

## Giving at Christmas

As we enter these hope-filled and joyous seasons of Advent and Christmas, our own sense of gratitude leads us to a heightened empathy with the many who struggle during this time, their hardship made all the more difficult for them as they see the wealth around them. As our economy gradually improves, the fact is that for millions of people, things are not getting better. Most of us are aware that cuts in the U.S. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – SNAP – went into effect last winter. Since then, charitable food banks and pantries have seen a growing demand to assist the nearly 48 million Americans on SNAP who have experienced these cuts.

Many of those affected by cutbacks in the government food program are children. At the same time, the National Center for Homeless Education reports there are 12 million homeless children in K-12th grade classrooms in America, and that despite improvements in the economy,



this figure has gotten worse in 41 states. These are just two examples of the continuing and growing blight of poverty. Homelessness and hunger are not the legacy Christian stewards want to bestow on our nation's children, nor on hungry children in nations throughout the world.

During the Christmas season, it's especially important to remember our commitment to a Lord who

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comes to bring Good News to the poor. It can be tempting to neglect charitable giving as we focus on family gift-giving and the added expenses of the season. But as Christian stewards, we know that this is precisely the time when sacrifice for others expresses our gratitude for the sacrificial gift of Christ to the world. What can we do?



- Make a generous donation to an agency that distributes food such as your local food bank.
- Ask your parish, or local Catholic Charities, how you can assist a family who may need help at Christmas.
- Take the opportunity to educate your children about poverty, and help them to participate in giving trees and food drives at school. Whenever possible, help them to connect personally by assisting at shelters and food kitchens. Discuss with your family how you might sacrificially limit spending on certain items in an effort to share more generously with those in need in your community.
- Explore how you can help address issues of poverty legislatively and practically by visiting the website of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.