

My family name is a bit unique – at least in the US. I’m told that in Austria and Bavaria, it’s very common. It’s very common in those regions because it is derived from the name of a local saint who lived in the 6th century and re-evangelized the alps as it’s bishop ... fourteen hundred years ago.

Because my name is “Jenuwine,” it’s often confused with the English word ‘genuine.’ People make clever comments things like “are you a genuine Jenuwine?” or “are you the real deal?” And other things like that. Even as far back as kindergarten, I remember that a nun asked me something like “are you genuine?” And being 5 years old, I was working on two and three letter words, and didn’t know many three-syllable seven letter words. So, I had no idea what she was talking about, and my blank stare was apparently not the joyful reception that sister expected to her obviously very ... very hilarious joke. Needless to say, I don’t remember sister being very funny after that, either.

In the First Reading, we hear of a widow and her son who have run out of food. The apparent reality of the situation was that they had enough for one meal, and in the widow’s own not-very-optimistic observation, “when we have eaten it, we shall die.”

The Prophet Elijah, speaking for God, tells here that despite the way things looked, that “[the] jar of flour shall not go empty, nor the jug of oil run dry.” And so it did.

In the Second Reading, we hear about the Old Testament high-priests who offered daily sacrifices. And this is compared to our own High-Priest of the New Covenant, Jesus Christ, who’s “once for all” sacrifice on Calvary did away with all other sacrifice. That very same sacrifice which we re-present on this very altar every time we celebrate the Mass.

And finally, in the Gospel, we hear the well-known story of the “Widow’s Mite.” The widow, who gave financially very little in comparison to the wealthy. But she gave from the money she needed, as opposed to giving from the money she could spare.

So, what does this mean?

The common thread that comes through in my reading of today’s Scripture is that God is the ultimate reality. That is, God is the real thing ... the real deal. And that we are called to live in the reality - the truth - of God’s life and love.

No matter how desperate a situation may appear, turn to God. His reality over-rides anything. And in the reading from Kings, we hear how God did just that.

God is the ultimate reality.

Christ’s sacrifice is the one true sacrifice - again, it’s the real thing. Our celebration of the liturgy re-presents His bloody offering on the cross in an un-bloody way. He is present in the Eucharist in a very very real way. It’s not what it appears to be; but we know that God is the ultimate reality, and what He says and does is more real than what we may think we see with our own eyes.

And what should our response be to this marvelous outpouring of God's grace that is more real than what we call reality?

We are called to return to God in some way – oftentimes this is through a gift of our time, a gift of our talent, or a gift of our treasure. But not in a way that puts God in second place.

The Gospel message for today is that what we give back to God has to be the real thing for us.

God doesn't give us "left-over" grace. God gave us His Son to save us from ourselves. He really died on the cross, and he really rose from the dead, and he really is present in the Eucharist.

And while we may not understand how any of that can be ... what we can understand is what would be for us an acceptable sacrifice of our own time, talent, or treasure.

Let us give God our quality time when we pray — not squeeze in a couple of seconds here or there. If that means missing the first part of a game on TV, or maybe getting up a little earlier, or going to bed a little later — only we know if our reasons are real and our gift is real.

Let us give God the quality of our talent. Each of us is gifted in some way. Instead of just doing the bare minimum, why not find a way to use your own special gifts in a way that builds up the Kingdom on Earth, the Church?

And let us share what we have in a way that really demonstrates our personal commitment to Jesus Christ.

Because God doesn't give us left-overs or second-best. God gives us His very best - He gives us Himself in the Sacraments, in the graces we receive each day ... and He gave Himself on the cross for us. For real.

Let us pray to know where we may be holding back and not really living a proper reflection of God's generosity in our own lives. Let us ask for the grace to give our very best — that is, really give of ourselves to God — in whatever ways that He is calling each of us to do just that — as His sons and daughters, redeemed in Christ, and filled with the power of the Holy Spirit.