



Almsgiving

Of the three pillars of Lent—prayer, fasting and almsgiving—almsgiving is surely the most neglected. And yet, in the only place where the Bible brings all three together, the inspired author puts the emphasis firmly on the last: "Prayer and fasting are good, but better than either is almsgiving accompanied by righteousness ... It is better to give alms than to store up gold; for almsgiving saves one from death and expiates every sin. Those who regularly give alms shall enjoy a full life" (Tob 12:8-9).

Why is almsgiving better than prayer and fasting? Because it is prayer, and it involves fasting. Almsgiving is a form of prayer because it is "giving to God" — and not mere philanthropy. It is a form of fasting because it demands sacrificial giving — not just giving something, but giving up something.

Jesus presented almsgiving as a necessary part of Christian life: "when you give alms, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets.....But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing" (Mt 6:2-3). Jesus does not say IF you give alms, but WHEN.

The first Christians knew this. "There was no needy person among them, for those who owned property or houses would sell them, bring the proceeds of the sale, and put them at the feet of the apostles, and they were distributed to each according to need" (Acts 4:34-35).

Through almsgiving we share God's love with others and we recognize that the gifts we have are not really our own. If the thing you are fasting from leaves a little extra money in your pocket, then give that money to a worthy charity which helps the poor. You can also donate goods. If you really want to push yourself, give your time in direct service to another. Acts of service such as these can also be considered almsgiving, especially if you do them with the intention of sharing your gifts. You might encounter Jesus in the faces of those you are serving.

Almsgiving Ideas for Lent (Adapted from Fr. Mike Schmitz)

Giving alms is not to make us feel good about ourselves. But there are some important reasons why we should practice almsgiving.

1. Jesus told us to
2. Other people matter
3. Out of gratitude
4. To imitate Jesus

Have a plan to be generous. Don't just leave it up to chance!

- Give something to those in need. Support an approved agency or make a random act of kindness to someone in need.
- Give something you like to charity. Proceeds from the sale of this item will alleviate the difficulties someone finds themselves in.
- Give some clothes away. (Ref. Luke 6:29-30)
- Buy extra food at the supermarket and give it to someone in need.
- Support a charity in alleviating homeless, poverty, trafficking, climate change etc.

- Give your time and yourself to helping someone.
- Do something for an elderly or sick neighbour.
- Send a card or letter to someone away from home.
- Visit an elderly relative.
- Pay attention to someone you would normally avoid.
- Do something nice for the environment. All Catholics are called to practice environmental justice.
- Cook a meal for your family at home.
- Visit a cemetery to pray for loved ones. It encourages us to reflect on how Jesus brings us from death into life through His sacrifice on the cross. Remember to pray for those who have nobody to pray for them.
- Support the work of Trócaire and their Lenten Campaign.
- Make a contribution towards the utility bills at home: electricity, fuel, streaming, wi-fi.
- Consider MISSIO! It was launched by Pope Francis as a crowdfunding platform that puts you in direct contact with charities and projects that need your help.
- Give of your time to a local volunteer group which improves the environs and quality of living for everyone in your community.
- Increase your support of your local parish.

Consider

Read the Works of Mercy as laid out by Jesus in Matthew 25:31-46. Then put this teaching into practice and choose an act of service you can perform throughout Lent.

Consider undertaking one of the Corporal Works of Mercy. The gospels show us that Jesus reached out to those in need.

To feed the hungry (Mt. 25:35)

To give drink to the thirsty (Mt. 25:35)

To shelter the homeless (Mt. 25:35)

To clothe the naked (Mt. 25:36)

To visit the sick (Mt. 25:36)

To visit the imprisoned (Mt. 25:35)

To bury the dead (Mt. 25:40)

Consider a Spiritual Work of Mercy. They are a way for us to accompany and encourage each other on our faith journey. They are acts of charity through which we show our love for one another.

To instruct the ignorant (Mt. 16:15)

To counsel the doubtful (Jn. 14:27)

To admonish sinners (Lk. 15:7)

To forgive offences (Mt. 6:12)

To comfort the afflicted (Mt. 11:28)

To bear wrongs patiently (Lk. 6:27-28)

To pray for the living and the dead (Jn. 17:24)

Adapted from:

Catechism of the Catholic Church

Introduction to Lent: Almsgiving Mike Aquilina