

## **HOMILY – Most Holy Trinity Parish, Cresco**

### **32<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time – November 6, 2021**

Today's scripture readings for Mass, quite providentially, couldn't be more appropriate and timely for your parish community, given all that you've faced these past few weeks. We hear of two widows – one in the Old Testament Book of Kings and one in St. Mark's gospel. Neither of them had much to give to the situation that they faced. One gave a cupful of water, a little flour and a bit of oil. The other gave two small copper coins – something by today's standards would amount to 1/40<sup>th</sup> of a penny. Nevertheless, these two women are our teachers today.

Many of us tend to gauge our relationship with God by the things that we do, the things that we give, how reverently we say our prayers, and the work that we do to support our parish. In today's gospel, however, Jesus helps us put into proper perspective the relationship with God that we so often seek to measure. The widow in today's gospel is praised by Jesus not because of *what* she gave but because of *who she was* – a woman of *faith* who *relied* upon her God and *trusted* that God would walk with her in her life's journey.

While your faith has been tested tremendously during the past two weeks, its presence in your life and mine is why we gather in prayer today at this Mass. We gather because we trust that somehow, amid disappointment, anger and concern, we believe that God is a part of our lives, walking with us and taking care of us – even – and especially – at this moment.

It's not my intention to rehash the difficult things that have been shared with you over the past two weekends at Mass. I know some of you just want to get on with life, push aside the hurt and move forward. For others, it's not so easy – not yet, at least. What you've experienced is troubling and unsettling to me as well.

I would like to share with you just a few things that may be helpful.

First, I am so sorry that this parish has had to undergo such trauma and pain. I apologize with all my heart for what you're experiencing. These things simply should not happen anywhere, but least of all in a parish community.

Second, and very importantly, I want to remind you that for those of you who feel it would be helpful, I'd encourage you to take advantage of counseling opportunities that we've arranged. There'll be a session here at the parish tomorrow morning from 9-10:00 a.m. and then on Monday evening from 7-8:00 p.m. We'll schedule more opportunities as needed.

Third, members of my leadership team are working with representatives of the parish to ensure that the building project for your new Church moves forward in a positive and timely manner with a completion date still targeted for around Easter this coming spring.

Fourth, our Priest Personnel Board has begun the process for selecting a new pastor for Most Holy Trinity Parish. I will do everything I can to care for this parish and to provide you with a good pastor who will walk with you to help you heal, to complete the building project and to carry this good and faithful community into a hope-filled future. That being said, I know that it's going to take time to trust a new pastor. Trust doesn't happen automatically. It's earned over time and from the lived experience of our faith.

Finally, while I will do whatever I possibly can to help you move forward as a parish community, there's one thing beyond my ability. I wish that I could change the narrative of the past two weeks. But I can't. So how do we confront this painful reality in our lives?

Some of you know one of the oldest and wisest priests of our Diocese, Monsignor John Esseff. A few days after things started to unfold here at your parish, I spoke with him. For all that he shared with me, there's one thing I want to pass on to you. It's called the "Surrender Novena." You can find it on line.

Essentially, it's a prayer that reminds us that when we've nowhere else to turn – when we finally admit that for all that we are able to do, we can't fix and control life – we need to turn to the one power in our lives that can give us hope. You and I know that power to be God. The pandemic that we've confronted for over a year and half taught us that we're powerless without God. And we've also learned of our desperate need for God these past few weeks.

The novena asks us to pray these words every day: "Jesus, I surrender myself to you – I trust in you! In your mercy, take care of everything – for I know that you will."

Our trust needs to be placed not in me or in a pastor or in our own righteousness. No! Our trust needs to rest in the power of God at work in our world, in this parish community and in our lives. That's the trust that enabled the two women in today's scripture readings to love as selflessly as they did amid all sorts of obstacles. And it's the same trust that will ultimately carry you and this community forward and bring you to peace.