

St. Anthony & St. Mary Religious Education Program

Family Service Project

The Corporal & Spiritual Works of Mercy

The Catechism of the Catholic Church says of the works of mercy: **“The works of mercy are charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbor in his spiritual and bodily necessities. Instructing, advising, consoling, comforting are spiritual works of mercy, as are forgiving and bearing wrongs patiently. The corporal works of mercy consist especially in feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, and burying the dead. Among all these, giving alms to the poor is one of the chief witnesses to fraternal charity: it is also a work of justice pleasing to God.** (2447)

But what is mercy? Mercy is a virtue that influences our will to have compassion for, and, if possible, to alleviate another’s suffering.

The Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy are central to the Gospel preached by Christ and to our living a life in Christ.

The Corporal Works of Mercy are oriented toward the body and are the response Christ expects of His followers when faced with the material needs and sufferings of others. Taken mostly from the scene of the Last Judgment in Matthew 25, the Corporal Works of Mercy are not optional for Christians. Our Lord is quite adamant that we will be judged on how we respond to the least of our sisters and brothers in need.

The Spiritual Works of Mercy are oriented toward the soul and center on providing for the spiritual needs of our brothers and sisters. Often spiritual poverty can be more hidden and yet more devastating than even material poverty. In imitation of Jesus who attended to the spiritual well-being of those he encountered, the Spiritual Works of Mercy enjoin is to help our neighbor in their spiritual needs.

The Corporal Works of Mercy	Scripture Passages
Feed the Hungry	Proverbs 22:9 Isaiah 58:10 2 Kings 4:42-44 Matthew 14:15-21; 25:35 Luke 3:11; 9:12-17 John 6:35
Give Drink to the Thirsty	Isaiah 55:1 Matthew 25:35 John 6:35 John 7:37-39 Revelation 21:6; 22:17
Clothe the Naked	Matthew 25:36
Shelter the Homeless	Matthew 25:35
Visit the Sick	Matthew 25:36
Visit the Imprisoned	Matthew 25:36
Bury the Dead	Tobit 1:17-19

The Spiritual Works of Mercy	Scripture Passages
Admonish the Sinner	Proverbs 27:17 Luke 15:7; 17:3 2 Timothy 4:2
Instruct the Ignorant	Matthew 28:19-20 Mark 16:14-18 Luke 24:47-49 John 20:21 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 4:1-5
Counsel the Doubtful	Matthew 13:18-23 Mark 4:13-20; 9:14-29 Luke 8:11-15 John 14:27
Bear Wrongs Patiently	Matthew 5:38-48 Luke 6:27-36 1 Peter 2:18-19
Forgive Offenses Willingly	Matthew 6:14-15; 18:15-35 Mark 11:25 Luke 11:1-4; 17:1-4
Comfort the Afflicted	Psalms 9:8-11; 22:23-27, Psalms 27:4-5; 30:2-4, Psalms 46:2; 55:22, Psalms 56; 71:20-22, Psalms 116; 119:49-50 Jeremiah 29:11-14 Lamentations 3:21-24, 31-33 Nahum 1:7-8 Matthew 11:28-30 John 14:15-18, 27; 16:22-23 2 Corinthians 5:17 1 Peter 5:5-11 Revelation 21:4
Pray for the Living and the Dead	2 Maccabees 38-46

Practical Suggestions for Practicing the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy

Corporal Works of Mercy

Feed the Hungry:

- Support and volunteer for food pantries, soup kitchens, and agencies that feed the hungry or collect canned goods to stock a food pantry. Check out the Riverwest Food Pantry.
- Educate yourself about world hunger.
- Avoid wasting food.
- Share your meals with others.
- Donate money to buy food for the poor.
- Help to shop for groceries for the home bound.
- Donate a meal to a needy family.
- Make sandwiches to give to the homeless.
- Give restaurant gift cards to people in need.

To give drink to the Thirsty:

- Give someone a drink on a hot day.
- Give the baby its bottle.
- Pour drinks at the table.
- Lift a young child to get a drink at a water fountain.
- Collect bottled water to donate to a shelter.

