

# ALMSGIVING AT A DISTANCE

## Ideas for Families to Give Generously While Quarantined

As Christians, we grow in our Faith and become more like Christ as we pray, fast, and give alms. During this extended time at home, there are many easy-to-think-of ways to pray and to fast, but what about giving alms?

Almsgiving is showing mercy to those who need our help. St. Leo the Great says,

**“With holy fasting, no work may be more fruitfully associated than almsgiving which, under the one name of mercy, embraces many good works. The field of works of mercy is immense.”**

There are lots of ways to give alms; during this time of being in our houses, we just need to be more creative!

St. Peter of Damascus agrees and adds some ideas,

**“The merciful person is he who gives to others what he has himself received from God, whether it be money, or food, or strength, a helpful word, a prayer, or anything else that he has through which he can express his compassion for those in need.”**

Compassion means to walk with someone during a hard time he or she is having. Who do you know who is having a difficult time right now?

# **1 Pray for everyone you know. Literally.**

- First, make a list of different groups of people you know, such as relatives, neighbors, church friends, school mates, friends from clubs/activities, coworkers, old friends, friends from camp, people you know but have never met in person, and even people you don't particularly get along with.
- Write each group name at the top of a separate blank sheet of paper.
- List everyone whose name you know in each group.
- Go through each page, praying "Lord, have mercy on \_\_\_\_\_" for each person.
- Add names whenever you think of someone you missed.
- Each person in the family can make his or her own lists, or work together to create one big set of lists for all family members to add to and pray through.

# **2 Strengthen someone with the sound of your voice and kind words.**

- Look through your prayer lists above. Pick someone who you think may be going through a difficult time or may be sad, lonely, or scared.
- Call or video chat with the person to say that you are thinking about and praying for him or her.
- If you want to, you could sing a favorite song, tell a funny joke or interesting story, or simply ask how the other person is doing.
- If you don't like talking on the phone or by video chat, record an audio or video clip and send it instead. That might be a way to start ongoing communication back and forth.

### **3 Encourage someone with helpful words or beautiful drawings.**

- Find verses in the Bible that can remind someone that God loves and cares for us all.
- Write these verses in a card or in a letter.
- If you are feeling artistic, draw something beautiful to go along with the verses.
- Mail the card or letter, or take a photo and email/message/text it to the person to brighten his or her day.

#### **Consider sending a card to someone in prison.**

What should you include? Drawings and verses are a good idea. You can also write a little bit about yourself (such as your first name and age), what you like to do, and the names of any pets. You can also write that you will pray for him or her (even though you don't know his or her name, God does!). It's not a good idea to ask about why the person is in prison or to share details about yourself that are too personal (such as your address).

Place each card or letter inside a blank envelope. Put a stamp on the envelope, but do not seal the envelope. Place the envelope(s) in a larger envelope and mail to:

Fr. David J. Randolph  
Orthodox Prison Ministry  
PO Box 187  
Okahumpka, FL 34762

Fr. David will make sure your card or letter gets to someone in prison who needs to see what you have to say. Remember to pray for the person or people who will receive your encouragement.

## **4 Give food to those who need it, safely and creatively.**

Usually, making and taking food to others is a good idea. However, with all the germs going around, it's best to share love and not sickness. There are still some ways to help those who do not have enough to eat.

- Make a donation to a church or organization that provides meals for those who cannot afford groceries. Most communities in the United States have a Meals on Wheels program that could use some money to buy and deliver food for senior citizens. (Find the closest one at [www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org](http://www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org).)
- Use a food delivery service to buy a meal for someone you know who is having a difficult time.
  - First, contact the person to find out what he or she likes to eat (and if there are any allergies) and plan a convenient time.
  - Place a phone or online order at a locally owned restaurant, and let one of the delivery services take the food to the person (don't forget to include a tip!).
  - Follow up with a phone call or text to make sure the person received the food, and chat for a few minutes.
- If you don't have money to give food, ask whoever does your grocery shopping to cut back on junk food or unnecessary purchases and use the money that is saved to buy food for someone else. Christians in the early church would sometimes go without food for a day or more at a time so that others could eat!

## **5 Donate money to an organization that is helping people with their needs.**

If you and your family have money\* to give,

- Check with your priest to see if your church has a “discretionary fund” and to find out how the church is helping those who come or call with needs. Ask how is the best way to send money so the church has more to give to those who ask.
- On their websites, many organizations such as homeless shelters have “wish lists” (at Amazon or other stores) for items that they need to operate. Find an organization that interests you, pick an item off their list, and have it sent directly to the organization.
- Contact your local pregnancy center to find out if they need diapers, wipes, or formula, and order a shipment of supplies directly to the center.

\* Don't have a lot of money right now? For creative ideas, check out the article, “On Finding Ways To Help Even on a Limited Budget” ([orthodoxchristianparenting.wordpress.com/2017/07/05/on-finding-a-way-to-help-even-on-a-limited-budget](http://orthodoxchristianparenting.wordpress.com/2017/07/05/on-finding-a-way-to-help-even-on-a-limited-budget)). This was written before the current pandemic, so please adapt as necessary.

## **6 Clean house!**

Many of us have much more stuff than we need and there are other people who don't have enough. Now is a great time to get rid of extras.

- Go through your clothes, toys, games, books, and anything else you no longer need to donate to someone else.
- Many thrift stores and clothing banks are not collecting right now, but you can place all the items in boxes or bags for later.
- Be sure to check what kinds of items your local donation center will and won't accept. For example, they probably don't need your worn out sneakers or want an outdated electronic game.

## 7 Remember to care for the carers.

- You might not be able to go out and visit someone who is sick or take food to someone who is hungry, but you can pray for and encourage the people who are doing those things. They are probably working extra hard right now, and God, through our prayers and support, can give them strength to do their work.
- If a grownup in your family is able to go out and help someone, do your part around the house, perhaps doing extra chores without complaining, to make his or her life easier when he or she gets back. That way, you are helping, too!

## 8 Be creative!

Together, come up with other ways that your family can help the people who need help in your church and community. Add them here:

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Not sure what to do? Ask your priest for specific ways that your family can help others in your parish and community!

Remember, St. Gregory the Theologian says,

**“Give something, however small, to the one in need. For it is not small to one who has nothing. Neither is it small to God, if we have given what we could.”**