

SUGGESTIONS FOR PRACTICING THE CORPORAL AND SPIRITUAL WORKS OF MERCY

Every Christian has a calling and a responsibility to serve as a living example of Jesus' teachings - to serve one another. For Christians, young and old, service should be an attitude, a way of life. It is important not only to listen and understand the Word of God, but also to apply the lessons learned, through daily life and service to others. This is essential to living as a Catholic Christian following in the footsteps of Jesus. Below is a list of suggested ways that individuals or groups can fulfill Christ's mission of mercy.

The Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy

Fulfilling the Works of Mercy for each of us is a lifelong commitment to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Matthew 25:32-46 tells us that when we feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, take care of the sick, and visit the imprisoned, we care for Christ himself.

The Corporal Works of Mercy recognizes the sacredness of human life. We learn through fulfilling these Works of Mercy for others that we are our brother's keeper. Our feelings of love for our fellow man must be accompanied by acts of charity.

- (1) Feed the hungry.
- (2) Give drink to the thirsty.
- (3) Clothe the naked.
- (4) Shelter the homeless.
- (5) Visit those in prison.
- (6) Comfort the sick.
- (7) Bury the dead.

The Spiritual Works of Mercy recognize sin, ignorance, doubt, sorrow and other human conditions where we need to reach out in faith and love to others. How many times did Jesus rebuke with love, counsel, teach and help those who did not know Him?

- (1) Admonish sinners.
- (2) Instruct the uninformed.
- (3) Counsel the doubtful.
- (4) Comfort the sorrowful.
- (5) Bear wrongs patiently.
- (6) Forgive offenses.
- (7) Pray for the living and the dead.

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Works of Mercy Examples and Ideas

The Works of Mercy is our guide to being of compassionate service to others and in selecting service projects.

Feed the hungry –

- Donate canned goods to a food pantry.
- Have regular collections for a food pantry. Don't just give up the old stuff or what you don't like. Part with or buy some of your favorite foods to share with those less fortunate.
- Volunteer at a local soup kitchen.
- Bake cookies and send to a nursing home or Assisted Living home for a snack for the residents. (Check with the facility first for any food requirements.) Include a note telling them they are missed.
- Send homemade cookies to a student from your parish who is away at college.
- Make meals for people with someone in their family who is ill or has just passed away.
- Pick up leftovers at a local grocery store, bakery, or restaurant and deliver them to a food bank or homeless shelter.
- Take a friend out to lunch, your treat.
- Keep a list of local food banks and soup kitchens that are in your area to put in our parish vestibule or bulletin.
- Volunteer at a food bank.
- Organize a Catholic Relief Services Food Fast and donate the proceeds to CRS.
- Serve at a soup kitchen.
- Prepare and take a meal to someone in your community who is seriously ill or welcoming home a newborn.
- Help out at a Knights of Columbus or parish pancake breakfast.
- Give to or host a food drive.
- Cook meals for homebound and deliver. (Check on meal requirements)
- Assemble holiday food baskets for the needy.
- Cook and serve a meal at a homeless shelter.
- Pack care packages for service men and women.
- Bake and bring treats to emergency personnel.

Clothe the naked –

- Clean out dresser drawers and closets twice a year (beginning of each season) and take the clothes to St. Vincent de Paul or Salvation Army.
- Buy socks and underwear for people in homeless shelters.
- Send warm winter clothes - jackets, sweaters to homeless shelters. If you knit or crochet, make some hats and gloves and scarves.
- Look for baby clothes on sale or make your own and donate them to mothers who need assistance, through a pregnancy crisis shelter.
- Participate in your parish or community Giving Tree. Offer to deliver the gifts.
- Host a clothing drive and donate the items.

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- Help in resale or thrift shop.
- Organize the donations at a clothes closet or charity resale shop.

Pray for the Living and the Dead –

- Make a prayer list of people that you know are sick and pray for them every day.
- Pray for the people listed in the Church bulletin.
- Pray for your friends' relatives that have died. If you hear about something tragic or sad on the news, pray for the people involved.
- Make a prayer blanket or card or some object that can be given to a person who would be comforted by knowing that someone is praying for them.
- Find out some way you can assist at a local hospice or hospital.
- Pray for our seminarians and priests.

