

A local clergyman told me about visiting one of his parishioners in the hospital. Two gunshot wounds were in the patient's stomach. He was still alive, but the friend he was with that night was not. They were attacked in a parking lot about ten minutes away from here. The motive for the murder was robbery. The motive for the robbery was crack. Do you know how many crack houses there are in the Kansas City area? No one's sure, but they think it's about 600. Crack is a virus, and it's here in our city. It will take possession of people we love. It will make them evil. There is a system of drugs, and the system must be changed.

There is a system in today's Gospel, a system that cries out for change: not a system of drugs, a system of scribes. Jesus says they abuse honors, they lie when they pray, and they devour the savings of widows. That widow who threw two small copper coins into the temple treasure gave two coins because she had no more to give. The scribes had taken it all away.

The punch line to the story of the widow is not what it seems to be. The punch line seems to be, "Even if you give a little, it helps." But the widow did not give a little. She gave a lot. She gave everything. The punch line is rather, "Giving a little won't do. Giving a lot can make a difference." Some systems are so oppressive they take a lot of giving to change. Once in a while we've got to think big; we've got to take big actions.

First example, politics. Tuesday is election day; it's the most important day of our American citizenship. We have a responsibility to our community, we hold a responsibility to our world to vote, and to vote with understanding. We can make a difference in the political system if we're willing to take action.

Second example, families. The holiday season is here. What are your family traditions? Besides eating turkey, watching football, and finding the extra leaves for the dining room table. Are there traditional rivalries in your family? Are there people who traditionally don't get along? Can this be the year that peace comes to your holiday table? We can make a difference in the family system if we're willing to take action.

Third example, ourselves. Are we tired of the way we feel? Tired of the opinions we hold? Tired of the people we hang around with? We may need to take action in several areas of our lives. We can make a difference in our personal system if we're willing to take action.

We could go on--the safety of our neighborhoods, the hungry of our city, the drug crisis. Giving a little won't do; giving a lot can make a difference.

A trivia question to bring this to a close: How do you think Jesus would feel about tithing? Tithing is a theory of donating to the Church that we talk about every so often. Let me propose that Jesus wouldn't accept tithing. Tithing is giving 10 percent. Jesus doesn't want 10 percent. He wants everything. We want our time, he wants our thoughts, our devotion, our values, our love. He wants everything. Then we can make a difference.