

# LOOKING THROUGH STAINED GLASS



## A Column by Fr. Tom

### ...Almsgiving – The Life You Change May Be Your Own

In the last two columns, we explored the Lenten disciplines of Fasting and Prayer. In this column, we will complete the triumvirate by examining the discipline of Almsgiving.

In fact, as we were exploring both Fasting and Prayer, we already introduced the topic of Almsgiving and how it can help us get to the Heart of Lent. When we explored Fasting, we mentioned that Fasting helps us identify in some way with the needs of others, such as “The hunger pangs we may feel on a day of Fasting may help us understand, in a small way, the struggles that the poor mother feels when she doesn’t have enough to feed her children.” [*Looking Through Stained Glass*, “Fasting – Letting Go of Something...”, February 28, 2021] When we explored Prayer, we came to understand that “One of the great effects of Prayer is that it not only helps us get in touch with God, but it helps us get in touch with others. Prayer helps to open our hearts to the needs of others.” [*Looking Through Stained Glass*, “...Prayer – Doing Something Else...”, March 7, 2021]

So, we can see from the above statements that each of the Lenten disciplines builds on the others and that together they give us a chance to not only show our love for God but also show our love to one another. This brings us to one of the main goals of Lent – that this sacred season can help us follow more closely the commands of Jesus – to love God with our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love one another as Jesus has loved us. [cf. 1 JN 4:7-11]

Our Fasting and our Prayer should help us to both love God better and to love others better. Almsgiving is putting that enhanced love into action. At this point, most people would quote from Matthew 25, which states the Corporal Works of Mercy, such as feeding the hungry or clothing the naked. [cf. MT 25:31-46] The “works” mentioned in this Scripture passage are good, but they are not exhaustive, nor were they ever intended to be by Jesus. In fact the Church later added the Spiritual Works of Mercy to help us think beyond these few “works” of charity. [cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2447]

What we come to realize is that any assistance we can give to another person can be considered Almsgiving. As we mentioned above, Almsgiving is putting our faith into action, from prayer for and with a person who is hurting, to being present to a grieving widow, to giving a hot lunch to a homeless man, to contributing to the social outreach of the Church and other charities. The main qualification for almsgiving is that it is “giving from the heart.”

When we are inspired from our Fasting and Prayer to reach out to those in need through Almsgiving, we are truly getting to the Heart of Lent.

