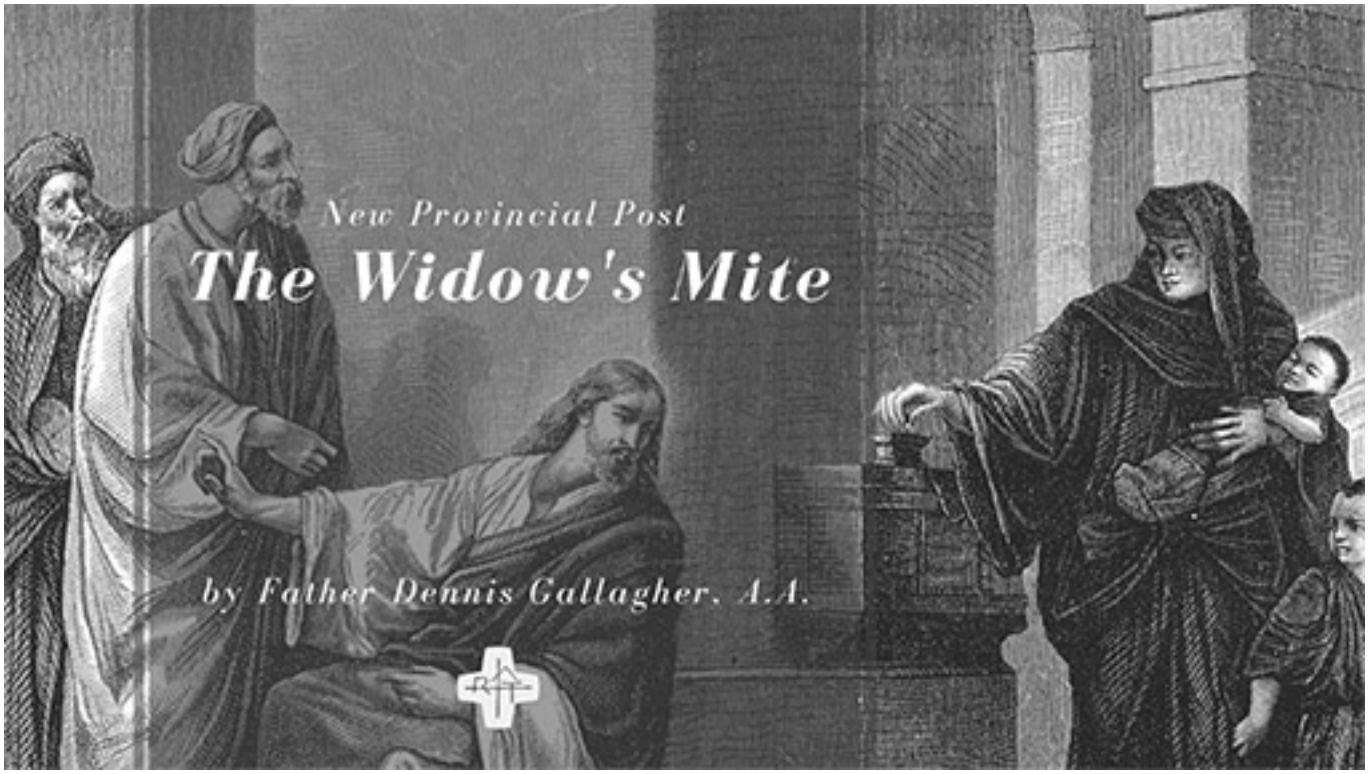


In today's Gospel, to get this last week of the liturgical year underway, we meet one of the heroines of the Gospel. We know the situation of widows in the ancient world. No laws of inheritance, no social security, no safety net at all, widows were at the mercy of those willing to offer assistance. Like “prostitutes and tax-collectors,” “widows and orphans” are conjoined in the Gospel, the latter as a kind of shorthand for the most vulnerable in our midst.

But the widow in today's reading is not honored because she belongs to a category that elicits our compassion. She’s celebrated for what she does, for something that is so deeply expressive of Gospel teaching that it foreshadows the salvific action of Christ himself.

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