

The Question of the Week

“A poor widow came and put in two small coins worth a few cents. Jesus said: The poor widow put in more than all the others—from her poverty she contributed all she had.”

Mark 12: 44

In the Poker game, Texas Hold ‘Em, there is a point when a player can push in all his chips as his bet on the particular hand he is holding. Other players may fold their cards or they can ask how much the person has pushed into the pot for that game. They can match and call for the cards to be shown on the table. That expression, “All in” has come into common parlance as an expression which conveys the meaning of a person who is fully committed to a relationship, a project, a business venture, an opportunity.

Such an expression flies in the face of a more common wisdom which dictates that it is a wise thing to hold back of some of your personal resources for the proverbial “rainy day.” So, it not often counselled to “burn all your bridges behind you,” but to keep lines of communication open. Going all in indicates something radical, something that will affect me to the core of my being.

So in the gospel today when Jesus sees this little old lady approach the basket for money offerings in support of the Temple, he indicates that she has nothing more than what she put in. She literally has gone “all in.” Ironically, Jesus knows how corrupt the whole Temple enterprise and endeavor has become. He sees people putting in sizable amounts and wanting it to be known. He sees the greed of those in charge and so you would think that Jesus would deter people from supporting this corrupt enterprise. But she knows nothing of that. She knows only that the Temple is where and how she encounters her God. For that she is just so grateful. It no longer matters if she gives all she has. Such a gift from God is worth everything she has. So, Jesus sees the heart. And he extols her gift not because of its size but because it was everything she had—given to her God. That is what he bids us all to do. Us too? The question of the week.