

## ALMSGIVING

This is where the Christian “rubber meets the road”. All the homilies, all the Catholic moral teachings, all the social justice advocacy remain simple words on a page if human behavior is not moved to action in response. While we worship, while we pray, while we meditate on the Gospel message what, as the Letter of James exhorts, moves us to be “doers” of the Word and not simply “hearers”. At some point, to make the **Way of Christ** meaningful for us is imitation, to form our lives to a purpose much greater than ourselves. **Almsgiving** speaks to sharing our “souls” with others. The very act of focusing on the plight of those in need is the starting point. Realizing we have the **responsibility** to share some of our wealth, some of our time, some of our selves...not all, but enough. We don’t teach the need to sacrifice to the point we lose ourselves in the effort of helping others, we just need to tip the scale in the direction of equality.

To be clear, the misconception is this conversation is simply about providing funding for the poor or that the Church is always talking about giving more money. This isn’t true, it’s just what we hear. The Church, in so many ways, speaks to the importance of being present to and opening our hearts to others. **Alms** refers to an Aramaic word for a sharing of the soul. In other words, when we give, it should flow from a place of intimacy because the compassion in our hearts moves us to act. When Jesus speaks of **Almsgiving**, **HE** refers to an effort of self-giving. In our modern understanding, it is translated into our donations to the collection basket or the other charitable giving we do. I don’t intend for my point to come across as we are not doing enough, only the mindfulness we employ as we think of others should govern our efforts. It’s how we allow ourselves to be moved. When Jesus is told of His friend Lazarus’ death **HE** is moved to tears. When the Roman centurion’s daughter falls sick, Jesus is moved by the man’s faith and heals her, only after **HE** has altered HIS plans. He travels everywhere, over and over again, seeking those who are in need of healing. It’s not because **HE can**, but because **HE cares**. **Jesus is nothing if not a man of compassion.**

On many levels, **almsgiving** is the perfect expression of the **love** we should have for our neighbor. Saying we love **GOD** with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength

(and our neighbor as ourselves) can be moved from simple words to the most powerful force on earth. The force that removes suffering from the earth, the force that restores Heaven on earth. It is neighbors sharing in the struggles of neighbors. Bishop Robert Barron describes, in a beautiful way, that Divine Love means to “will the best for the other” ... placing the benefit of others alongside ourselves. Sometimes what is best for us is what we desire most and sometimes it is not. In either case, what is best for us is what LOVE wants. The way we discern this is by “connecting” our hearts and minds to others, opening the way of LOVE to will the outcome. It often does include monetary resources but not as a means to clear our conscience but an effort of caring for others. When we forget ourselves, “peeking around” the ‘self’, our thoughts see what needs doing and how to accomplish it. Sometimes this means sharing our wealth to ease the pain of those who suffer. Sometimes this means creating space in our lives, dividing our time to assist or be with someone needing our attention. Sometimes it means pausing our personal intentions to notice opportunities where we can be helpful and present **when** it is beneficial to another. This is the work of the Church.

This is why **Almsgiving** is the crescendo to the **Spiritual Pillars of Faith**. Immersing in **Prayer** as often and genuinely as possible, **Fasting** to deny ourselves to focus our hearts and minds on the will of **GOD**, giving of ourselves to bless the lives of others in giving **Alms** completes our true imitation of Christ. We can't be **Christ**, but we can reflect and ‘image’ our **Savior of LOVE** to a world (big and small) around us. We can usher in the Kingdom of Heaven, even in times bent on the destruction of **HIS** people. This is why we **LENT**. **Almsgiving** is the sacramental (outward sign of GOD's Grace) effort of a people confirming our shared responsibility, as disciples, to protect GOD's creation around us.

**Bless You all this Coming Easter. Thankyou for taking time to reflect on these virtues of faith \* Prayer-Fasting-Almsgiving \* the past three weeks. See you at the Resurrection!!!**

**GOD's Blessings**

**Deacon Mike**

**PAX CHRISTI**

**deaconmike@gunnisoncatholic.org**