



Asian Journal of Religious Studies

“The Lord is truly among us.”

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Editorial

Giving with Dignity

Pope Francis has offered a concrete, permanently useful prescription for dealing with those who request alms from us. It's simple: "Give them the money, and don't worry about it."

The pope's advice, from an interview with a Milan magazine published just before the beginning of Lent, is startlingly simple. "It's scripturally sound but may be confusing."

"Living in the city means that at some point in your day, or week, a person seeming (or claiming) to be homeless, or suffering with a disability, will ask you for help," reports *New York Times*.

Speaking to the magazine *Scarp de' Tennis*, which means Tennis Shoes, a monthly for and about the homeless and marginalized, the Pope said that giving something to someone in need is "always right." He added: "In the shoes of the other, we learn to have a great capacity for understanding, for getting to know difficult situations."

He added: "Here in the Vatican there are two parishes, and both are housing Syrian families. Many parishes in Rome have also opened their doors and others, which don't have a house for priests, have offered to pay rent for families in need, for a full year."

But what if someone uses the money for, say, a glass of wine? His answer: If “a glass of wine is the only happiness he has in life, that’s O.K. Instead, ask yourself, what do you do on the sly? What ‘happiness’ do you seek in secret?” Another way to look at it, he said, is to recognize how you are the “luckier” one, with a home, a spouse and children, and then ask why your responsibility to help should be pushed onto someone else.

Then he posed a greater challenge. He said the way of giving is as important as the gift. You should not simply drop a bill into a cup and walk away. You must stop, look the person in the eyes, and touch his or her hands.

The reason is to preserve dignity, to see another person not as a pathology or a social condition, but as a human, with a life whose value is equal to your own. “This message runs through Francis’ preaching and writings, which always seem to turn on the practical and personal, often citing the people he met and served as a parish priest in Argentina,” writes *New York Times* in its editorial page.

May we learn to give without counting the cost for us! May we learn to give and empower the other in his freedom and dignity! We have received freely! We are privileged to give freely!

Kuruvilla Pandikattu SJ
The Editor