

PRAYER OF COMMITMENT



Father, God how do we thank Thee as we ought for Thy goodness to us? We slept in comfortable beds last night between clean sheets. Millions of people in cities and in other parts of the world slept on the streets.

We awakened to a good breakfast this morning, with a promise of more than enough to eat for lunch and dinner. Millions had no breakfast this morning, nor yesterday, nor the day before, and they have no prospect of lunch or dinner in the foreseeable future.

We live in comfortable homes while millions are homeless in refugee camps or worse.

Dear God, forgive us for complaining, for never thanking Thee, for behaving as though we deserve these benefits in contrast to those who are without.

Don't let us lose these blessings to appreciate them. We pray in the name of Him whose heart was the hungry, the homeless, the naked and the oppressed.

Amen.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

ALMSGIVING

In Christ's teachings, almsgiving goes together with fasting and prayer. When one prays and fasts, one must show love through active generosity to others. Giving alms should be a sacrificial act if it has any worth. One cannot give merely what is left over when all his own needs are satisfied. One must take from oneself and give to others. In the spiritual tradition of the Church, it is the teaching that what one saves through fasting and abstinence, for example during the special Lenten season, should not be kept for other times, but should be given away to the poor.

ALMS BOX

We propose that you use a household ALMS BOX. Augment your personal prayer life with communal prayer with the other members of your family each day during the Great Lent. Choose a time when your entire household can be present. After prayer and appropriate Scriptural reading, each member of the family should place his personal offering in the box. Parents of younger children will find it helpful to discuss the joy of giving and emulating Christ, who loved us and taught us to alleviate human suffering.



"...nothing is so strong and powerful to extinguish the fire of our sins as almsgiving." —St. John Chrysostom



45
YEARS
FOOD FOR HUNGRY PEOPLE
AND CHARITABLE OUTREACH

For 45 years we have challenged every family in our Archdiocese to feed and care for their hungry brothers and sisters.

For 45 years we have responded to that challenge and shown our love to the hungry, hurting people in our own neighborhoods, as well as to those in hidden corners of the world.

For 45 years we have:

- Helped the homeless and the sick
- Fed hungry babies, children, and adults
- Sheltered and guided run-away teenagers
- Aided and visited those in prison, and cared for their families
- Brought clothes and hope to the homeless
- Provided food and medicine for war-torn and disaster-struck victims

As we enter into the Great Lenten Season—
Let us continue to strive to help those in need.

As we fast and curtail our eating habits—
Let us set aside the extra money we would have spent on food and give it to the poor.
This will make our fasting and almsgiving complete.

As we increase our prayers, both privately and in church—
Let us set aside those extra dollars we would have spent at the movies, or going out with friends.
This will help put our prayers into action.

And, as we strive to control our passions—
Let us help those whose only passion is to have a piece of bread to eat, a glass of clean water to drink, or a warm safe place to rest their heads.
This will enable us to meet Christ in these, 'the least of our brethren.'

Thank you for 45 years of continued support of our Food for Hungry People program and for allowing us to care for those less fortunate.

Robin

Robin Lynn Nicholas
Food for Hungry People and
Charitable Outreach Chairman


FOOD
FOR
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OUR HOLY FATHER JOHN CHRYSOSTOM reminds us that: “...the scripture says, ‘Deprive not the poor of his living.’ Now to deprive is to take what belongs to another. For our money is the Lord’s, no matter how we may have acquired it. This is why God has allowed you to have more: not for you to waste on drink, fancy food, expensive clothes, and all kinds of indolence, but for you to distribute to those in need.”

TRUE STORY

Here is a true story from one of our parishioners, Charmaine Darmour – President of Antiochian Women, Diocese of Los Angeles and The West:



