



## ALMSGIVING

### ■ Before you begin this handout:

1. Pray the opening prayer.
2. Discuss resolutions from last week, successes and struggles.
3. Watch Video for Almsgiving

**What is Almsgiving?** Of the three marks 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 says this: "Prayer and fasting are good, but better than either is almsgiving... 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). Why is almsgiving "better" than prayer and fasting? Because it is prayer (it is "giving to God" and not just philanthropy) and it involves fasting (it demands sacrificial giving — not just giving something, but giving up something, giving till it hurts).

- Why is giving alms important to you?

"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).

- Are there any ways you give alms outside of giving money (time/talent/goods)? Describe what that looks like. What does it mean for you to be able to volunteer?

The Catechism of the Catholic Church puts it succinctly: "The goods of creation are destined for the entire human race" (n. 2452). But they can't get there unless we put them there — and that requires effort.

As with prayer and fasting, so with almsgiving. If we have a plan, we'll find it easier to do. Throughout history, many Christians have used the Old Testament practice of "tithing" as a guide — that is, they give a tenth of

their income "to God." In practice, that means giving it to the poor, to the parish, or to charitable institutions.

- Have you ever given a full 10% to God? If you have, what does this feel like? If you haven't (and research shows most Catholics have not), what worries you about this level of giving?

Here's a story about a man remembering the day he decided to start tithing a full 10% of his pay to the church and charity. "When I was a senior in high school I read an article on charitable giving in a Catholic newspaper," he recalls. "Breadwinners told how God provided whenever they were in need or had an emergency. I decided, then and there, to start tithing, and I've been doing it ever since." Those 65 years have had their financial ups and downs. He served in the military during World War II, went to college and raised a family of nine children. Through it all, he says, he was often tempted, but he never wavered in his tithing. "There were many times when I reached a point where I said, 'Something has to give — but I'm not going to give up on my tithing.'"

It's a matter of trusting God, he adds, "and God will not be outdone in generosity."

- How can we make alms-giving sacrificial?

**RESOLUTION:** Each week we encourage all small group members to make a resolution related to the topic. For almsgiving, think about how you give. Discuss your resolution for the week. Some ideas:

- Have you considered giving a full 10%? Maybe this week you share a tenth of what has been given to you. See how that works for you.
- Try a new kind of volunteer work this week.
- Clean out a closet or the kitchen and share the bounty with others.
- Think of something that you can give that will require a true sacrifice...and give it.

### **CLOSING PRAYER:**

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And You shall renew the face of the earth.

O, God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy His consolations, Through Christ Our Lord, Amen.