

An Expression of Gratitude

*Adapted from an article by Jim Lamm,
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When we look at the three traditional “disciplines” of Lent, prayer, fasting and almsgiving, we know that almsgiving gets the least attention. Yet, the Bible places emphasis firmly on almsgiving: “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” (Tobit 12:8-9).

Almsgiving is simply an expression of our gratitude for all that God has given us, and a realization that as a member of a community of faith, it is never just “me and God.” For disciples of the Lord, almsgiving means much more than simply throwing a little change in the poor box. It is an attitude of generosity. It challenges us to examine how we are using our time, abilities, and money to better the lives of those around us. It urges us to share what we have been given by God with others in love and justice. It reminds us that Jesus blesses those who seek to be “poor in spirit” (Matt. 5:3).

Almsgiving opens our hearts to the realization that God blesses us through those we serve. It is here that we find the great mystery of Christian service. We see God in the life of Jesus, and we see Jesus in all those who are in need of our care. Look around, see those who are in need, and ask God to take away those obstacles and distractions that keep us from being generous with them. In turn, we will receive Christ’s blessing, a blessing we need to receive.