Spirituality
Pencil Preaching



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“Some gave from their surplus; she gave from her poverty” (Luke 21:4).

Rv 14:1-3, 4b-5; *Luke 21:1-4*

Commemoration of the Presentation of Mary

The story is told of a man who promised God he would tithe on his income if God would bless him with material success. He worked two minimum wage jobs and gave God 10 percent. He soon had a steady job and rose to management. His salary increased and he gave God 10 percent.

Within two years he was president of his own company and making millions of dollars each year. He saw how much his 10 percent had become and decided to renegotiate his bargain with God: "Lord, I want to keep my promise, but need to reduce my contribution by half. Help me do the right thing." That very day his stock portfolio and net worth fell by half. God had answered his prayer.

Generosity can be measured by the proportion of our gift to our total worth. The poor widow went even further than that by giving from her poverty, thus entrusting her very survival into God's hands. Jesus says that her small gift far exceeded the impressive amounts being poured into the Temple treasury by donors who could well afford to give.

The real measure of generosity is in the heart. By giving from her very want, the poor widow found favor with God. There is a deep paradox here that does not compute to worldly shrewdness but represents the total surrender that enables us to find the heart of God. What wealth can compare with that?

Today we also remember the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Her dedication to God will cost her everything. Her relationship with Jesus will mirror his own self-emptying. At each stage of her life, conceiving, bearing, birthing and parenting Jesus will be her gift. Tradition assumes she is widowed before Jesus begins his ministry and that his death will take away his support. At Pentecost, she will repeat her self-surrender by pouring her life into the church. She is our best model for full discipleship.