Scripture
Mark 12:38-44

The Joy of Generosity

As we offer “everything” to God, God gives “everything” to us.

◆ In today’s gospel, Jesus and his disciples witness a humbling act of generosity: a poor widow gives generously from her meager resources.
◆ Children, like adults, can only give what they feel themselves to possess. We prepare young children for generous giving by helping them discover their own gifts and by modeling generous sharing ourselves.
◆ In today’s session we invite children to hear and re-enact the story of the generous widow.

Question of the Week
What do I receive from God today? What do I offer God today?
**Getting Started** (5-10 minutes)
Children talk about money containers as an introduction to today's story.

Show the children a collection of money gathering items: a piggy bank, offering plate or basket, mite box, etc. Ask:

◆ What are these?
◆ What do we use them for?
◆ What do we put in all these things?

Make available a dish of pennies and allow children to put coins into the different banks.

Show the two pennies and ask:

◆ What are these?
◆ What are pennies for?
◆ Are two pennies a little money or a lot of money?
◆ Can you buy a lot or a little with two pennies?

Use the two pennies and an offering plate or basket to help tell today's story.

**Gospel Story** (5-10 minutes)
*Story Focus:* Use two coins and a plate or basket as a focal point for today's story.

**The Woman's Gift**
Once in the temple where people came to worship, Jesus sat watching rich men bring gifts of money for God. *Cling, clang* went the heavy coins into the money box. The rich men gave handfuls of gold and bags of silver.

Then Jesus saw a woman who was too poor to buy even food, but she had brought a gift for God, too. She dropped into the temple money box the only money she had: two little copper coins. *(Drop two coins, one at a time, into the plate or basket.*) *Plink, plunk* went the little coins.

Jesus said to his friends, “This poor woman put more into the money box than all the other people who have given money today.”

“Yes,” said Jesus, “but the rich men have more than enough money to buy food and clothes and fancy houses. This woman, poor as she is, has given everything she has to God.”

**Story-Review Game** (5-15 minutes)
Children review today's story by playing a variation of the traditional game Farmer in the Dell.

**Give the Coins Away**
Gather children in a circle. Ask one volunteer to be the *widow*, who stands in the center of the circle and holds two coins.

Help the other children walk in a circle around the *widow* while singing these words to the tune of “The Farmer in the Dell”:

*She gives the coins away,*

*She gives the coins away, God will take care of her,*

*She gives the coins away.*

At the end of the verse, the *widow* hands the coins to someone in the circle who takes her place in the center.

If you have a large group, you may prefer to have two children in the center, each with one coin to hand to another child. Try to give each child a turn in the center.

**Praying Together** (5 minutes)
Gather the children in a circle. Ask children name good things from God: food to eat, stories to hear and time to play.

Then pray:

◆ Thank you, God, for giving us good things. Help us to share good things with others. *Amen.*

**Note:** Distribute this week’s *At Home with the Good News* to children before they leave, or e-mail it to their parents after the session.
Discover the Good News
(5-10 minutes)
Page 1 of today's Discover the Good News invites children into a discussion of what it means to go to church.

On Page 2 you'll find the verses to today's story-review song.

Page 2 also includes a To Parents note for families to use at home.

Singing Together (5-10 minutes)
From Singing the Good News, sing together:
◆ “Two Little Copper Coins” (songbook p. 10)
◆ “Love as Jesus Loves” (songbook p. 16)

Note: To access both the songbook and its attached MP3 files, open your Fall-B Seasonal Resources folder, then click on Singing the Good News.

Art (10-15 minutes)
Chagall’s Vision of the Artist’s Family
Use the attached painting by the artist Marc Chagall to inspire children’s storytelling.

Gather children around the poster. Explain that the artist said that his family was “poor but happy.” Ask them what the word poor means to them.

Accept the children’s answers, and be willing to share your own simple definition such as, “Poor can also mean not having very much money or food or warm clothes.”

