



Archdiocese of San Antonio

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**Homily – Archdiocesan Assembly
November 7, 2015**

On our journey of *Encountering Christ*, we go to two places at this Mass: Jerusalem and Zarephath. Jesus has entered Jerusalem, the city of God. His earthly journey is coming to an end. We hear his last words on missionary discipleship before he enters into his Passion and Death. Elijah is sent to Zarephath in Sidon, a town outside the Promised Land where pagan gods are thought to rule. The center and beyond the frontier. God sends his people everywhere. Why? Missionary disciples are sent out for encounter, dialogue, and inclusion, as Pope Francis has consistently told us.

We encounter two widows today – one is a Canaanite who was apparently wealthy in the past; the other is Jewish and very poor. The widow of Zarephath is living in a time of severe drought and famine, and she and her son are ready to prepare their last meal before they die. They have become very poor and desperate. At Elijah's request the woman sets aside her own dire predicament and generously offers him the little hospitality of which she is capable. But because of her

encounter with this man of God, she and her son survive the famine. God provides their sustenance and gives life.

The widow of Jerusalem is also very vulnerable. She has no one to defend and protect her. Jesus describes the prominent scribes who love to recite lengthy prayers in public but also are keen to devour widows' savings and houses. In contrast, this widow – with great faith, trust, and love of God -- gives her last two coins – worth about a penny – to the Temple. Jesus points out to his disciples that “she, from her poverty, has contributed all she had, her whole livelihood.” She offers her whole being to God. She thereby foreshadows the gift that Jesus is about to make: offering his very life on the Cross for our salvation.

This is at the heart of a missionary disciple: giving one's entire being to God, holding nothing back. Not neglecting family or friends or freeing oneself of human responsibilities. Rather, continuing Jesus' own mission and ministry, proclaiming the risen Lord and his gospel to all whom we encounter – bringing God's healing, merciful, compassionate love to all, especially those who are most vulnerable – widows, orphans, migrants, the unborn, the elderly, those who are in prisons and detention centers. This proclamation is our purpose. The encounter we have had with Christ is what brings us here today our Assembly.

We, the Church of San Antonio, have experienced the love of Christ. We have encountered the living God who has given everything he is to bring us salvation, and we are ready to do the same. May we hear

the words of Pope Francis: “Salvation cannot be bought or sold: it’s a gift. It’s given to us, it’s free. We can’t be saved through ourselves: Salvation is a totally free gift” (Homily, March 25, 2014). My brothers and sisters, we have received a totally free gift from the Lord. We have no reason to hold back in sharing that gift. We have encountered Christ, are you ready to share that encounter with others? Are you ready to be people renewed in the good news?

Look around this place and see the thousands of us gathered here. We represent our parishes, our schools, our institutions, our families, our religious communities, our seminaries and formation houses, our apostolates, our ministries, our associations. We are here for those who cannot be – those who cannot take off of work, those who are incarcerated, those who are in the hospital or are homebound. Think of what we can accomplish for the Lord if we take the example of the faithful widows of today’s readings and share all we have received from the Lord with those around us. We can share everything we are with hope and joy, with faith and love. We are the Church of San Antonio! We have encountered the freely given love of Christ, and we are ready to share that encounter freely with all people.

Let us continually renew our encounter with Christ during this next year, the Year of Mercy. May Our Lady of Guadalupe, who promises to be with us always, help us to become true missionary disciples – willing to offer hospitality and welcome to those near and far, to walk with

Jesus through the city and across the frontier, to proclaim the Word of God and our encounter with Christ, who is our help and our salvation.