

## Sharing what we have: 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).

Why is almsgiving better than prayer and fasting? Because it is prayer, and it involves fasting. Almsgiving is a form of prayer because it is "giving to God" -- and not mere philanthropy. It is a form of fasting because it demands sacrificial giving -- not just giving something, but giving up something - giving till it hurts.

The practice of almsgiving is based on this:

- Everything we have comes from God. Everything is a gift.
- Every gift is given for the good of all. The gifts and talents we receive are meant to be shared.
- God has gifted us with enough to meet our daily needs and even over and above that for almsgiving.

Daily we should make the choice to give of our time, our attention, and we should give generously. We need to dig deep and give much where much is needed. We need to identify what our essential needs are and what are luxuries. To carry out God's call we may need to simplify our lifestyles.

Almsgiving is not limited to financial support. Whenever possible, our charity should involve personal acts, not just automatic withdrawals from our bank account. People may be in need of a sympathetic ear, a smile, a word of encouragement.

Sometimes all we **can** give is a smile, but sometimes that is the greatest sacrifice, the greatest prayer, and indeed the most generous and most sacrificial alms. Now during this time of preparation for Pascha, let us remember to make almsgiving a priority.