

First Reading 1 Kings 17:8-16

A reading from the first book of Kings

The jar of meal shall not be spent

And then the word of the Lord came to Elijah, 'Up and go to Zarephath, a Sidonian town, and stay there. I have ordered a widow there to give you food.' So he went off to Sidon. And when he reached the city gate, there was a widow gathering sticks; addressing her he said, 'Please bring a little water in a vessel for me to drink.' She was setting off to bring it when he called after her. 'Please' he said 'bring me a scrap of bread in your hand.' 'As the Lord your God lives,' she replied 'I have no baked bread, but only a handful of meal in a jar and a little oil in a jug; I am just gathering a stick or two to go and prepare this for myself and my son to eat, and then we shall die.' But Elijah said to her, 'Do not be afraid, go ahead and do as you have said; but first make a little scone of it for me and bring it to me, and then make some for yourself and your son. For thus the Lord speaks, the God of Israel:

"Jar of meal shall not be spent, jug of oil shall not be emptied, before the day when the Lord sends rain on the face of the earth"

The woman went and did as Elijah told her and they ate the food, she, himself and her son. The jar of meal was not spent nor the jug of oil emptied, just as the Lord had foretold through Elijah.

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Responsorial Psalm Ps 62:1-8

R. My soul clings to you; your right hand holds me fast.

O God, you are my God, for you I long;
for you my soul is thirsting.
My body pines for you
like a dry, weary land without water. R.

So I gaze on you in the sanctuary
to see your strength and your glory.
For your love is better than life,
my lips will speak your praise. R.

So I will bless you all my life,
in your name I will lift up my hands.
My soul shall be filled as with a banquet,
my mouth shall praise you with joy. R.

On my bed I remember you.
On you I muse through the night
for you have been my help;
in the shadow of your wings I rejoice. R.

Second Reading

Colossians 3:12-17

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Colossians

Bear with one another, forgive each other.

You are God's chosen race, his saints; he loves you and you should be clothed in sincere compassion, in kindness and humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with one another; forgive each other as soon as a quarrel begins. The Lord has forgiven you; now you must do the same. Over all these clothes, to keep them together and complete them, put on love. And may the peace of Christ reign in your hearts, because it is for this that you were called together as parts of one body. Always be thankful. Let the message of Christ, in all its richness, find a home with you. Teach each other, and advise each other, in all wisdom. With gratitude in your hearts sing psalms and hymns and inspired songs to God; and never say or do anything except in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Gospel Acclamation **Matthew 27:55**

Alleluia, alleluia!

Many women were there by the cross, watching from a distance,
the same women who had followed Jesus and looked after him.

Alleluia!

Gospel Matthew 6:25-34

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

Do not worry about your life.

Jesus said to his disciples:

That is why I am telling you not to worry about your life and what you are to eat, nor about your body and how you are to clothe it.

Surely life means more than food, and the body more than clothing!

Look at the birds in the sky. They do not sow or reap or gather into barns;

yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they are?

Can any of you, for all his worrying, add one single cubit to his span of life?

And why worry about clothing? Think of the flowers growing in the fields; they never have to work or spin;

yet I assure you that not even Solomon in all his regalia was robed like one of these.

Now if that is how God clothes the grass in the field

which is there today and thrown into the furnace tomorrow,

will he not much more look after you, you men of little faith?

So do not worry; do not say, "What are we to eat? What are we to drink? How are we to be clothed?"

It is the pagans who set their hearts on all these things. Your heavenly Father knows you need them all.

Set your hearts on his kingdom first, and on his righteousness, and all these other things will be given you as well.

So do not worry about tomorrow; tomorrow will take care of itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

SAINT MARY OF THE CROSS MACKILLOP

1 Kgs 17:8-16; Col 3:12-17; Matt 6:25-34

In a period of want, when there was famine in Elijah's time, the widow of Zarephath still responded hospitably towards a stranger wanting a drink of water. She was less able to provide even only a little food, but then trusting the prophet she shared her family's meagre resources. It is easy to deduce that this reading and the Gospel were chosen to reflect the hardship faced by St Mary of the Cross and her sisters in the early decades of the Josephites. The order was founded in 1866 when the colony of South Australia was only thirty years old. Social infrastructure does not spring up overnight, and South Australia did not have the wealth derived from gold discoveries that the other colonies had. Their colony was free but poor, so hardship was a shared reality, as it was throughout much of Australia and New Zealand outside the fledgling cities. St Mary and her founding sisters willingly shared the poverty of others while also trusting in the provident goodwill of others. It takes much courage and trust to embrace such a life of poverty and a mendicant lifestyle in order to provide education for disadvantaged children in particular, and then to give attention to the many needs of others in isolated areas too. It is the same courageous trusting sentiment found in today's Gospel, excerpted from the Sermon on the Mount.

The letter to the Colossians was addressed to believers in the first decades of the Church's formation, struggling with how this new faith was to be lived out in sometimes hostile societies, but also how it was to engage positively with what already existed. The Colossians were criticised for their assimilation of beliefs or practices others held to be contrary to the teachings. In the passage chosen to be read on our feast the Colossians are encouraged to focus more on Christ himself so that his teachings might enlighten and guide them. New religious orders established in new social realities must likewise grapple with the question of how to live out Christ's teachings in a new way that responds new needs. This is something that St Mary and her sisters did and have continued to do.

In Year C the Gospel pericopes from Luke remind us more than once of the need to take up our cross daily and to follow Christ. This has never been understood as indicating a need to be crucified, but rather as commitment to living the way of Christ, whatever difficulty that may entail. The story of St Mary of the Cross is one witness to living that commitment through adversity. Luke also has an emphasis on the universality of the message of the Gospel and of Christ's going to others whom the righteous look down on; thus he goes to the homes of Pharisees as well as to the homes of those they rejected. Likewise in St Mary's story we find one who, while facing adversity due to opposition from at least some in the Catholic leadership, found remarkable kindness from the Jewish community, from Emanuel Solomon in particular. It seems an unusual reversal of the model in today's first reading (1 Kgs 17:8-16) as, instead of the Jewish prophet Elijah finding hospitality with the Gentile widow, the Christian Sister finds hospitality with the Jewish ex-convict. However, both stories testify to human goodness being found beyond one's own "tribe". St Mary's story is one of kindness in hardships shared, for it was marked by a willingness not only to share the poverty of the poor but the richness of education that is needed by all.

Text: Homily Help - Rev Dr Barry Craig - Saint Mary of the Cross - Year B