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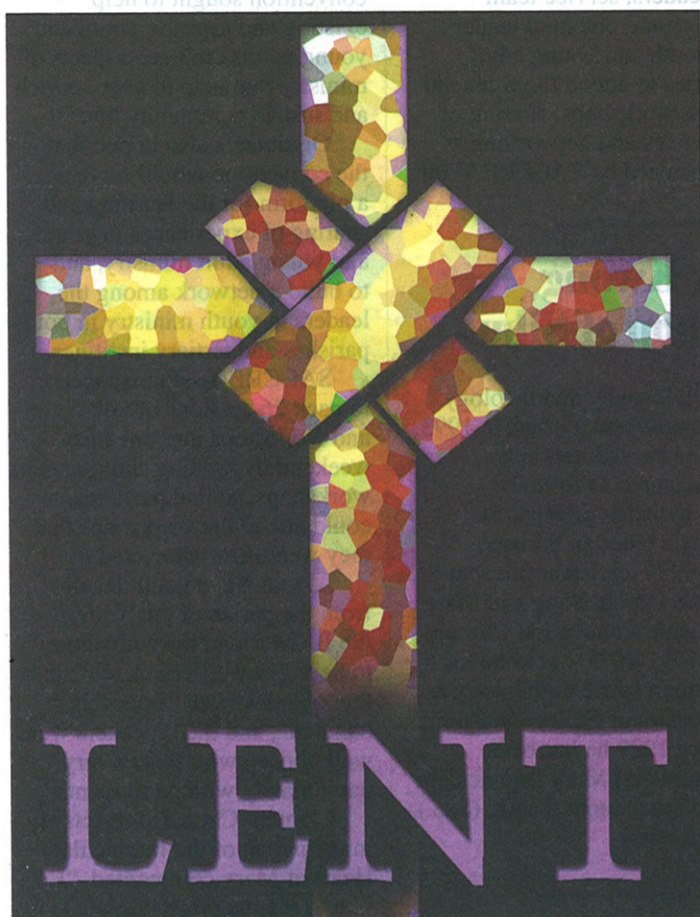
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## Pope: Almsgiving conquers temptation of wealth

**VATICAN CITY** – Almsgiving helps Christians conquer the constant temptation to become slaves to wealth and material goods, Pope Benedict XVI said in his 2008 message for Lent.

The practice of almsgiving “represents a specific way to assist those in need and, at the same time, an exercise in self-denial to free us from attachment to worldly goods”, the pope said in the message.

The theme of the message is “Christ Made Himself Poor for You”. Lent begins Ash Wednesday, which this year is Feb 6. Easter is Mar 23.

Jesus recognized that material riches possess an enormous “force of attraction”, but he was resolute in confirming “how categorical our decision must be not to make of them an idol”, the pope said.

“Almsgiving helps us overcome this



constant temptation, teaching us to respond to our neighbour’s needs and to share with others whatever we possess through divine goodness,” he said.

The Lenten season is a time of prayer, fasting and almsgiving, which aid in an “inward cleansing” that allows the Christian to welcome Easter with renewed spirit, he said.

The pope said he wanted this year’s message to reflect on almsgiving so that it

would not be an empty, loveless gesture of philanthropy or an egotistical attempt for attention or applause.

“There is little use in giving one’s personal goods to others if it leads to a heart puffed up in vainglory,” he said. Christian almsgiving must be hidden and, as everything, “must be done for God’s glory and not our own”, he added.

The pope made special mention of those who particularly feel burdened by “the weight of the evil they have committed”.

Sinners can often “feel far from God, fearful and almost incapable of turning to him”, the pope said, but by reaching out to others through almsgiving “we draw close to God” and this can lead to “authentic conversion and reconciliation” with God and one’s neighbours. □ *CNS*

(See page 16 for the pope’s message in full.)

## Donate time, talent in addition to money, archbishop asks

**SINGAPORE** – Lent is “a period of renewal and a time for Christians to take time for religious reflection and contemplation and focus on charitable deeds to help us draw closer to God”, Archbishop Nicholas Chia said in his message for Lent.

The message is published in the Lenten booklet “Led by the Spirit into New Life” prepared by the Singapore Pastoral Institute and the Catholic Social and Community Council. It has been distributed at all parishes from Jan 26.

Archbishop Chia hopes all parishioners will use it with their family, neighbourhood group or Small Christian Community.

Giving time to prayer will help us



draw closer to Jesus and share in his compassionate love, he encouraged.

“The life of Jesus showed that he identified with the poor and destitute and was extremely sensitive to their needs,” the archbishop said.

Jesus urges charity and compassion and presents almsgiving as a necessary part of

Christian life, Archbishop Chia continued.

He asked that Singapore Catholics donate generously to Charities Week 2008 to help the good works of the archdiocese’s Catholic charities. Under the umbrella of the Catholic Social and Community Council are 15 organizations whose work touches the lives of more than 40,000 beneficiaries.

“The poor and needy are around us even today: the abused and abandoned children; the elderly, the sick and the suffering; migrant workers who have been exploited and those who are displaced,” he said.

“You may also wish to give beyond your financial resources to include your time and talent,” he encouraged. □