



LIFE APPLICATIONS “I CORINTHIANS”

Chapter 16

GIVE TO CHARITY

Our Lord explicitly instructs us to give to the poor (Matthew 19:21; Mark 10:21; Luke 11:41; 12:33), and the centurion Cornelius was told that he was blessed because he prayed and gave to the poor (Acts 10:4). Charitable giving is essential to the Christian life.

We should remember that Christ instructs us that assisting the needy is to give aid to Him; we therefore should serve the poor and outcasts in the same way that we attempt to serve Christ if we saw Him in dire straits. St. John Chrysostom writes:

Do you wish to honor the Body of the Savior? Do not despise it when it is naked. Do not honor it in church with silk vestments while outside it is naked and numb with cold. He who said, ‘This is my body,’ and made it so by his word, is the same who said, ‘You saw me hungry and you gave me no food. As you did it not to the least of these, you did it not to me.’ Honor him then by sharing your property with the poor. For what God needs is not golden chalices but golden souls.

Such service should be indiscriminate; we address the need, and not the virtue of the person, as St. Maximos the Confessor teaches: “He who gives alms in imitation of God does not discriminate between the wicked and the virtuous, the just and the unjust, when providing for men’s bodily needs.”

Many opportunities to give money to charitable causes; there are additional opportunities to give to Orthodox Christian charities. For example, the Department of Youth Ministry in the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America is raising money for its St. John Chrysostom Youth Worker Fund, which provides scholarships for youth workers pursuing an education and training through the Antiochian House of Studies.

You can also tell your parents that, in workplaces that allow deductions for charities (and frequently have charity enrollment drives each year), the International Orthodox Christian Charities is an official non-profit organization that can be specified on their enrollment sheet (and, if the ICOC is not on the list of recognized charities, they can talk to the appropriate department about including the ministry). There are at least as many charities as there are reasons for which to give money.

God may call those who are blessed with notable financial affluence to greater giving. Many parishes need repairs performed, equipment or resources purchased, or activities financed; it could be that God is calling you to give of your largesse to His Church. On a larger scale, our dioceses and archdioceses always need funds for our national programs, and our seminaries depend upon donations to educate the next generation of clergy and church leaders. All of these are needs that can be met by giving.