



Lent Week 4 – Almsgiving

*Heavenly Father, we thank you for the opportunity to gather here tonight in your holy Name.
We ask your blessing upon our Emmaus Group and upon the time we will spend together.
Draw us closer to You through each other. Give us the ability to search our own
hearts and know ourselves ever more, so we might better know You.*

Almsgiving: "Almsgiving, according to the Gospel, is not mere philanthropy: rather it is a concrete expression of charity, a theological virtue that demands interior conversion to love of God and neighbor, in imitation of Jesus Christ, who, dying on the cross, gave His entire self for us." -Pope Benedict XVI At its root, almsgiving and works of mercy are the same. They are "charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbor in his spiritual and bodily necessities." Almsgiving is the "chief witness to fraternal charity," and, as referenced in the Gospels, it is "a work of justice pleasing to God." (CCC 2447)

Read Matthew 6:1-4 out loud first, and then to yourself silently.

Discuss: What word, phrase or idea most jumped out to you?

Discuss: What does almsgiving mean to you? How does Jesus describe giving of ourselves and our possessions?

Discuss: Share about a time when you experienced the temptation to "perform righteous deeds so that others might see them."

Read Matthew 6:19-21 out loud.

Discuss: What treasures are you storing up for yourself? Think about how, where and why you spend your money & time. Do your values match how you spend your money and time?



Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-12 out loud.

Discuss: It can be tempting to give begrudgingly. What does it mean to be a “cheerful giver” as in the passage from second Corinthians?

Discuss: How does God equip us for generosity?

"[For] Love to be real, it must cost—it must hurt—it must empty us of self."

St. Teresa of Calcutta

Discuss: How can we give of ourselves until it hurts, like St. Teresa states?

“The third element is almsgiving: it is a sign of gratuity because alms are given to someone from whom you would not expect to receive anything in return. Gratuity should be one of the characteristics of a Christian, who, aware of having received everything from God freely, that is without any merit, learns to give to others freely. Today often gratuity is not part of everyday life, where everything is bought and sold. Everything is calculation and measurement. Almsgiving helps us to live the gratuitousness of the gift, which is freedom from the obsession with possessing things, [freedom from] the fear of losing what one has, from the sadness of those who do not want to share their well-being with others.”

Pope Francis, Ash Wednesday Homily, 2014

Discuss: Pope Francis states, “Gratuity should be one of the characteristics of a Christian, who aware of having received everything from God freely, that is without any merit, learns to give to others freely.” How can almsgiving and tithing lead to freedom?

Discuss: Do you feel free or tied down to your possessions? What are ways that you can combat a society obsessed with the material world?

Discuss: What is easier for you to give – money or time? How can you grow in a way that will challenge you this Lent?

"What does love look like? It has the hands to help others. It has the feet to hasten to the poor and needy. It has eyes to see misery and want. It has the ears to hear the sighs and sorrows of men. That is what love looks like."

St. Augustine