To Clothe the Naked:

- Bring clothes to a needy family.
- Share outgrown clothes with another family.
- Bring clothes to a clothing drive.
- Help a young child get dressed.
- Help with laundry at home.
- Go through your drawers and closets and find good-condition clothes and shoes to donate to agencies that provide assistance for those in need.
- Volunteer to work at a clothing drive or at a shelter where clothing is distributed to those in need
- Support the work of the St. Vincent de Paul Society

To Shelter the Homeless:

- Work at or supporting a homeless shelter.
- Help take care of the house, dusting, making the beds, cleaning the floor, and cutting the grass.
- Help neighbors care for their homes and do repairs. Adopt an elderly home bound parishioner at the parishes and volunteer to shovel snow, rake leaves, etc....
- Support and/or volunteer at a homeless shelter.
- Support and/or volunteer for charitable agencies who care for the homeless, build homes, and provide support in the wake of natural disasters.
- Advocate for public policies and legislation that provide housing for low-income people.
- Consider becoming a foster parent.
- Save plastic bags to be used to create sleeping mats for the homeless.
- Make Tie blankets for homeless shelters.
- Help with your parish's homeless outreach program.

To Visit the Sick:

- Visit the elderly who are home bound.
- Run an errand for an elderly or sick person.
- Take the time to call, send a card or an e-mail to someone who is sick.
- Volunteer to drive patients to medical appointments and treatment facilities.
- Assist those who are full-time caregivers for family members.
- Cook and delivers meals to the sick and homebound.
- Make cards to take to a hospital.
- Collect toys and books to deliver to a children's hospital.
- Consider being a pen-pal to a home bound parishioner.
- Write to our service men and women.

To visit the imprisoned:

- Help care for the families of the imprisoned.
- Protect a little child from being bullied.
- Take care of and protect the baby in your family.
- Support and/or participate in ministries to those who are incarcerated.
- Support programs sponsored by agencies that advocate on behalf of those who are unjustly imprisoned.
- Support job-training and educational programs designed to rehabilitate prisoners.
- Pray for the families of inmates.
- Support programs that provide holiday gifts for prisoners and their families.

To bury the Dead:

- Go to funerals and wakes.
- Treat cemeteries with respect.
- Cut the grass on a grave or put flowers on it.
- Support or volunteer at a hospice.
- Spend time with widows and widowers.
- Take friends and relatives to visit the cemetery.
- Offer daily prayers for those with terminal illnesses and for those who have died.
- Have a Mass offered for those who have passed away.
- Send a card to someone who has recently lost a loved one.
- Visit a cemetery and pray.
- Donate food and your time for funeral luncheons

Spiritual Works of Mercy

To counsel the doubtful:

- Work at being optimistic and avoiding cynicism.
- Respond to cynicism, skepticism, and doubt with hope.
- Be articulate about your own hopes.
- Ask people about their hopes and support them in trying to attain them.

To instruct the ignorant:

- Commit yourself to learning about the Catholic faith and share your understanding of the faith with others.
- Share your insights, knowledge, and skills with others, especially friends, fellow students, & coworkers.
- Take time to "tutor" those who are just beginning tasks.
- Read good literature and encourage others to do the same.

To admonish the sinner:

- Be courageous yet compassionate in calling people and institutions to be faithful to Gospel values.
- Intervene in situations in which people are clearly doing harm to themselves or others.
- Respond to negative and prejudicial comments with positive statements.
- Put an end to gossip by walking away; set a good example for others.

To comfort the afflicted:

- Walk with others through their pain.
- Offer words of encouragement to those who seem discouraged.
- Offer positive words to fellow students or coworkers who are having a difficult time with their tasks.
- Be present to those who are struggling.
- Offer sympathy to those who are grieving.

To forgive offences Willingly:

- Pray for those who have wronged you and pray for the courage to forgive.
- Ask forgiveness from others.
- Let go of grudges; go out of your way to be positive with someone you are having a difficult time with.

To bear wrongs patiently:

- Work at being less critical of others.
- Give people the benefit of the doubt.
- Pray for those who have wronged you.

To pray for the living and the dead:

- Pray for the souls in purgatory
- Assure a family member or friend has access to last Rites before death.

Family Service Project Plan

Family Name: _____ Date: _____

HOW TO START

- Select a Corporal or Spiritual Work of Mercy that you would like to work on for the month or the year. You may choose one for the whole year, or you may choose a new one every month.
- Read about the Corporal or Spiritual Work of Mercy in Scripture.
- Come up with a plan of how you as a family are going to practice that Work of Mercy that you have selected. Everyone in your family should have a part in the plan.