



# Great Lent Giveaway 2017 Life!

## Youth Group Session 2 –

### Compassion in Action! - Christian Almsgiving

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(Originally created for GLG 2013 modified by the Office of Youth Ministry 2017)

## Leader Packet Background

**Goal** - To make youth aware of the plight of the poor and their suffering, leading to the possibility of the charitable engagement, service in love.

### I. Introduction

This session is designed to engage students to use their desire to help others and to creatively address the needs of the poor and those in distress who they may encounter in their lives. This will focus on two general areas - determining the need of the poor, and engaging our resources to help.

Our almsgiving is not only an attitude of the heart, but a course of action. When encountering others in need we may react emotionally - and this is not always wise. Love is more than an emotion - it is an engagement in the life of another. In some cases, like the emergency care by first responders at an accident scene, personal reactions have to be stifled, less the emotional impact of the crash be too overwhelming to allow the essential life saving measures to be swiftly and effectively applied. To love someone in need may mean first approaching them with gentleness and ascertaining what their true need is, then engaging our personal resources and the help of others to make a difference.

### **II. Determining the Need of the One Afflicted**

We need to picture the plight of the victim. In part this 'vision' of the poor person (he *saw* him) leads to a growing awareness of the real needs of the afflicted. Sometimes it means peering beyond the externals and listening intently to hear the story of others. Such attention leads to the experience of compassion in the heart, prompting a response to action. The encounter must center on the life of the one afflicted, not the agenda of the caregiver. The discussion on the needs hopefully helps to sharpen that focus, and begins to give us clues how we can actually help.

### **III. The Samaritan Gets Busy**

The parable is filled with action verbs which describe the Samaritan:

he *saw* him,  
he *took pity* on him.  
he *went* to him  
*bandaged* his wounds  
*poured* oil and wine on his wounds  
*lifted* the man on his own donkey,  
*brought* him to an inn  
and *took care* of him

Charity in this way is identified with acting out of a compassionate heart. It is not enough to care or feel sorry for others. There are usually things we can do that can make a real difference.

### **III. Beyond the Human Caring and Giving**

All true charity is a reflection and revelation of divine love. God, Who is Love, reveals himself through the expression of love of human beings - as a fruit of the Incarnation. Divine love is often expressed in simple, not necessarily heroic ways. It is self-emptying and focused on the Other. This is why the Church saw the Parable as something of an icon of Christ Himself. When the power of divine love is at work, human efforts - seemingly incidental - can work miracles. An excerpt from a homily by St. Ambrose is available here:

[http://books.google.com/books?id=Gh6sFDUfq8cC&pg=PA179&lpg=PA179&dq=good+samaritan+Ambrose+%22exposition+of+the+gospel+of+luke%22&source=bl&ots=j\\_U3mEv5jK&sig=3BDfyyGoK8K\\_O\\_wotdCABLSINPE&hl=en&sa=X&ei=TZxtUa\\_NJMan0AGQ\\_YGoBQ&ved=0CDEQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=good%20samaritan%20Ambrose%20%22exposition%20of%20the%20gospel%20of%20luke%22&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=Gh6sFDUfq8cC&pg=PA179&lpg=PA179&dq=good+samaritan+Ambrose+%22exposition+of+the+gospel+of+luke%22&source=bl&ots=j_U3mEv5jK&sig=3BDfyyGoK8K_O_wotdCABLSINPE&hl=en&sa=X&ei=TZxtUa_NJMan0AGQ_YGoBQ&ved=0CDEQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=good%20samaritan%20Ambrose%20%22exposition%20of%20the%20gospel%20of%20luke%22&f=false)

## **Session II Outline - Compassion in Action**

### **I. Opening prayer** - Recite together

From the Lenten Triodion (First Wed - Vespers)

*'While fasting bodily let us also fast in spirit. Let us loose every bond of iniquity. Let us undo the knot of every contract made by violence. Let us tear up all unjust agreements. Let us give bread to the hungry and welcome to our house the poor who have no roof to cover them, that we may receive great mercy from Christ our God.'*

### **II. Recognizing the need in our Brother**

Watch this video from provided on Youtube. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D38S9o\\_6qnc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D38S9o_6qnc)

What did you think of the video? Allow time for discussion. We often do not know what struggles a person is going through based on just looking at them. We cannot understand who they truly are until we take the time to know them. Do you sometimes make judgments about people simply based on how they look? Do we possibly miss out on helping someone in need by not truly *looking* at them? Do we possibly miss out on helping someone by not truly listening to them?

**Read the Scripture Passage** - Let's take a look at the scripture passage to begin our discussion today. Compassion for my neighbor (Parable of the Good Samaritan) **Lk. 10:25-37**

### **III. Questions!**

The questions below to begin discussion. Either keep the group together and pose the questions to them allowing time for discussion or break them up into three groups allowing them time to discuss and then share their thoughts with the group. Utilize a white board or easel pad paper to write down the main points of their discussion.

Question 1: The Samaritan 'had compassion' on the afflicted man and was moved in his heart. If you have been so moved in your heart, what do you want to do? What *can* you do?

Question 2. What did the Samaritan do for his neighbor? What are the verbs that describe his actions? (consult the bible passage - use imagination.) Charity is often about *doing*, not just feeling.

*Some possible responses:*

- he *went* to him - to go is the first step, to draw close not only in body but in spirit

- *bandaged* his wounds - providing medical care as well as healing emotional wounds through comforting words and gestures
- 
- *poured* oil and wine on his wounds - applying specific treatments to areas of need.
- *lifted* the man on his own donkey - he provided transportation so that more help could be received.
- *brought* him to an inn - he took the man himself
- and *took care* of him - stayed with him in his need, overnight
- gave the innkeeper *his money* - so that he would be cared for after he left
- *promised* to return - to visit and pay for additional expenses for his care. (hospital bill)



*Notes:* Any of these verbs could serve as a jumping off point to open the discussion to all manner of ways in which we can help people in need. The imagery of bandaging and pouring in oil and wine should be explained as images of the Church's healing for the whole person - especially spiritual healing. The Mystery of Holy Anointing brings healing to our inner soul, afflicted by sin, as well as our body. We celebrate this Mystery on Great and Holy Wednesday.

