in my own life. How often do I catch myself "counting the cost" rather than simply trusting and giving from a generous heart, a heart grounded in faith?

In the movie **26.2 to Life**, the men own up to their crimes and the majority are "lifers" with sentences that will keep them in prison well into their eighties. The 1000-mile club enables them a chance to refocus their lives, reflect on the harm they have done through their crimes, and commit to reforming themselves from the inside out.

Running can do this for you because as you run, mile after mile, self reflection becomes the soil of the ground on which you run. Prayer can provide a similar platform for those seeking to draw closer to God, to become your truest self, and to seek the good within and outside of you. Prayer and our relationship with God can propel us to respond in trust, hope, faith, and love like the widow in today's gospel passage.

These men in San Quentin have so little, yet they are making the choice not to give up on themselves or on life itself. Through the 1000-mile club they are turning their lives around, even if they never see the light of day outside the prison of their harsh existence. It has inspired most of them to obtain their GEDs and to volunteer in other activities the prison has to offer. They don't deny the brutality of their existence inside San Quentin or their crimes and the consequences of their actions; what they choose to do now is live into the person they wish they had embraced long before crime became the staple of their lives. For the next few days, I will be referring to this film and how it connects to our life as disciples on the way.

Reflective Prayer

O God who has birthed each one of us into being, you never give up on us. While we might make disastrous choices in our lives, you are ever at our side, calling us to the more.

Turning toward you, O God, gives us the hope that at times can seem lost. We look toward those who trust in you and find a foothold to persevere no matter the circumstances of our lives.

Like the widow in today's gospel passage, we seek to build our spiritual muscles that enable us to respond with a generous "yes" when asked to do or endure the seemingly impossible in our lives.

Like the men who are serving time for crimes they committed, we find reconciliation and hope in leading lives that attest to our journey of discipleship and faith in the God of always.

May we embrace the virtue of humility, knowing that our reliance on you is a testament to true strength that is found when faith and the Holy Spirit are what guide and ground our lives.



Photo by ha1 10k

For Pondering

- Seek the hidden strengths of the widow's mite in your own heart and recall the times when you persevered in faith even when everything in you wanted to give up. Allow these memories to strengthen your resolve to live into your best self this day.

- How might you assist or enable others to tap into the inner strength of their own discipleship today?
 - How prepared are you for a generous “yes” to what might be asked of you today?
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For Prayer

*We pray for all who are seeking to reconcile
with themselves and with others.
May each of us be a reconciling and inviting presence
with all whom we encounter.
May our own “widow’s mite” be reflective
in our service and response to what comes our way
in the peaks and valleys and plateaus of life.
Amen.*

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