Affirm that Chagall’s childhood family didn’t have very much money, food or warm clothes. Ask the children to tell stories about the picture they see. Examples:
◆ What do they see that might make them happy?
◆ What do they see that might have made the artist happy when he was a child?

Creative Drama
Children pretend that they are at the temple, the scene where today’s story takes place.

You can retell the story as the children act it out and/ or invite the children to make up their own dramatic play. In either version of this activity, costumes and props are optional.

If you use them, simply drape towels, scarves or lengths of fabric for robes and head coverings. Use costume jewelry to suggest riches.

Ask for volunteers for the parts of Jesus, the rich people, the widow and Jesus’ friends. More than one child can play any of the parts, including Jesus or the widow.

Retelling the Story
Gather the children in a circle. Place a box or basket in the center of the circle to be the temple money box.

As you retell the story, prompt the children to act out the plot. To help keep attention focused on the story, give the coins to each child just at the moment when they are to be placed in the money box.

Children’s Drama
Initiate the children’s own dramatic inventions by asking one or more of these questions:
◆ What is this big box?
◆ Why do people bring money to put in this big box?
◆ Who comes first to put in money?
◆ Who is sitting here watching?

Help the children make the play their own. As much as possible, encourage them to come up with their own dialogue and actions.
Outreach for Young Children

As we turn our attention to service projects for the children, the first temptation is to offer them a chance to collect money or food for others. This is valuable work, and young children do benefit from learning at an early age that the Church, too, must collect and count coins to do its work in the world.

However, collecting money or food for people they never actually meet shortchanges young children from experiencing the full benefits of sharing in the work of the Church.

We recommend that as you plan service projects this year, you consider including projects that:

◆ invite members of the parish from all generations
◆ bring young children into direct contact with the people being served

For example, you might invite the children in your group to help serve at a community thrift shop or soup kitchen or to adopt, for a once-a-month visit, a shut-in member of the congregation. Consult with your rector or Christian Education director for other ideas.

Young Children and the Gospel

In today's gospel, Jesus and his disciples see a widow giving generously to the Temple treasury. This collection box was dedicated to the relief of orphans and widows, the class of people deemed most needy in ancient Israel.

This donation from one of the people the fund was meant to benefit underlines Christ's deep respect for all those his society deemed helpless, poor or outcasts: children, widows, the landless, foreigners, etc. For young children, we communicate this message when we accept with gratitude the gifts each child brings to the group.

Where You’ll Find Everything Else

◆ Attached to this Session Plan you will find:
  — Backgrounds and reflections for today’s readings, titled More about Today's Scriptures.
  — Two additional coin-based crafts, Coin Magnets/Pouches, as additions or alternatives to today’s Coin Bank project.
  — A copy of today’s Gospel Story which can be distributed or e-mailed to children and their families.
  — A copy of today’s At Home with the Good News to print or to e-mail to children and their families.
  — Chagall’s Vision of the Artist’s Family, used in today’s Art activity.

◆ Open your Fall-B Seasonal Resources folder, then click on Seasonal Articles to find:
  — Information on Fall-B’s Models of the Faith.
  — A reproducible handout for parents titled Sharing God’s Word at Home.
  — A printable article titled Learning through Music.
  — A PowerPoint presentation for catechists titled Why Use the Arts?
  — An article for catechists exploring the seasons of The Church Year.
  — The Introduction for Preschool/Kindergarten for Living the Good News.
More about Today’s Scriptures

Today’s readings challenge us to offer “everything” to God, and to celebrate the fact that God similarly offers “everything” to us. In the story of Elijah and the widow from 1 Kings, God honors the sacrifice and faith of the woman with abundant oil and flour. The author of Hebrews assures us that Christ not only came to remove sin, but now, in God’s presence, intercedes on our behalf. In today’s gospel, Jesus praises the generous devotion of a penniless widow.