Give drink to the thirsty –

- Watch for ways to save water or keep it clean. Be environmentally aware. Use water saving gadgets in your shower or toilet.
- Set up a lemonade stand and send the proceeds to Catholic Relief Services.
- Hand out water at a race or walk that raises money for a charity.
- Give someone who is sick some Holy Water and let them know you will pray for them.
- Help someone who is “thirsting” for a friend or someone to talk to.
- Pass out water bottles to the homeless.
- Take a cold glass of water to a neighbor doing yard work.

Visit the sick –

- Send cards to friends or relatives who are sick and in the hospital. If possible, make them a homemade card and hand deliver it.
- Be part of a group that visits the sick. Many nursing homes get visitors over the holidays. Call the nursing home office and find out who doesn't get any company. Offer to visit them.
- Make or buy some note cards for parishioners in adult care facilities and leave them with stamps so they can send letters home.
- Volunteer at a hospital.
- Sit with a homebound person so their caregiver can go out.
- Shovel snow for homebound parishioners.
- Pick up donations for the St. Vincent DePaul Society.
- Visit residents at a nursing home or retirement facility.
- Help elderly sign, address and mail Christmas cards.
- Volunteer to read to the blind.
- Create a play area for the waiting room of a clinic.
- Deliver magazines and books to patients at a hospital.
- Do a craft project at a children's home.
- Play board games at a senior center.
- Read to children at a children's nursing home.
- Be a friend or helper to someone facing a disability or handicap.

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Shelter the homeless/Welcome the stranger –

- Have a garage sale of some of your furnishings that are extras and donate to Habitat for Humanity or a homeless shelter.
- Welcome parishioners at the beginning and end of mass.
- Welcome a new student.
- Send cards or gifts to new neighbors or parishioners.
- Help build a house with Habitat for Humanity.
- Let your house be a welcome place for a friend who may not have a parent home after school. (with parental permission)
- Bring in baby gifts for a new mother who is in need. Have a baby shower.
- Donate items to Catholic Charities.
- Contact the library and see if they would like some books for underprivileged children.
- Participate in the Giving Tree and adopt a family in need for Christmas and make their Christmas and yours a lot brighter.
- Send Christmas, Easter, any type of card to the servicemen overseas.
- Send a care package with special treats to an orphanage.
- Help clean up an area at a shelter.
- Decorate a shelter for the holidays.

Visit the Imprisoned –

- Learn what the Church teaches about Capital Punishment. Contact the Prison Ministry office to see what you could send to those in jail.
- Help prepare a Christmas meal or gifts for the family of a prisoner who may have few monetary resources with an imprisoned parent.
- Find a local halfway house and donate bus tokens to prisoners looking for work.
- Send phone cards to those detained in immigration centers.

Comfort the Sorrowful –

- Give comfort and care to those with sick loved ones.
- Be present at wakes and funerals as a show of support.

Bury the dead –

- Call the Catholic Diocese Cemetery and ask if they need help in the fall or spring with cleanup around the cemetery grounds.
- See if there are any other ways that you can assist near the holidays. See if they need help putting flags out around Memorial Day or Veterans Day.
- Make a meal for a grieving family.
- Help a widow or widower in need with yard work or errands.
- Visit a cemetery and pray for the dead.
- Pray at an abortion clinic for the lives lost to abortion.

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Instruct the Ignorant –

- If you have a special gift or talent, share it with someone else.
- Help someone learn to play a musical instrument.
- Peer tutor at school in a subject that you are good at.
- Help someone with homework in your best subject. Don't always make it be your best friend. Share your gifts with someone you don't know as well.

Counsel the doubtful –

- When someone comes to you for advice or just to talk about a problem, be a good listener and say a silent prayer to Jesus asking for his help in telling them the right things to do.

Admonish the Sinner/Forgive Offenses –

- If you know someone is going to do something that is risky or wrong, warn them not to do it. If they have already done it, tell them nicely that it was not a good thing to do so they will choose not to do it again.
- Remind someone who is hurting because of their sin to receive grace and forgiveness in the sacrament of reconciliation.
- Extend forgiveness to those who hurt you.