

- One of the things I want to point out in the second reading is toward the end: *“human beings die once, and after this the judgment...”*
- You tend to see the soaring flight of the eagle, the strength of the bear, the intelligence and wisdom of a great man...and we envy those traits...at least to a degree.
- That is, I think, the source of the idea of reincarnation—envy of having something we don’t or can’t now possess.
- But, as we see in that reading, God tells us there is no such thing.
- And so the Church teaches: *“Death is the end of man's earthly pilgrimage, of the time of grace and mercy which God offers him so as to work out his earthly life in keeping with the divine plan, and to decide his ultimate destiny...we shall not return to other earthly lives...There is no “reincarnation” after death.”* (CCC 1013)
- And so...we step through that portal which we call death once, and (we all hope!) into eternal life.

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- Now a critical aspect of our earthly pilgrimage is generosity back to God in thanksgiving for the many, many gifts that He showers upon us.
 - And the moral of our readings today is: Fear not, and trust in God’s care for you.
 - Yes, helping the poor and the needy is an essential part of that generosity which God expects of us...and yet, one of the greatest mercies and kindnesses we do is supporting our parish, our Archdiocese and the church as a whole, in their efforts to lead believers to a deeper faith...and to lead non-believers to discover Christ and God’s love for them; there is no greater act of charity and love than that.

- - For God's gifts are not for ourselves; we are simply stewards of His blessings. We are spiritual "storehouses", as it were, to help those who have less.
 - This congregation especially has received blessings in great abundance...probably above the vast majority of the people on earth—in intellect, in the opportunity to exercise that intellect...in employment and in families.
 - Remembering this and God's generosity to us, we can't help but recall Jesus' parable: *"There was a rich man who had a steward, [who] was wasting his goods. And he called him and said to him, 'What is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account of your stewardship...'"* (Luk 16:1-2 RSV)
 - Or His parable of the talents, in which the poor servant must admit: *"'I went and hid your talent in the ground...!' But his master answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant!...you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has the ten talents. For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away.'"* (Mat 25:25-30 RSV)
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- Now "steward" is defined as *a person who has charge of the household of another.*
 - Well, the Church is the household of Christ...and Jesus established His Church—US—to spread His Word—the Gospel—of His salvation throughout the world.
 - The Church is ALL of us—each person having responsibility to further that mission of spreading the Word of God in Jesus

Christ...by our lives—living morally in accord with God’s teachings, and in being witnesses to Christ by both word and example—love of God; love of neighbor.

- This is our duty; this is our privilege...partially in serving God in the support our local church—through our donations, through various ministries, through all the little chores needed to be done around ANY household.
- I’ve read that Blessed Mother Teresa used to clean the bathrooms of every convent that she visited...to help her remember that we are called to serve and not to BE served.
- This service to God is the greatest of our life’s works by far. It may not seem so because there is little, if any, recognition...but God sees the heart; not the slightest action goes unnoticed.
- And serving and loving God and neighbor is why we exist; it is the very purpose for which He made us!
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- Always we look to Jesus for example and wisdom...such as when the apostles were arguing about who among them was the greatest: “...and he said to them, ‘If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.’” (Mar 9:35 RSV)
- And Jesus Himself—our master, our savior and our God—says of Himself: “...the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mat 20:28 RSV)...and He serves all of us—totally, completely and perfectly—upon the cross.

- Will we not, then, as His disciples, give of ourselves—not even in pain and agony or even discomfort, but simply of the goods which He gives us?
- Salvation is what He “purchased” for US...by giving Himself totally.
- The more we move toward that goal of absolute generosity, the more perfect we become in the eyes of God.
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- Without YOU, the children are not educated in the faith...buildings are not built or maintained, and, in worst case, the sacraments are not celebrated, or are reduced, because vocations to the priesthood are not supported.
- Historically, and biblically...since the time of Moses and before--10%--the tithe--of our income to God. This is expected not by the Church, but by God Himself—a minimal offering in return for all the blessings He has given us.
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- So have the trust of the widows in our reading today, and always give of yourselves generously. They simply trusts in God’s goodness and mercy, and His promise...and in that love they gave to Him all that they had, even for their very survival...for which they are was praised by Jesus Himself, immortalized in the Gospel for all time, and no doubt raised to eternal life.
- In the final analysis, this is WHY you have what you have.
- St. Paul tells us: *“You will be enriched in every way for great generosity...for the rendering of this service not only supplies the wants of the saints but also overflows in many thanksgivings to God. Under the test of this service, you will glorify God by your obedience in acknowledging the gospel of Christ, and by the*

generosity of your contribution for them and for all others...”
(2Co 9:11-13 RSV)

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- “[Jesus] said to them, ‘Truly, I say to you, there is no man who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, [whatever he has] for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not receive manifold more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life.’”
(Luk 18:29-30 RSV)
- “For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it.” (Mar 8:35 RSV)

Reading 1 [1 Kgs 17:10-16](#)

In those days, Elijah the prophet went to Zarephath.
As he arrived at the entrance of the city,
a widow was gathering sticks there; he called out to her,
"Please bring me a small cupful of water to drink."
She left to get it, and he called out after her,
"Please bring along a bit of bread."
She answered, "As the LORD, your God, lives,
I have nothing baked; there is only a handful of flour in my jar
and a little oil in my jug.
Just now I was collecting a couple of sticks,
to go in and prepare something for myself and my son;
when we have eaten it, we shall die."
Elijah said to her, "Do not be afraid.
Go and do as you propose.
But first make me a little cake and bring it to me.
Then you can prepare something for yourself and your son.
For the LORD, the God of Israel, says,
'The jar of flour shall not go empty,
nor the jug of oil run dry,
until the day when the LORD sends rain upon the earth.'"
She left and did as Elijah had said.
She was able to eat for a year, and he and her son as well;
the jar of flour did not go empty,
nor the jug of oil run dry,
as the LORD had foretold through Elijah.

Responsorial Psalm [Ps 146:7, 8-9, 9-10](#)

R. (1b) Praise the Lord, my soul!

The LORD keeps faith forever,
secures justice for the oppressed,
gives food to the hungry.
The LORD sets captives free.

R. Praise the Lord, my soul!

The LORD gives sight to the blind.
The LORD raises up those who were bowed down;
the LORD loves the just.
The LORD protects strangers.

R. Praise the Lord, my soul!

The fatherless and the widow he sustains,
but the way of the wicked he thwarts.
The LORD shall reign forever;
your God, O Zion, through all generations. Alleluia.

R. Praise the Lord, my soul!

Reading II [Heb 9:24-28](#)

Christ did not enter into a sanctuary made by hands,
a copy of the true one, but heaven itself,
that he might now appear before God on our behalf.
Not that he might offer himself repeatedly,
as the high priest enters each year into the sanctuary
with blood that is not his own;
if that were so, he would have had to suffer repeatedly
from the foundation of the world.
But now once for all he has appeared at the end of the ages
to take away sin by his sacrifice.

Just as it is appointed that human beings die once,
and after this the judgment, so also Christ,
offered once to take away the sins of many,
will appear a second time, not to take away sin
but to bring salvation to those who eagerly await him.

Gospel [Mk 12:38-44](#) or [12:41-44](#)

In the course of his teaching Jesus said to the crowds,
"Beware of the scribes, who like to go around in long robes
and accept greetings in the marketplaces,
seats of honor in synagogues,
and places of honor at banquets.
They devour the houses of widows and, as a pretext
recite lengthy prayers.
They will receive a very severe condemnation."

He 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."