

Practical Suggestions for Practicing the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy – by Joe Paprocki, DMin

Corporal Works of Mercy - The Corporal Works of Mercy are kind acts by which we help our neighbors with their everyday material and physical needs.

Feed the Hungry

- see to the proper nutrition of your loved ones,
- support and volunteer for food pantries, soup kitchens, and agencies that feed the hungry;
- make a few sandwiches to hand out as you walk through areas where you might encounter people in need;
- educate yourself about world hunger;
- avoid wasting food;
- share your meals with others.

Shelter the Homeless

- help neighbors care for their homes and do repairs;
- 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.

Clothe the Naked

- go through your drawers and closets and find good-condition clothes and shoes to donate to agencies that provide assistance for those in need;
- participate in programs that provide towels and linens for hospitals in distressed areas.
- 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

Visit the Sick

- spend quality time with those who are sick or homebound;
- 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;
- volunteer at a hospital;
- assist those who are full-time caregivers for family members;
- cook and delivers meals to the sick and homebound.

Visit the Imprisoned

- 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;
- support efforts that seek the abolition of the death penalty.

Give to the Poor

- take some small bills or loose change (or coupon books if you prefer not to carry cash) with you to hand out to people you encounter who are in need;
- throw your coin change into a jar and periodically donate it to a charity;
- if possible make a regular monetary donation to a charity that tends to the needs of the poor.

Bury the Dead

- be faithful about attending wakes/visitation;
- support or volunteer at a hospice;
- participate in a bereavement ministry;
- spend time with widows and widowers;
- take friends and relatives to visit the cemetery;
- support ministries that offer free Christian burials to those unable to afford one;
- offer daily prayers for those with terminal illnesses and for those who have died;
- send Mass cards to families of those who have died.

Spiritual Works of Mercy - The Spiritual Works of Mercy are kind acts by which we help our neighbors with their everyday spiritual and emotional needs.

Instructing

- commit yourself to learning about the Catholic faith and share your understanding of the faith with others and with those who welcome it;
- 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.

Advising

- 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.

Consoling

- 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.

Comforting

- 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 or in emotional pain or despair;
- offer sympathy to those who are grieving.

Forgiving

- 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.

Bearing wrongs patiently

- work at being less critical of others;
- overlook minor flaws and mistakes;
- give people the benefit of the doubt;
- assume that people who may have hurt you did so because they are enduring pain of their own;
- pray for those who have wronged you.

** Some of the above suggestions need to be adapted for young children and should not be practiced without the supervision or accompaniment of an adult*