

### Our Faith: Almsgiving

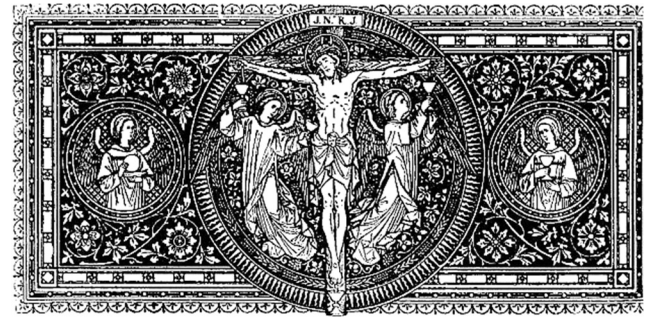
Almsgiving has always been an important part of Lent. It is important to give ourselves the experience of fasting from being un-generous. Generosity is not simply giving excess clothes to a place where poor people might purchase them. It's not even writing a generous cheque for charity. These are wonderful practices, but generosity is really an attitude. Generosity is a recognition that everything we have is a gift, a gift given to be shared. Generosity means that sharing with others in need is a priority. That is quite different from assessing our own needs first, and then giving away what is left over. A spirit of selfless giving means that one of our deepest needs is to share with others. Lent is a wonderful time to practice selfless giving. This kind of self-sacrificing generosity is a religious experience. It places us in solidarity with the poor who share with each other, without having any excess. It also joins us with Jesus, who gave himself completely, for us on the cross. Establishing new patterns of giving will give real life and joy to Lent.

### From the Fathers:

In the preaching of the holy Gospel all should receive a strengthening of their faith. No one should be ashamed of the cross of Christ, through which the world has been redeemed. No one should fear to suffer for the sake of justice; no one should lose confidence in the reward that has been promised. The way to rest is through toil, the way to life is through death. Christ has taken on himself the whole weakness of our lowly human nature. If then we are steadfast in our faith in him and in our love for him, we win the victory that he has won, we receive what he has promised. When it comes to obeying the commandments or enduring adversity, the words uttered by the Father should always echo in our ears: This is my Son, the beloved, in whom I am well pleased; listen to him.

*From a sermon of Pope St Leo the Great*

25<sup>th</sup> February 2024  
Second Sunday of Lent



On this second Sunday in Lent we are given the first prediction of the Lord's Passion. He will 'undergo great suffering and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.' In short, he will suffer the humiliation not only of physical pain, but also total rejection by the religious authorities. In both regards he is to suffer a most un-Messianic fate. The longed-for Messiah was to inherit the throne of David. Indeed, he was to be the definitive David, the definitive King of Israel, a deliverer unsurpassed in power and potency. Such were the expectations of Israel. But instead of the projection of royal power and the promise of victory, the Lord Jesus speaks of suffering. 'And all this he said quite openly'. You can see why it is, then, that St Peter takes the Lord Jesus to task. The apostle cannot accept his master's most un-Messianic message. But this is a failure to understand the purposes of God, which are love because he is Love. Self-sacrificing love is not weakness. It reveals divine strength because God in Christ lives and looks not to himself but wholly to the other and for the other. In fact, for the God of Love there can be no other way than the way of the cross, because the way of the cross is the way of total self-annulment. The cross is God's total self-abandonment for the sake of the world. Christ simply must go to Calvary.

*Gospel: St Mark 8:31-end*