

MEDIA RELEASE FROM THE CATHOLIC COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE (CCSJ)

GIVE FROM THE HEART THIS CHRISTMAS

The Catholic Commission for Social Justice urges each person to give generously, freely, and from the heart during this Christmas season. Winston Churchill said: *“You make a living by what you get. You make a life by what you give.”*

Research shows that generosity is a key to happiness. In March 2008, research published by Psychologist, Elizabeth W. Dunn, Lara B. Aknin (study researcher) – both from the University of British Columbia, Canada) and Michael I. Norton, Researcher at Harvard Business School, USA – see “Spending Money on Others Promotes Happiness” in ‘Science Magazine’: www.sciencemag.org/cgi/content/abstract/319/5870/1687), suggest that “how people spend their money may be at least as important as how much money they earn...Participants who were randomly assigned to spend money on others experienced greater happiness than those assigned to spend money on themselves.”

They found greater happiness among people who give money to charity and buy gifts for friends, regardless of income. As Michael Norton says: “We showed that spending as little as \$5 over the course of a day on another person led to demonstrable increases in happiness. In other words, people needn't be wealthy and donate hundreds of thousands of dollars to charity to experience the benefits of pro-social spending; small changes—a few dollars reallocated from oneself to another—can make a difference.” “Pro-social giving needn't be about cash”, says Dunn, “Thoughtfulness counts.”

Aknin says: “I think it's a lot of factors of pro-social spending that are responsible for these happiness boosts. I think it could be that people feel good about themselves when they do it; it could be the fact that it strengthens their social relationships; it could just be the act of spending time with other people.”

CCSJ agrees with Maya Angelou who said: “I have found that among its other benefits, giving liberates the soul of the giver.”

In a world of selfishness and individualism let us banish the “Scrooge” in us and liberate our souls by giving. As James Fowler says: "The will of God is the life of Jesus Christ lived out in His people. Christian giving is part of the will of God; it is God's activity of grace (II Cor. 8:1, 8:5); it is the privilege of being vessels of God's grace. Christian giving involves a spiritual 'return' - 'Give, and it will be given to you' (Luke 6:38)".

All that we have is 'gift' from God. As we prepare to celebrate the birth of the Christ-Child, let us reach out to the poor and needy, the lonely, the homeless and the disadvantaged and share with them the gifts that God has so generously given to us. For further information, please contact Leela Ramdeen, Chair of CCSJ, on 299 8945.