Question 3. What is one thing that the passage doesn't say directly that we might consider doing as well?

*Some possible responses:*

- *Pray* - Seeking God's will helps to guide our actions. In helping situations we need to rely not only upon our own strength but upon God's grace. This will bring His grace to the situation where it's needed.

- *Think First* before jumping in - charity does not mean foolishness or being simplistic about what a situation requires. Orthodoxy stresses this using terms like 'discernment' to guide us into the right approach in these situations. Sometimes, it may mean diving right in. In other situations, the prudent path might be more cautious. Ask your Spiritual Father for guidance, so your reaction is not emotionally based.

- Ask ourselves, "What resources do I/we have to offer?" Often our helping requires us to be creative to be helpful. Often young people can be very creative in finding ways. Also, we should be careful about promising help to people when we may not be able to deliver it.



Question 4. One of the goals of the Great Lent Giveaway is trying to help us focus on the needs of people in need, to help mothers and babies who may be without. How can the actions of the Samaritan in the story of the Good Samaritan help us find ways to do things where we can participate in such charitable work?

*Some related questions that you should utilize when the discussion is held in or presented to the group:*

- Just as the Samaritan solicited the help of the Innkeeper, how can we work with ZOE for Life to bring this about? We don't have to do it all by ourselves!

- Just as the Samaritan used the money available to him to provide help and encouragement for the afflicted man, how can our money be used to support worthy charities, such as the ZOE? How can this bring encouragement to someone suffering?

- Is it better for us to use our own money for these things, or raise money from others? Is Almsgiving about raising money or offering our own?

*Note:* When we do a fund raising event in the right spirit, we are offering our time and talents, and often expend money as well so as to join with others, to provide help for people in need. So to have a benefit dinner, it takes time, effort, food for the meal, etc. from which the proceeds can benefit the charitable work. Fundraising is not a replacement for almsgiving and personal financial offerings for people in need, but might work along side with it.

Question 5 - Is there some way that the spirit of Almsgiving can overflow past these weeks of Lent, to other projects and charitable efforts in our parish? Sponsored by our youth group?

Sometimes it can be overwhelming when we see the needs of a person or situation. Often we are not able (and must not try) to meet all the needs. Just begin with what we can do, and hopefully do well. The Samaritan is a Superman when it comes to Charity!

There is another great Take Home Challenge for you and your family to work on together. Make sure to bring it with you to our next GLG session!



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#### **IV. Closing Reflection/Prayer - From St. John Chrysostom**

“Let us not overlook such a tragedy as that. Let us not hurry past so pitiable a sight without taking pity. Even if others do so, you must not. Do not say to yourself: ‘I am no priest or monk; I have a wife and children. This is a work for the priests; this is work for the monks.’ The Samaritan did not say: ‘Where are the priests now? Where are the Pharisees now? Where are the teachers of the Jews?’ But the Samaritan is like a man who found some great store of booty and got the profit.

“Therefore, when you see someone in need of treatment for some ailment of the body or soul, do not say to yourself: ‘Why did so-and-so or so-and-so not take care of him?’ You free him from his sickness; do not demand an accounting from others for their negligence. Tell me this. If you find a gold coin lying on the ground, do you say to yourself: ‘Why didn’t so-and-so pick it up?’ Do you not rush to snatch it up before somebody else does?

“Think the same way about your fallen brothers; consider that tending his wounds is like finding a treasure. If you pour the word of instruction on his wounds like oil, if you bind them up with your mildness, and cure them with your patience, your wounded brother has made you a richer man than any treasure could. Jeremiah said: ‘He who has brought forth the precious from the vile will be as my mouth.’ What could we compare to that? No fasting, no sleeping on the ground, no watching and praying all night, nor anything else can do as much for you as saving your brother can accomplish.”

St John Chrysostom, *Eighth Homily against the Judaizers 4: 1-3*

*Note:* It would be worthwhile to ask, after Pascha, if anyone experienced the spiritual fruits of Charity mentioned by St. John in the quotation above. These 'treasures' are gifts God bestows in the hearts of those who love, helping them to grow in His likeness, becoming God-like. If the youth group were to do a project together, the experience of working together can be discussed and encouraged for future work.

Additional Activity from the Office of Youth Ministry- Reaching out at Home! Each of our communities serves youth with disabilities and life-threatening illness. In this session, Fr. Robert encourages us to “take it past” Great Lent. Discuss with your parish priest and your youth concerning reaching out to mother's and babies in your community. Children’s hospitals, children’s wards in regular hospitals, special needs programs all provide opportunities for volunteers to work with or help these individuals. In addition to granting our wish with the Great Lent Giveaway, commit to helping mom's and babies all year long!

# Take Home Exercise – Compassion in Action

## Session 2 - Who is my Neighbor?

Scenario: A new young, single mom does not have the support of her family. It is becoming difficult to hold down a job, go to school and take care of her daughter. She is almost at the end of her rope.

Note - Being overwhelmed and alone is like a 'robber' which can beat us down, strip us of our strength and leave us near death, both physically and emotionally.

Question 1 - List ways that you think that someone might be able to help this young mom? Be creative!

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

Question 2 - Of these ways you think that someone might be able to help this young mom, would there be any that **you** (or your family) could do?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

Part II - How do we Carry Out Almsgiving as the Church?



