



Serving Those in Need

LYNETTE BALLARD, MAHCM
SENIOR DIRECTOR, LEARNING INTEGRATION, CATHOLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION, ST. LOUIS

OPENING PRAYER

LEADER: From ancient times, the Lord has required the people to care for the poor. When Jesus said “The poor you have always with you,” he was echoing Moses in Deuteronomy 15:11, “The needy will never be lacking in the land; that is why I command you to open your hand to your poor and needy kinsman in your country.” In Isaiah 58:6-7, the prophet said service and generosity were more important than garbing oneself in sackcloth and ashes: “This, rather, is the fasting that I wish,” said Isaiah, “... sharing your bread with the hungry, sheltering the oppressed and the homeless; clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own.” Philanthropy brings those who have resources to the ministries that serve those in need. By loving and serving persons who are in need, we serve Jesus, who became poor for our sake.

READER: (Luke 17:20-21) “Asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he said in reply, “The coming of the kingdom of God cannot be observed, and no one will announce “Look here it is,” or “There it is.” For behold, the kingdom of God is among you.”

READER: (Matthew 7:7-11) “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. Which one of you would hand his son a stone when he asks for a loaf of bread, or a snake when he asks for a fish? If you then, who are wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good things to those who ask him.”

LEADER: Jesus told his followers, “Much will be required of the person entrusted with much,

and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more.” Philanthropy is not a way to bury treasure but to use what is precious to help the kingdom of God to come about. It is a way to make life more abundant for others; a way of being in solidarity with persons who are poor; a form of social justice and a correction of injustices.

INTERCESSIONS

LEADER: For whom shall we pray? Who needs our prayers today? (*Pause for replies from the congregation.*)

RESPONSE: *Lord, hear our prayer.*

LEADER: Small and large acts of generosity can result in unforetold growth and goodness. It is a way to plant and nurture love here on earth, love that may find its fulfillment in the future far beyond the end of our lives. It starts being about money and causes us to consider what money means when we give it away. It’s about letting go and having confidence that what we give will somehow fulfill God’s plan.

READER: (Matthew 6:19-21) “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and decay destroys, and thieves break in and steal. But store up treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor decay destroy, nor thieves break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.”

CLOSING PRAYER

ALL: Gracious God, may your love multiply the effects of our acts of generosity and kindness. Help us to know your will and to be open to ways we can serve to build your kingdom here and now. Teach us how to detach ourselves from worldly goods in order to bring about a world that is more just, where all people can flourish and where love will abound. We pray in your holy name. Amen.

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