

Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time
November 12, 2006
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Good Morning! Today, when we listen to the readings, they all talk about generosity, but sometimes we focus on the people instead of where all generosity begins. And the generosity of course today begins with God. And if we listen to the second reading, it talks about how Jesus gave His life, once for all. So, the generosity begins with God. God does not give to us through His surplus; He does not give to us through His surplus, though He does – He gave us life, He gave us existence, He gives us breath, He gives us health, He gives us faith- that is all surplus! But God gives more than surplus – He gives the essence of who He is in the person of Jesus Christ. That Christ, when it comes to dealing with us doesn't just give from surplus, He gives from essence. He gives from all He is – He gives us everything He had – His body, blood, soul and divinity – His life. And then He begins the cycle – the cycle of generosity. He says “ok, now I give everything to you, now what I want you to do is be a person of generosity. And then when you are person of generosity, I will bless you even more.” And so the cycle begins. There is only one person that stops that cycle – who is that? Us! When we say “I am not going to be generous, I have to take care of number 1 first, me, me, me, please, please...I have to do it first for me!” But if you listen to the first reading today – isn't it amazing? Here is this woman – a widow – and her son. She has nothing left except for one more meal – just one. So, here comes the prophet, and the prophet asks for that meal. He says “could you give me something to eat?” And she says “we only have enough for me and my son, and then we are going to die.” Can you imagine what he says? “Give it to me.” He asks for the last thing that she had to keep her son and herself alive – he asks for it and she gives it. Can you imagine? And when she gave it – God blessed her with a miracle and blessed her abundantly. But let's get a hint here – if she had not given it – she and her son would have died. If they would have been more concerned about them than they were about the other, then that would have been their last meal, and they would have died. It was a test, if you will, from God. When it comes right down to it, whose skin is more important -yours, or someone else's - yours or God's? That is the test. God did it with Abraham – “take your son, your only one, who you love and give him to me.” It is always the test. And again, when we pass this test, God blesses us abundantly! You can never out-give God in generosity – NEVER! We keep thinking that, but that is ultimately – being generous is about trusting God! It is about having that thing that says “ok, Lord, if I put other people first, then I will trust that you will take care of me.” And that is where most people fail – they won't do it, because if you go to up to Barnes & Nobel today, or Borders Books and you go to the self-help group – and not any of you here read self-help books...hmm... But if you read these self-help books – the core of all these self-help books can be summed up in this – take care of yourself first and then you will be good enough to take care of others. But you have to start by taking care of yourself first! Thousands and thousands of dollars – you go to a psychologist - \$150 an hour – take care of yourself first, and then you can take care of everybody else! So, if the widow and the son would have just taken care of themselves first, they would have died! If you are not a man or a woman of faith – you must take care of yourself first, because you are

