

The Spiritual Works of Mercy

The Spiritual Works of Mercy have long been a part of the Christian tradition, appearing in the works of theologians and spiritual writers throughout history. Just as Jesus attended to the spiritual well-being of those he ministered to, these Spiritual Works of Mercy guide us to "help our neighbor in their spiritual needs" (USCCA).

Counseling the doubtful

Everyone has moments of doubt in their faith journey. Nevertheless, we should always remember that Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life and turn to him along our way.

Listen to counsel and receive instruction, that you may eventually become wise" (Prov 19:20)

The Cross of Christ "the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength" (1 Cor 1:25)

- Has someone asked you for advice? Orient your response to Christ, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life
- Follow Christ with the witness of your life so that others may see God's love revealed in your actions
- Accompany a friend who is struggling with believing to join a parish group for service or faith formation, share a book you found useful in dealing with your friend's faith concern, and worship at Sunday Mass

Instructing the ignorant

- Learn about our faith and be open to talking with others about our beliefs. There is always something more to discover about our faith.
- Go on a service trip or short-term mission trip. No time? Donate to support someone on their service trip
- Volunteer to help with religious education programs at your parish
- Invite someone to go to mass with you this weekend
- Know your faith! Read through the USCCA to find out more about the Catholic faith and how to live it

Admonishing the sinner

- Don't judge, but guide others towards the path of salvation (see Mt 7:1-2)
- "Remove the wooden beam from your eye first; then you will see clearly to remove the splinter from your brother's eye" (Mt 7:5)
- Do not judge, but be supportive in helping others find their way and correct their mistakes. Together we can learn to walk more closely with Christ.
- In humility we must strive to create a culture that does not accept sin, while realizing that we all fall at times
- When you correct someone, don't be arrogant. We are all in need of God's loving correction.
- We should journey together to a deeper understanding of our shared faith

Comforting the sorrowful

- Be open to listening and comforting those who are dealing with grief. Even if we aren't sure of the right words to say, our presence can make a big difference.
- Lend a listening ear to those going through a tough time
- Make a home cooked meal for a friend who is facing a difficult time
- Write a letter or send a card to someone who is suffering
- A few moments of your day may make a lifetime of difference to someone who is going through a difficult time

Forgiving injuries

- Forgiving others is difficult because we do not have God's limitless mercy and compassion. But Jesus teaches us that we should forgive as God forgives, relying on him to help us show others the mercy of God
- Let go of grudges
- Saying sorry is something we learn as kids, but how often do we mean it? Forgiveness transforms hearts and lives
- Participate in the Sacrament of Penance
- Pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet

Bearing wrongs patiently

- Do not be bitter about wrongs done against you. Place your hope in God so that you can endure the troubles of this world and face them with a compassionate spirit.
- Frustrated with someone? Step away from the situation, take a few deep breaths, pray the Our Father, ask God for patience

Praying for the living and the dead

- Prayer is one of the most powerful ways we can support others. Joining together in prayer for the living and the dead entrusts us with God's care.
- Request a mass intention for a friend or family member who is going through a tough time
- Request a mass intention for a friend or family member who has passed away
- Keep your own book of prayer intentions, writing down the names of those who you are keeping in your prayers
- Ask a friend or family member if there is anything you can pray for them about
- Through prayer, entrust your cares and concerns for those around you to God

The Corporal Works of Mercy

The Corporal Works of Mercy are found in the teachings of Jesus and give us a model for how we should treat all others as if they were Christ in disguise. They "are charitable actions by which we help our neighbors in their bodily needs" (USCCA). They respond to the basic needs of humanity as we journey together through this life.

Feed the Hungry

- There are many people in this world who go without food. When so much of our food goes to waste, consider how good stewardship practices of your own food habits can benefit others who do not have those same resources.
- Having delicious food at Thanksgiving or Christmas dinner? Donate to a Thanksgiving or Christmas food drive so everyone can have something to eat.
- Research, identify and contribute financially to organizations that serve the hungry.
- The next time you make a recipe that can be easily frozen, make a double batch and donate one to your local food pantry or soup kitchen.
- Try not to purchase more food than you can eat. If you notice that you throw groceries away each week, purchasing less groceries would eliminate waste and allow you to donate the savings to those in need.

Give Drink to the thirsty

- Many of our brothers and sisters in Christ do not have access to clean water and suffer from lacking this basic necessity. We should support the efforts of those working towards greater accessibility of this essential resource.
- We take it for granted that we have access to clean water. Donate to help build wells for water for those in need
- Organize a group of children on a sports team (e.g., soccer) or a summer camp. Invite them to collect bottled water to distribute at a shelter for families. If parents can be involved, ask them to accompany their children in delivering the water to the families.
- Do the same for youth and young adult groups.
- Make an effort not to waste water. Remember to turn off the water faucet when brushing your teeth or washing dishes can help, especially in regions suffering from drought.

Shelter the homeless

- There are many circumstances that could lead to someone becoming a person without a home. Christ encourages us to go out and meet those without homes, affirming their worth and helping them seek a resolution to their challenges.
- See if your parish or diocese is involved with a local homeless shelter and volunteers sometimes.
- Donate time or money to organizations that build homes for those who need shelter.
- Many homeless shelters need warm blankets for their beds. If you can knit or sew, that would be an extra-loving gift.
- Millions of children and families are on the move, fleeing from war, illness, hunger, and impossible living conditions and searching for peace and safety. Engage parish groups of children, youth, young adults, and families in researching the causes and challenges these families face to survive. Contact Catholic Social Services or diocesan offices of peace and justice for help with your research. Seek ways to provide shelter for the homeless locally, regionally, nationally or internationally.

Visit the sick

- Those who are sick are often forgotten or avoided. Despite their illness, these individuals still have much to offer to those who take the time to visit and comfort them.
- Give blood
- Spend time volunteering at a nursing home – Get creative and use your talents (e.g. sing, read, paint, call Bingo, etc.)!
- Take time on a Saturday to stop and visit with an elderly neighbor.
- Offer to assist caregivers of chronically sick family members on a one-time or periodic basis. Give caregivers time off from their caregiving responsibilities so they can rest, complete personal chores, or enjoy a relaxing break.
- Next time you make a meal that can be easily frozen, make a double batch and give it to a family in your parish with a sick loved one.

Visit the prisoners

- People in prison are still people, made in the image and likeness of God. No matter what someone has done, they deserve the opportunity to hear the Word of God and find the Truth of the message of Christ.
- See if your parish, or a nearby parish, has a prison ministry and if so, get involved.
- Volunteer to help out or donate to charities that give Christmas presents to children whose parents are in prison. (Get on the Bus Program)
- Provide seasonal gifts for children/teens in detention centers.

Bury the dead

- Funerals give us the opportunity to grieve and show others support during difficult times. Through our prayers and actions during these times we show our respect for life, which is always a gift from God, and comfort to those who mourn.
- Send a card to someone who has recently lost a loved one. Make your own card and use some of these [prayers](#).
- Visit the cemetery and pray for those you have lost.

Give alms to the poor

- Donate money to organizations that have the ability to provide support and services for those in need. Do the research and find organizations that put people in need first rather than profit.
- Skip the morning latte and put that money in the collection basket at church.
- Find a charity that is meaningful to you and volunteer your time or donate.
- In Lent, give up eating out at restaurants. Pack your meals and donate the extra money to charities.