RITE OF BLESSING FOR OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD BOXES

Beloved in the Lord, Christ our Lord commended the giving of gifts of mercy to the poor and needy, saying, "Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

P Furthermore, the Apostle Paul reminds us:
C **"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,**
P that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor,
C **so that you by His poverty might become rich."**
P Out of this richness, our Lord calls us to give, as the Apostle also says,
C **"God loves a cheerful giver.**
P And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times,
C **you may abound in every good work.**
P As it is written, 'He has distributed freely, He has given to the poor;
C **His righteousness endures forever.'"**

As the Lord has taught us in His holy Word that everything is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer, it is fitting that we bless and sanctify these Operation Christmas Child boxes to be distributed to children around the world who are poor and in need.

P Let us pray:

O God, You have directed us to bring offerings for Your glory, and gifts of mercy for the poor, out of love for You and for our neighbor, because in Christ You first loved us. We implore You to ✠ bless these Operation Christmas Child boxes. Grant that they may reflect our love for You and for our neighbor, and bring joy and blessing to those who receive them, as we rejoice to bring them; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
C **Amen.**

Commemorations in the Prayers

November 14
Justinian I (AD 565),
Christian Ruler & Confessor of Christ
Justinian I, also known as Justinian the Great, was emperor of the Byzantine (Eastern Roman) Empire, beginning in A. D. 527. Among the main accomplishments for the empire during his reign were the recovery of some territories of the former Western Roman Empire, and the rewriting of Roman civil law, the *Corpus Juris Civilis*. In the church realm, Justinian wrote a few theological treatises, encouraged the spread of the Gospel, and ordered the building of churches for the newly-converted. The greatest results of his building program are the St. Catherine's Monastery in the Sinai and the Church of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople.

November 19
Elizabeth of Hungary (AD 1231),
Christian Ruler & Philanthropist
Elizabeth was daughter of King Andrew II of Hungary, and at age 14 married Landgrave Ludwig IV of Thuringia in 1221. It was a happy marriage, though she was widowed when Ludwig died of a fever in Italy on his way to the Sixth Crusade in 1227. She always had a concern for the sick and poor, building hospitals and orphanages with her dowry—a practice approved by Ludwig, but not by his family. In the dispute with her in-laws, Elizabeth moved out of the Wartburg (same place where Luther translated the NT into German). As a widow she took vows, devoting herself to nursing and sewing clothes and fishing for the poor, as ways to put Christian love and faith into practice. The many St. Elizabeth's hospitals are named for her.

November 19
Obadiah, *Prophet*
Obadiah, whose name means *servant of YHWH*, is one of 'The Twelve' or "Minor" Prophets (the latter referring to the lengths of their books, not their importance). Prophesying in the early to middle sixth century B. C., he speaks of "eagles" or vultures, representing soldiers of Edom (descendants of Esau) taking advantage of desperate Judahites fleeing Jerusalem as it was under Babylonian attack. "And even though the Edomites dwelt securely in their rocky kingdom, carved into the cliffs of Mount Seir, the Lord's judgment would reach them, and He would rule over them" (*The Lutheran Study Bible*, p. 1473). Luther comments: "Obadiah does not specify the time when he lived. However his prophecy applies to the time of the Babylonian captivity, for he comforts the people of Judah that they shall return to Zion."