



SIRTRAVELAOT / SHUTTERSTOCK

[Jesus said,] "Amen, I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the other contributors to the treasury."

MARK 12:43

Ouch!

That's the sound of someone giving until it hurts. Most of us probably will never be in such a situation. It's not that we don't give, but that we are seldom asked to give until it really hurts.

The women in today's readings were in desperate straits. They hurt even before they opened their hands to give. Both belonged to one of the groups of vulnerable people often identified in the Bible—namely, the resident alien, the orphan, and the widow. Since the social structure of a patriarchal society is usually built on male kinship, those with no male patron were extraordinarily vulnerable. Consequently, Jewish law made special provision for them (see Deuteronomy 24:17, 19–21; 26:12–13; 27:19). The women in these stories were disadvantaged because they were women, they were widows, and they were

poor. How these deprivations interacted with each other isn't specifically mentioned.

It's not their state of deprivation that makes them models for us to emulate. It's their generosity *despite* their deprivation. The widows featured in today's readings gave from their hearts, not from their abundance. They recognized need in another and did what they could to address that need. That is the virtue set before us today. It is, indeed, heroic!

Do we do what we can to help others in need—as little as that might be? Or do we cling to what we have, to what we say we have a right to have because we worked for it? Are we that uncaring? Ouch! That hurts!

Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

FOR *Reflection*

- * How open are you to the needs of others?
- * How generous does this make you?

