

Almsgiving and Conversion

- **St. Leo The Great (Pope - 440-461 AD)**- *For as the Easter festival approaches, the greatest and most binding of fasts is kept, and its observance is imposed on all the faithful without exception; because no one is so holy that he ought not to be holier, nor so devout that he might not be devouter.* For who, that is set in the uncertainty of this life, can be found either exempt from temptation, or free from fault? Who is there who would not wish for additions to his virtue, or removal of his vice? seeing that adversity does us harm, and prosperity spoils us, and it is equally dangerous not to have what we want at all, and to have it in the fullest measure. There is a trap in the fulness of riches, a trap in the straits of poverty. The one lifts us up in pride, the other incites us to complaint.
 - Lent is a great opportunity to cleanse ourselves from vices
 - Prepare our hearts for the Passion, death, and resurrection of our Lord!
 - To rid ourselves of those sins that have plagued us the most...
- **St. Leo The Great** - Which of the faithful does not know what virtues he ought to cultivate, and what vices to fight against? Who is so partial or so unskilled a judge of his own conscience as not to know what ought to be removed, and what ought to be developed? Surely no one is so devoid of reason as not to understand the character of his mode of life, or not to know the secrets of his heart.
- **ALMSGIVING**: Money or goods given to the poor as an act of penance or fraternal charity. Almsgiving, together with prayer and fasting, are traditionally recommended to foster the state of interior penance.
 - **CCC 1434** *The interior penance of the Christian can be expressed in many and various ways. Scripture and the Fathers insist above all on three forms, fasting, prayer, and almsgiving, which express conversion in relation to oneself, to God, and to others.* Alongside the radical purification brought about by Baptism or martyrdom they cite as means of obtaining forgiveness of sins: efforts at reconciliation with one's neighbor, tears of repentance, concern for the salvation of one's neighbor, the intercession of the saints, and the practice of charity "which covers a multitude of sins."
 - **Tobit 12:8-10**
 - **Sirach 3:30**
 - **2 Mac 12:39-45**
- **Almsgiving is much more than just being charitable to our neighbor....**
 - It is more about the disposition of our hearts than about our outward actions...
 - You might say... an outward action of our inward conversion!
 - Matthew 5 & 6

- **You can't give what you don't first have for yourself**
 - **St. Augustine** - For the man who wishes to give alms as he ought, should begin with himself, and give to himself first. For almsgiving is a work of mercy; and most truly is it said, "To have mercy on thy soul is pleasing to God."
 - If you have not given to yourself this essential charity... how do you expect to give it to others?
 - **St. Augustine** - This is our first alms, which we give to ourselves when, through the mercy of a pitying God, we find that we are ourselves wretched, and confess the justice of His judgment by which we are made wretched, of which the apostle says, "The judgment was by one to condemnation;" and praise the greatness of His love, of which the same preacher of grace says, "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us:"³ and thus, judging truly of our own misery, and loving God with the love which He has Himself bestowed, we lead a holy and virtuous life.
 - **CCC 1436**
 - **The Sacraments.... nourishes your soul for charity!**

- **James 2:13-18 - Faith without works is dead!**
 - Will almsgiving atone for your sins if you have no conversion?
 - **St. Augustine** - We must beware, however, lest any one should suppose that gross sins, such as are committed by those who shall not inherit the kingdom of God, may be daily perpetrated, and daily stoned for by almsgiving, The life must be changed for the better; and almsgiving must be used to propitiate God for past sins, not to purchase impunity for the commission of such sins in the future.
 - **St. Augustine** - Those, then, who think that they can by giving alms, however profuse, whether in money or in kind, purchase for themselves the privilege of persisting with impunity in their monstrous crimes and hideous vices, need not thus deceive themselves. For not only do they commit these sins, but they love them so much that they would like to go on forever committing them, if only they could do so with impunity.
 - Your charity must include Christ... your own daily conversion, and that of your neighbor!
 - **CCC 1435**

- **1 Cor. 13:2 - if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.**
 - What is the greatest act of Almsgiving?
 - Forgiving the sins committed against you!
 - Forgiveness is Godliness!

- Commenting on **Matthew 6:14** For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; **15** but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.
 - **St. Augustine** - for to forgive a man who asks for pardon, is really to give alms.
 - **St. Augustine** - And thus there are many kinds of alms, by giving of which we assist to procure the pardon of our sins.
- You reap what you sow...
 - If you want mercy, you must give it!
 - **St. Leo The Great** - Be steadfast, Christian giver: give what you may receive, sow what you may reap, scatter what you may gather. Fear not to spend, sigh not over the doubtfulness of the gain.
 - **St. Leo The Great** - For with the Father on high, he that is not in charity with the brethren, will not be reckoned in the number of His sons. Furthermore, in the distribution of alms and care of the poor, let our Christian fast-times be fat and abound; and let each bestow on the weak and destitute those dainties which he denies himself.
- **What do you have to offer?**
 - In the very act of almsgiving you grow closer to Christ
 - You give to yourself the gift of charity by acting in charity
 - To act with charity for others is to act as Christ!
 - **Matthew 25:40** And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.'
- **How can you incorporate your almsgiving into your Lent?**
 - Time
 - Talent
 - Treasure
- **Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta - Live simply so other may simply live!**
 - See Christ in everyone you meet, and simply give to them the Love you have for Our Lord.
- **Above all... forgive and love!**
 - Father forgive them for the they know not what they do!
 - Today... decide to Love as Christ loves... have mercy on your brothers and sisters that your own sins maybe forgiven!