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THIS POOR WIDOW... OUT OF HER POVERTY HAS PUT IN EVERYTHING SHE HAD. Biblical Commentary by Father Alberto Maggi O.S.M.

link video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nMaRlBeKa3M>

Mark 12,38-44

And in his teaching he said, "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes and like greetings in the marketplaces and have the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honour at feasts, who devour widows' houses and for a pretence make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation." And he sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. And he called his disciples to him and said to them, "Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.

In the temple of Jerusalem Jesus had denounced the highest heads of the religious institution to be bandits and assassins and accused them of transforming the house of the Father into a den of thieves. Naturally these heads of the religious institution hate Jesus, they want to kill him but cannot because of the crowds, they unleash attacks against him, from which Jesus emerges victorious and now it is Jesus who goes to counterattack. After having demolished the theology of the scribes, maximum theoretical officers of the religious institution, now Jesus passes to condemn their behaviour. This is what the evangelist Mark writes in chapter 12, 18-44.

"*And in his teaching...*" for Jesus' words the evangelist does not use the words discourse or speech, but *teaching* so it is something that is always valid for the communities of believers of all time "*.. in his teaching he said, "Beware..."* be careful, but of whom? Not the sinners, not those that do not observe the law, but the scribes. They were the official theologians, the official magisterial of the religious institution, people of great importance who's words had the same value of those of God. And Jesus says beware, beware of them, so they must be avoided, they are dangerous.

And Jesus gives indications to know how to distinguish them, saying "*..who like to walk around in long robes..*" that is, they wear religious clothes to be recognised that they have a privileged and superior relationship, to the rest of the people, with God, "*.. and like greetings in the marketplaces..*" they love to be flattered, to be revered for their titles, Jesus is being ironic, "*... and have the best seats in the synagogues..*" not

the first row seats in the synagogue. In the synagogue there were like steps and the first seats were those at the top, so far from the rest of the people. But when eating you recognize them because they are always in the privilege places, “.. *the places of honour at feasts.*” These places were those near to the host, where one was served first and ate better

And they do all this, says Jesus, because they “..*devour widows' houses..*” The widow, is a person that not having a man, is a person without protection and is a weak element of the society. Well they devour widows' houses and here the translation says “.. *for a pretence make long prayers.*” Jesus does not grant them the fact that they pray, they show that they pray, but their purpose is to empty and take for themselves the goods of others. And for the first time Jesus says “.. *condemnation..*” a great condemnation, not for the sinners but for the head authorities of the temple, the scribes. Those that should teach the people God's will. “*They will receive the greater condemnation.*”

Then the evangelist shows us the reason for this: Jesus “.. *sat down opposite the treasury..*” here is the real God of the temple. “..*and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums.*” The evangelist writes “*And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny.*” Nearly nothing “*And he called his disciples to him..*” Jesus must always call these disciples, they are always distant because they do not share his way of thinking or his actions.

And here is Jesus' speech “*Truly,*” so it is something very important. He continues “*I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box.*” All the others have put in what had left over, but she put in all that she had. “..*she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.*” To understand what Jesus had said one must look at the law. In the book of Deuteronomy chapter 14. 28 it is written that with the proceeds of the temple it was necessary to feed the weak elements of the society of which the widows and the orphans were the example. Well, what had the scribes done? Not only did the proceeds of the temple not feed the widows, but the scribes sucked the lifeblood of the widows and the poor elements of society to feed themselves. So they had completely overturned what was the teaching of the law: rather than feeding, the poor went hungry.

That of Jesus is not praise for the faith of the widow, but a lament for the victim of the religious institution and for this immediately afterwards there is the announcement on the part of Jesus that this institution must disappear. Jesus will say “*There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.*” (Mark 13, 2) A religious institution that, instead of putting itself at the service of people, puts people at their service, this has no right to exist.