1 Kings 17:10-16
The prophet Elijah addressed the northern kingdom, Israel, in the middle of the ninth century BCE. He opposed King Ahab and Queen Jezebel who supported the worship of Baal and the other Canaanite gods. Baal was reputed to be the god of rain and fertility. In judgment of Israel’s spiritual adultery and in a divine display of Yahweh’s absolute authority over creation, the Lord declares a drought.

Today’s story continues this theme, demonstrating God’s miraculous care for the prophet. Through divine guidance, Elijah finds a woman of great faith, as evidenced by her obedience to the prophet. Though she is not an Israelite, she receives the benefits of the covenant through her faith. She becomes a living rebuke to the faithless Israelites and receives the commendation of Jesus.

Hebrews 9:24-28
This week’s reading stresses the superiority of Jesus’ sacrificial work to that of the high priest. Jesus’ work excels high priest’s in where, when and how it takes place. It is presented in the presence of God, not in an earthly temple. It is made “once for all” time at the “end of the age,” not repeatedly. His offering is definitive and unique, as final as death. And his offering is himself, not the “blood of goats and calves” (9:12). His continuing work is not continual self-oblation but continual representation of and intercession for humanity.

After entering the Holy of Holies to offer sacrifice on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16) the Jewish high priest reappeared outside the sanctuary to show that the work of atonement was completed. So likewise Christ “will appear a second time.” Since sin has been taken away by his “once for all” sacrifice, Christ’s second coming will bring salvation for all who eagerly await his return.

Mark 12:38-44
Today’s reading forms the end of the series of Jerusalem controversy stories and of Jesus’ public teaching. Although Jesus related positively to individual scribes, today’s sayings indicate his inevitable breach with the catechists of Judaism.

This reaction was especially significant in the light of the clash of the early Church with a Judaism grown defensive after the fall of the temple. Both hypocrisy and oppression among the scribes will “receive the greater condemnation” since they should know better.

The sayings are linked to the story following—that of the widow and her gift—by the word widow (12:40, 42). Her self-giving is also a comment on the self-serving of the scribes. Holding nothing back for herself, the widow gives even though she is in need rather than giving from her surplus, offering her emptiness to God—an emptiness that indicates her capacity to be filled. Jesus’ praise indicates that such trust ought to be the characteristic of all Jesus’ disciples.
Reflection
The two parts of today’s gospel are linked by the word widow (12:40, 42). We can only speculate on what motivated her to give “all she had to live on.” But since one valid way to respond to scripture is through the imagination, let’s imagine this woman.

Perhaps, if you get her talking about her late husband, her eyes glow and her face lights up. Perhaps hers was a rare but precious love story, and she genuinely misses him. He may remain with her in spirit, more present in death than he was in life. She talks with him at his tomb about the day’s events; she listens intently for his response. When she remembers their married life together, a sense of blessing far outweighs a sense of loss.

She has learned, over the years, to live from a deep pool of gratitude and trust. It wasn’t easy, but as her loves for her husband and for God flowed together, she understood that she already possessed the great treasure. Compared with her deep inner peace, two copper coins seemed like little. And so, wealthy with intangible riches, she approached the temple treasury. She smiled to herself as the money clinked quietly into the box.

The Scriptures and the Catechism
Today’s readings remind us that we must contribute to the creation of our Christian communities with our sacrifices of time, talent and treasure (CCC, #1351, #2041–43). Just as the sacrificial death of Jesus the High Priest (CCC, #605–18, 1544–45) creates a bond between God and humanity, so our many little deaths will establish the bonds of our parish community and the Church itself.

The World of the Bible
The Treasury
In the ancient world, the temple building and its surrounding area (sanctuary) were considered to be God’s house. So the temple often included storerooms inaccessible to the public in which were kept not only the things needed for worship but also the money gathered for its upkeep.

Each year, Jews throughout the world were required to contribute one half shekel (equivalent to about two days wages) for the upkeep of the Temple. In the Jerusalem Temple sanctuary, there were thirteen different trumpet-shaped chests into which people put their specific types of contributions, for example, yearly taxes, bird offerings, etc. It is probably into one of these chests that the widow is putting her contribution.