**“God Cannot be Outdone in Generosity”**

All our readings today point us to the phrase, **“God Cannot be Outdone in Generosity.”** Generosity is the act of being kind, sharing, and selfless. God calls us to imitate Him by being generous to Him and to each other. Out of His generosity, God uses what are secondary or known in our world to illustrate to us about things that are primary or things that are of eternity. God uses things that exist in time to shower us with His generosity as a foreshadow of what we are to expect about His generosity in heaven.

In our first reading, Prophet Elisha met a woman who was generous to him by feeding him whenever he showed up in town. Recognizing him as a man of God, the woman and her husband went to the extent of constructing a private room for him on top of their house. The room was supposed to be a place where the prophet could sleepover, rest, meditate, read, and write. Otherwise, a well-furnished private and comfortable room.

 My brethren, you see, God could not be outdone in generosity. As this woman and her husband were generous in extending to Elisha part of what God had given them, so did God through Prophet Elisha gave them a generous gift far beyond their wildest dreams. God gave them a gift of a son. The gift of the son was especially for the woman because as we are told in our reading, her husband was getting old!

Without a son, in their cultural at the time, the woman would have suffered. Because without a male figure in the family, the status of the woman would have been lowered. So, it must have been a great news to the couple to hear that they would have a son. The husband would not have to worry about what would happen to his wife after he was gone. With the couple having a child, God did in His generosity, performed extraordinary miracle for the couple.

The woman gave to God’s prophet not out of a sense of forced duty, but out of generosity and love. Being generous means acting and giving without delay and without expecting anything in return. God would bless who ever gives generously out of His abundant love and mercy. God does not need anything from us, He is always filled with all things.

In our second reading, again we hear about God’s generosity towards us. We who offended him by disobeying His commandment, ends up receiving the precious gift of eternal life. God used baptism as a sign of His love and mercy for us.

As Paul said, we as Christians have been baptized into the death of Jesus, because each time water is poured or we are immersed in water at baptism, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we die because we stop breathing naturally each time water runs over our nose. The three times we stop breathing, represents each day, Christ was in the tomb.

Similarly, just has God uses ‘holy smoke’ of incense to signify our prayers rising up to Him, so has God used water to transform us into life eternal. Through dying with Christ, just as He was raised to life, we too have the assurance of being resurrected into life for eternity, if we obey God’s commandments.

In our Gospel reading, we heard Jesus say, we must love Him generously more than our parents or siblings or even ourselves. Jesus is saying the kingdom of God comes first. Jesus is saying to love Him generously, means to die to self and carry our cross of suffering. It means to give up whatever we desire that does not honor God. It could be the desire of the flesh or the desire to stay alive when our dying would bring glory to God. Jesus is asking us to empty ourselves only for His sake so He can fill us up with Himself.

Does Jesus mean that we should not enjoy the good things He created for us? Absolutely, not! God created us out of His generosity and redeemed us out of His generosity. So, whatever we return to Him even our lives, out of generosity, would be multiplied beyond our expectations, especially in heaven.

Jesus then told His disciples that whoever is generous or receives them by receiving His Gospel would be rewarded. Our first reading gave us an inkling as to the type of reward God would give us. That woman received a prophet’s reward for her act of generosity. Jesus then broke it down for us by saying, if it is ordinary cold water that we give to one of His disciples because of Him, boom, we will surely get our reward.

If we think about our lives especial when we do an act of kindness to anyone of His disciples, we will come to realize that boom, God did send someone to us to give us a much bigger reward than we gave. We might even receive multiple rewards from Him. That is why our God could never be outdone in generosity. However, we will be missing the point, if we expect our reward from God to be material things instead of God’s unsurpassable, peace and joy.

As we come to receive Jesus in the Eucharist, let us ask for His grace to be generous to Him and to our neighbor.