In this evening’s readings Elijah and Jesus praised two poor widows. These widows from their very little resources had given all that they possessed. What inspirational generosity!

We have each been given many gifts, in various kinds and degrees. How generous have we been with what we have been given?

Here at Niagara University many extraordinarily generous people surround us. The buildings on campus bear their names.

Many successful businessmen have donated millions of dollars to NU and other non-profit institutions. May I list their names: Bisgrove, Castellani, Dunleavy, Dwyer, Gacioch, Galisano, the Glynn Atrium and the Leary Theater I know personally all but one of these people. They grew up in ordinary hard-working families; none of them grew up with a silver spoon in his mouth, and that goes for their wives as well. And we all know the saying, “Behind every good man is a great woman!”

Two buildings are named after legendary basketball people: the John “Taps” Gallagher Center, and the Frank and Barbara Layden Gymnasium. These NU graduates dedicated their lives to teaching young people on and off the basketball court. They earned recognition not just for athletic achievements but especially for selfless contributions in caring for and teaching young people.

Other buildings are named after Vincentian priests: Clet, Kiernan, Perboyre, Lynch, O’Donoghue, O’Shea, Timon and of course, St. Vincent’s Hall, affectionately called Vinnie’s. I lived with Bishop O’Shea for three years. He had grown near Middletown, Connecticut, graduated from NU, was ordained and volunteered to minister in China. The Communist Chinese government in the late 1949s, arrested and imprisoned him in a small cage for seven months. These Vincentian priests had next to no money but they gave their whole lives to preach Jesus Christ and to minister to God’s people.

Two buildings are named after Sisters of Charity: Seton and Laboure. St. Elizabeth Ann Seton grew up at Battery Park in Manhattan. She came from wealth and married into even greater wealth. When her husband’s business failed, he died soon thereafter. She was left a widow with five young children. Soon, she converted from Episcopalianism to Catholicism. Her NYC family and friends black-balled her, and she was forced to move. She ended up at Maryland, founded a religious community, and was canonized a saint in 1975.

Bobo Field and Bailo Hall are named after heroes in their particular professional fields. John and Joseph Bailo, father and son, both graduated from NU. Joseph became a medical doctor, but died young. Mrs.
Rosemary Bailo, wife and mother, left monies with which we built Bailo Hall. Lieut. John Bobo, after whom the baseball field is named, grew up in Niagara Falls. He came to NU, entered the Marines, and upon graduation was commissioned to Vietnam. One night, his platoon came under heavy enemy fire. A mortar shell blew off the bottom half of John’s leg. He tied a tourniquet to his stump, placed it in a dirt mound, and continued to fire on the enemy to allow his troops to reposition themselves on safer ground. He is credited with having saved the lives of many corpsmen. The President of the United States awarded John Bobo the Purple Heart and the Medal of Honor for “conspicuous gallantry,” and for having given his life for his country at age 24.

One last building is the one in which we are praying: Alumni Hall/Alumni Chapel. The Catholic and Vincentian roots of Niagara University inspired the alumni to donate monies to build this administrative and worship space.

Time, talent, treasure. How generous have we been with what we have been given? You might be wondering about how you might exemplify the generosity of the widows in today’s readings. ... May I make a few suggestions?

The relatively new student apartments have no donor’s name on them, ... yet!!! There are many ways by which you could help Niagara University continue its Vincentian tradition into the future. Also, the Vincentians and Daughters of Charity are looking for a few good men, a few good women to serve Jesus in his Church, and especially in serving the poor in greatest need. You may do that as priests or brothers or sisters, or as lay volunteers. Most of you will marry. Marriage requires unimagined giving and forgiving, ... and that’s even before you have children! Children likely will be your greatest joys and greatest challenges. Many will live the single life, in which you will most generously, and saintly, love those in your lives, professionally and familially.

Let’s reflect quietly. ... What gifts has God given you? ... In what ways might God want you to be particularly generous? ...