all you have! If you are a man or woman of faith – take a look at these saints – every one of them put God and others first and God blessed every one of them abundantly. When you and I take and give all that we have for God and others, then God always blesses us – ALWAYS! We can never out-give God in generosity! Most people have never experienced that because most people have never done that. What it ultimately comes down to is that we always have to take care of ourselves first. And see, this is what happens with some people’s thinking: “I wish God would bless me, so that I could be more generous with others...I wish God would bless me so that I could then bless others...” You have it backwards! That isn’t what happened in the gospel today! That isn’t what happened in the first reading! “They were generous and blessed others, and then the Lord blessed them...” You don’t sit there and hope God will bless you so that you can go bless others, and then you wonder “well, how come God doesn’t bless me, I don’t get it!” Because you are not generous. When you sit there and make that act of faith – now let me be clear here – we are not talking about putting money into the collection basket – that is not what this homily is even close to being about. This homily is about being generous with our time, with our finances – with all that we are, so that God would bless us. And what that will cost is the same thing that it cost God to be generous with us – it cost Him His life. And if God gives us this example that if I will put your needs in front of mine – that I am going to be third – that if I am going to do this, then ok, Lord, then I will trust in you to be generous with me. Remember my grandma’s ditty? “What, giving again, I said in dismay, it seems I just keep giving and giving and giving away. Oh, no said the angel, piercing me through, just give until God stops giving to you.” And it is never...you know, think about your own life. How much has God given us? He has given us everything. Did you ever just start thinking about it? Oh, He has given you your mind, your sight, your smell, He gave you your work, the ability to walk, the ability to think. Let’s think of all of the things that He gives us. And then He says “I want you to be generous with others – put them first.” “Oh, I can’t Lord, I have to take care of me first.” “OK, go for it. I’ll let you do it. You want to be God – ok, I will let you be God of your life.” That is a sad thing when God lets us be God of our own life, because we can’t even control our next breath, but God can. When we allow God to be in charge of our life, then He takes care of everything. When we don’t, then He lets us take care of everything, and that’s the problem. So, when He is generous with us, He says now be generous with others and when we give everything seemingly away, then God blesses us more abundantly. See, He just blesses us more abundantly, and He gives us peace and He takes care of us. I have never known anybody that is generous that has not received a thousand times more – never experienced it! I have experienced people who are never generous and are wondering why their life sucks! I have experienced that a lot! “Oh, Father, I don’t get it – I just don’t get it!” And I just want to say – but I could never do this one on one – “I get it – you’re selfish!” But I can’t say that to somebody – they’ll be like miserable to me – but that is what I’m thinking! I’m giving you the hint to get out of this! Be generous – stop thinking about yourself, and God is going to bless you! You sit there, and you are not generous, making sure your needs are taken care of first, then your life is going to suck! Sorry for that word, but I don’t know what else to say with it. It’s gonna stink, or whatever it is! But you have to hear it – you have to let it enter into your being. So what we have to think about today, is, am I a generous person? Not just with my money. You know, some people use their money to be generous, so that they don’t have to give of

themselves. It is called guilt money. "Here, I'll give you money Father, now shut up!" No...Father, you know this priest never shuts up! He wants...the Lord God of the Universe wants us to give our very selves. We express that with money with the poor, we express that with money in helping others, we express that in helping the Church, we express that, but we still have to be giving of our very selves. Remember Jesus today, the one He blessed wasn't all of these people who had an abundance of money, and they gave...say they make one million dollars a year, and they gave \$100,000.00 to somebody, well that would be tithing, so that would be ok! But let's say you sit there and give \$50,000.00 one week and you go "hmm..." and this other poor person lives on a pension of \$100 a week, and they give \$100 a week – God says this is the one who is blessed. "Well I gave the \$50,000.00..." "Wooooo...and you kept \$950,000.00!" What God calls us to do is give of the very essence of who we are. And when we do that, God promises that He will bless us. This past week, we got to bury somebody from our parish – 88 years old, Clyde was his name. And Clyde was a very generous person. He didn't have much, but he was so generous, you could tell where he began being generous was with his life. When he was a young man, Clyde went and joined the war and was part of World War II. While he was in the war, he got five bronze stars. Do you know how hard it is to get one? He got five by putting other people in front of him. When he got out of the war, he decided he had to keep giving, so he became a fireman. For 30 years he was a fireman in Erie – kept giving of himself. Even as this man got older and older he would always sit there and take care of the people he rented apartments to. Can you imagine a landlord that is more concerned about the people instead of the apartment? Could you imagine? He would call and take them to work. He would take them to hospital visits. He had a stroke about a year ago – the guy was 88 – always had a smile on his face! The guy – after he got out of the hospital a couple of weeks ago – right before he died – do you know what he did this past week? He drove people to the poles so that they could vote. He could have sat there and said "listen, I'm old and I'm going to die here in a week – I better take care of me first!" He was always more giving of others. Do you know another thing that this man did? He was one of the few people in our church that gave an hour in the middle of the night – not just once a week, but twice a week. He was always more concerned about Jesus – giving his life to Christ, giving his life for them, about the church, giving his life. Here was a man who didn't have much – but gave everything he had. And this is a man that has to speak to us – a member of our community – that when he stood before God last week, and we buried him here Friday, when he went before the Father, we know he heard "well done, good and faithful servant. You were generous with the one life that I gave you – now I will be generous with you with eternal life." Isn't that what we want to be said about us when we take our last breath and die? "Boy, they had one life to live, and they gave it away. What a life worth living." God starts the generosity, we continue the generosity, God blesses the generosity. There is only one person that stops the cycle of generosity – US. You choose – be generous and be happy or selfish and be miserable. You decide what you want. May each of you know His love today and forever. Amen.