

Monday week 34 of Ordinary Time

Readings: Apocalypse 14:1-5, Luke 21:1-4, Psalm 24:1-6

Perhaps today's psalm sums up most eloquently what we read in the first reading and the Gospel. The Responsorial Psalm is a response to the first reading so tends to develop the theme we have just read there. Today's psalm presents us with an image of those who seek, and have found, the face of God in Christ. The person with clean hands and a pure heart and who desires not worthless things is the one who receives blessings from the Lord (Ps 24:4), which reminds us of the Beatitudes, especially "*Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God*" (Mt. 5:8). The Gospel shows us what not desiring worthless things is in practice. The widow (who had no income other than other people's generosity) trusted so much in God's bounty through other people, that she could be generous herself. Most of us, I expect, tend to give from what we have left over, having worked out what we need first, and this on the surface seems to be a very sensible way to live. But the message is about trust, do we completely trust the Father to give us everything we need?

Giving is not just of money, as we noted from the Gospel on Sunday (Mt.25:31-46), when we are invited by Jesus to respond to His love, and by the grace of the Spirit to love all people, regardless of their circumstances. This is an act of love, not just of duty, as St Paul says, "*The point is, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver*" (II Cor. 9:6-7).

The vision in the Book of Revelation which we read in the first reading, is a vision of the assembly of those who have, in Christ, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, given of themselves to other people, now have the Father's name written on their foreheads. They follow the Lamb (Christ) wherever He goes and are with Him because on earth they did the same; they followed Christ and lovingly tended Him in the poor, the weak, the lonely and the lost. In a discussion with a friend once, she said "we cannot out-give God". We give, not to earn reward (we can't do that for Jesus Christ has already done that for us) but as a response of love and thanks for the great gift we have been given.

(Carol Ann Harnett)