

Generosity is the heart of stewardship.

Before the Second World War a young man suffered severe brain damage in an accident. Only an operation could save him, but up until then no such operation had ever been performed. An experienced surgeon offered to try it, in hopes of saving the young man's life, but also stating clearly that there was only a very rare chance that the surgery would be successful. The operation was extremely difficult and dangerous, as one small mistake would have fatal consequences. Medically speaking, the intervention was off the map. The operation lasted seven hours, with the surgeon's concentration stretched to the limit throughout—and it worked. Afterwards the surgeon was completely exhausted and had to be led away by the nurse like a blind man or a little boy. He had really given everything he had to save the patient's life.

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All 3 of our readings focus on people of generosity: the widow in the 1st reading; Christ in the 2nd reading and another widow in the Gospel. Jesus praises the widow because her contribution was "all she had to live on." Literally, the Greek says she "gave her whole life." The widow is doing as Jesus will shortly be doing: giving the gift of his whole self. Like the widow, Jesus will hold back nothing.

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God showered gifts upon the widows, upon Jesus, upon the surgeon in the opening story. How did these people respond to God's generosity? The widow of Zarephath gave the prophet, Elijah, water to drink, bread and a little cake while she and her son had little to live on. Jesus gave his very life as a return for God's unconditional love. The widow in the synagogue gave abundantly from her poverty. The surgeon gave his imagination, skill and hope for healing to his patient.

God is constantly gifting us. Daily we are the recipients of God's generosity. How do we respond to God's goodness? That is our challenge as disciples of Jesus Christ. In order to respond to God's generosity, we need to be mindful of being blest. Each day this week, call to mind 3 blessings we have received. Express our thanks to God. Reflect on our response to God's generosity. Be good stewards of God's gifts like the widows, Jesus and the surgeon.

My sisters and brothers, generosity is the heart of stewardship. Let God's generosity beget generosity in us.