



■ “Her heart was a true garden of God”

## The Value of Compassion and of Almsgiving\*

“... she never ceased secretly showing mercy to all..”

**I**n a small village in the plains of Navpaktos, during the years of the German occupation, there lived a family renowned for its piety and hospitality.



The one who surpassed all of the others in compassion and secret almsgiving, however, was the matriarch of the family, Kyra [Mrs.] Smaragde.

During those difficult years of hunger and poverty, she never ceased secretly showing mercy to all.

The cellar of their house, which was blessed by God and always full, was at the disposal of all of their indigent relatives.

She gave them the right to come and take whatever they needed without even asking!

When she would hear that some woman had given birth and was therefore in need of nutritious food, she would do the following: She would hide an egg, cheese, and bottle of milk under her apron and go to her house at night to feed her in secret, since at that time people were dying of hunger.

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At other times, she used another tactic: Her kitchen had a low window that looked out onto a dirt road where the neighborhood children would often play.

So then, she would put on this window sill a covered clay

pot, which contained oil or milk or something of that sort. She would then call out of the window to the child of the poor family she wanted to help.



“Hey there, Michael, come here, you little rascal! Pour this water out onto the tree so that I don’t have to go outside!”

When the child approached, she would whisper: “Take this pot and give it to your mother quickly, hush-hush!”

That is how this Christian woman would give alms.

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**The** years went by and Kyra-Smaragde grew old, along with the other people her age in the village. One year, three of them passed away: Kyra-Smaragde and two other women.

Sometime later, the daughter of one of these women saw her mother in a dream.

“Mama,” she cried out with yearning. “How are you doing up there?”

And the good woman answered on behalf of all three:

“We are all well! Glory to God! We have beautiful houses! But none of us has a house like Smaragde. Now there is beauty, there are lights, there are flowers—so many flowers!”

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**The** next morning, when the woman told her dream to some of the people in the village, they smiled and said:

“Kyra-Smaragde deserves that heavenly palace and the many flowers! Her heart was a true garden of God. May God grant rest to her soul!”

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**This** was related with great affection by the wife of one of Kyra-Smaragde’s grandsons. Her memory is passed down from generation to generation.

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(\*) Source: “Consolation and Edification,” vol. 3 (March-May 2013), p. 3, from the book *Messages from Heaven [in Greek]* (Dorida: Hiera Mone Panagias Varnakovas, 2005), pp. 81-82.