“Mid-January on a Sunday morning, I took my mother to get her hair done – before Church. When I pulled into the parking spot there was a lady huddled on the cold ground in front of the salon. It was 45 degrees outside and I was pretty sure she had been there all night. It also seemed that she was talking to people who were not there or at least I could not see. There was no way I could just sit in my warm car and read until my mom was done, and watch my 90 year old mother walk by this lady again and then proceed to Church. **Matthew 25:40** was loud in my head! I **had** to do something. Off I went to the Del Taco and bought her breakfast. When I gave her the food, I told her our City has just opened a new shelter where she could sleep in a warm bed and get hot meals; and if she wanted to go there I would make the arrangements. She said, ‘Yes’ and told me her name was ‘Janet.’ Since I work at the Police Department, I was familiar with the Homeless Outreach Team (HOT). I made a phone call to one of the HOT team Sergeants. He said they would try to contact Janet that morning. My mother and I went off to Church and one hour later I received a text during Liturgy. I had to look at my phone to see what had happened and saw that Janet had declined any services. During Coffee Hour I spoke with Fr. Tassos and shared my disappointment that Janet refused the services and he replied, ‘trying to help her was an experience in “Theosis.”’ I was still very sad and concerned about Janet. It was so cold outside, especially with the torrential rain we were experiencing. Janet was continually on my mind and in my prayers. A week later, while at work I mentioned Janet to one of my co-workers who was also a member of the HOT Team. He immediately said, “Send me her photo, name and any other information you have and I will go look for her tomorrow.” To my GREAT JOY, the next night I was notified that he had found her. Janet was now off the streets and would be receiving the help she so desperately needed.”

Our Lord Jesus Christ, instructs us to make the needs of others our own and that is exactly what our dear Charmaine had experienced.

“The bread you do not use belongs to the hungry. The garment hanging in your closet that you do not use is the garment of the person who is naked. The shoes you do not wear are the shoes for the person who is barefoot. The money you keep locked away is the money for the poor.” —St Basil the Great

ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE
OF NORTH AMERICA

Beloved in Christ,

Greetings to you in the Name of Our Great God, and Savior, Jesus Christ!

As we begin this most holy time of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, let us turn our attention once again to the Food for Hungry People and Charitable Outreach Program of our Archdiocese. Over the span of forty-five years, this campaign has had a tremendous impact throughout the world, helping to alleviate the suffering and hunger caused by poverty, war, and numberless tragedies. Today, we see humanitarian disasters ensuing from the recent wars abroad, numerous natural disasters, and global economic instability, and we depend now more than ever on your support to help the victims of these man-made and natural tragedies.


St John Chrysostom, perhaps the greatest preacher in the history of the Church, once said:

“Although fasting is more difficult than this, nothing is so strong and powerful to extinguish the fire of our sins as almsgiving. It is greater than all other virtues. It places its lovers by the side of the King Himself, and justly. For the effect of fasting is confined to those who fast, and no other is saved thereby. But almsgiving extends to all, embracing the members of Christ, and actions that extend their effects to many are far greater than those which are confined to one.”


Through your generosity to the Food for Hungry People campaign, you embrace the world with the love of Christ, saving yourself as you work to save others.

We urge you, during this season of prayer, self-discipline and fasting, to be very generous in your contribution to this campaign. As we practice the virtues that cleanse our souls, let us not forget or refrain from the “greatest of the virtues.” As important as prayer and fasting are, they are of no avail to us if we fail to give to those in need.

Asking the Almighty God to bless you during this journey to Pascha, I remain,



Your Father in Christ,



+JOSEPH
Archbishop of New York and Metropolitan of all North America

45
YEARS

FOOD
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GREAT LENT

PRAYER

FASTING

The season of Great Lent is the time of preparation for the feast of the Resurrection of Christ. It is the living symbol of man’s entire life which is to be fulfilled in his own resurrection from the dead with Christ. It is a time of renewed devotion: of prayer, fasting and almsgiving. It is a time of repentance, a real renewal of our minds, hearts and deeds in conformity with Christ and His teachings. It is the time, most of all, of our return to the great commandments of loving God and our neighbors.

All the virtues and powers of God are attained primarily by prayer. Without prayer, there is no spiritual life. As the Russian Bishop, St. Theophan the Recluse, has said, “Prayer is the test of everything; prayer is also the source of everything; prayer is the force of everything; prayer is the director of everything. If prayer is right, everything is right. For prayer will not allow anything to go wrong. If you are not successful in your prayer, you will not be successful in anything, for prayer is the root of everything.”

Jesus Himself fasted and taught His disciples to fast. The purpose of fasting is to gain mastery over oneself and to conquer the passions of the flesh. It is to liberate oneself from dependence on the things of this world in order to concentrate on the things of the Kingdom of God. We are called upon to fast not only for reasons of self-control and prayer, but also for reasons of love: to deny ourselves something, that we may share what we have saved with a needy person.

“What does it profit my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works? Can his faith save him? If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and filled,’ without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. But someone will say, ‘You have faith and I have works.’ Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith.”

— James 2:14–18