

Lenten Almsgiving and Good Works

Almsgiving and Good Works In the opening Gospel of Lent on Ash Wednesday, Matthew 6:1-6; 16-18, we are told to pray, fast and give alms. Almsgiving is not a thing of the past, but still a necessity in becoming saints. Almsgiving is also tied closely with fasting. Whatever we give up, the money we save should go to the needy. It should be given away to the missions, the Church or a worthy charity. In a family with small children it helps to make this a visual practice by, for example, having a jar or box in the center of the table as a reminder and measure of progress.

It is also considered "almsgiving" to give one's time and goods to those who are in need, i.e., donating time for a soup kitchen, giving clothes to charity, visiting the shut-ins and elderly, driving those without transportation and other similar practices.

Under this category we include **Good Works**, a positive aspect of almsgiving. We can use the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy as a guide for ways to show charity toward others. Good works deal with two kinds of action: perfection of our daily duties and perfection of charity toward others.

Our daily duties include our job as a spouse, as a parent, as a child, as a worker or student. We need to strive to do our best in these capacities, even if that means being more patient, more cheerful, more efficient, more charitable, less critical, less gossiping, or less backbiting. We need to make the most of the time we are given each day; we should not waste time. This is the positive area of our Lenten program. We should work on virtues, like obedience, charity, humility, chastity and perseverance.

Corporal works of mercy are

- To feed the hungry
- To give drink to the thirsty
- To clothe the naked
- To harbor the harborless
- To visit the sick
- To ransom the captive
- To bury the dead.

The spiritual works of mercy are

- To instruct the ignorant
- To counsel the doubtful
- To admonish sinners
- To bear wrongs patiently
- To forgive offences willingly
- To comfort the afflicted
- To pray for the living and the dead