

# Fourth Week of Lent



## Blessing for an Alms Box

Generous God,  
how great is your love,  
how small our hearts.  
You hear the cry of the poor,  
when we are too often deaf.  
We want to have larger hearts,  
dear God.  
We want to be people of love.  
Bless our Lenten sacrifices,  
and tune our ears to hear  
the cry of the poor.  
Bless this alms box.  
May it remind us to share  
the abundant blessings we receive  
with our brothers and sisters  
throughout the world.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

**March 22, 2009**  
**Joyful Givers**

The fourth Sunday of Lent, *Laetare Sunday*, is named for the first words of the Latin Mass text, *Laetare Jerusalem*, meaning "Rejoice, O Jerusalem." We rejoice because, in the words of today's Gospel (John 3:14–21), for "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son . . ." The greatest gift we can receive is the gift of God's love in the person of Christ. But love is a special kind of gift. It can only be received, truly acknowledged and taken in, when it is given back. We cannot hoard love. Almsgiving is the practice of responding to and returning God's love by sharing the blessings we receive with others. Almsgiving acknowledges that

we are all children of a heavenly father whose blessings are meant for all. The more love we give, the more we are able to receive. Lent is a time to take stock of ourselves. Am I good at giving? Am I stingy, greedy, or self-absorbed? Do I have trouble receiving love? Do I give money but hoard my time or hide my talents? This Lent, use an alms box to collect money for those in need. Think of the many other gifts or talents you have received and how you might share them. Jot down your commitment to use these gifts and place it in the alms box as well. Measure your growth as a giver by the increase in your interior joy.



# This Week at Home

## Monday, March 23

### Looking Ahead

Midway through Lent, we focus on where this holy season is taking us: to the celebration of the Resurrection and the gift of eternal life in Christ. It was customary for the Pope to carry a golden rose after celebrating Mass on the Fourth Sunday of Lent, as a symbol of the glory of Christ, who flowered from the family tree of Jesse ("A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse . . ." Isaiah 11:1). Reflect on the Resurrection this week. Read today's First Reading (Isaiah 65:17-21). Decorate your dinner table with pictures of golden roses in anticipation of the celebration of the Resurrection.

## Tuesday, March 24

### Learning How to Help

As we look forward to the Resurrection we are still mindful of those who suffer on earth. One way to help them is to learn how political processes are often connected with the root causes of world poverty. Catholic Relief Services (CRS) provides policy analysis in the light of Christian social values, suggesting ways to get involved politically as an advocate for change. Visit the CRS Action Center: <http://actioncenter.crs.org/> or inquire by calling 1-888-277-7575. Then invite friends over for a serious discussion about what you can do.

## Wednesday, March 25

### Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord

Today's solemnity celebrates God's communication to Mary, through the angel Gabriel, that she would be the mother of the Messiah, the "Son of the Most High" (Today's Gospel: Luke 1:26-38.) How did Mary react to God's gift? Read and reflect on her response in the words of the beautiful prayer we call the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55).

## Thursday, March 26

### An Ancient Tradition

Alms boxes, or poor boxes, are an ancient Jewish tradition. In the words of a Jewish sage, in his interpretation of the book of Leviticus, "More than what the householder does for the poor person, the poor person does for the householder" (Leviticus, [*Rabbah*] 34:10). It is customary to put money into the box

before praying, before eating, before going on a journey, and at times of thanksgiving. Alms boxes are sometimes called mite boxes, in reference to the story of the widow whose unselfish giving gained the respect of Jesus (Mark 12:42).



## Friday, March 27

### Monastery Pumpkin Soup

This recipe, from the Benedictine Monastery of the Holy Cross in Chicago, makes a wonderful Friday supper. Melt 2 to 3 tablespoons of butter in a pot. Add enough flour to make a roux (paste) and simmer, stirring for one minute. Slowly add 3 cups of milk while stirring making sure that the mixture is neither too thick nor too thin. Add 2 cups of vegetable stock and simmer for a few minutes. Add one large can of pumpkin (or three cups of mashed, fresh-cooked sweet pumpkin) and a pinch of cayenne pepper. Simmer soup until thickened. Just before serving, add 1½ cups grated sharp cheddar cheese, stirring to blend and melt. Sprinkle paprika to taste over the soup and serve. Try eating your meal Benedictine style, in silence!

## Saturday, March 28

### Where Does He Come From?

Today's Gospel reading (John 7:40-53) shows us how conflicted the Jewish community was about Jesus. Some were powerfully drawn to him: "Never has anyone spoken like this!" But the chief priests and Pharisees insist that he is from Galilee, and since the prophecy says the messiah will be born in Bethlehem, they will not believe he is from God. He does not fit their interpretation of the law. The scene ends in division as each person goes home. What convinces you that Jesus is from God?

