

Mercy in Action

Corporal Works of Mercy



**The Time Is Now
(Doug Clorey, ofs)**

Refrain:

Let us reach out to each other as brothers and sisters.
Let us serve one another, sharing our giftedness.

He has sent us to bring Good News to everyone around us:
To the hungry, to the homeless, the poor.
All are needy, all are waiting for ministry and caring;
Let's be open, for the time is now!

Theme:

Franciscan Focus on the Year of Mercy

Mercy, the Face of God's Love

- What is Mercy?
- Mercy in Scripture

Franciscan Focus of Mercy

- Mercy at the Heart of Francis' Conversion
- Mercy in the Life of Francis

Mercy in Action

- Corporal Works of Mercy
- Spiritual Works of Mercy

Group Work and Plenary

Did you know ...

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The *Criminal Code of Canada* contains a provision for mercy to be exercised, allowing a person convicted of an offence to apply for ministerial review on the grounds of a miscarriage of justice.

The *Criminal Code* provisions are derived from the ancient Royal Prerogative of Mercy vested in the British monarch who had the absolute right to exercise mercy on any subject. In Canada, similar powers of clemency have been given to the Governor General who, as the Queen's representative, may exercise the Royal Prerogative of Mercy.

The works of mercy

(excerpt from Pope Francis' 2016 Lenten Message)

“God’s mercy transforms human hearts; it enables us, through the experience of a faithful love, to become merciful in turn. In an ever new miracle, divine mercy shines forth in our lives, inspiring each of us to love our neighbour and to devote ourselves to what the Church’s tradition calls the spiritual and corporal works of mercy ...

These works remind us that faith finds expression in concrete everyday actions meant to help our neighbours in body and spirit: by feeding, visiting, comforting and instructing them. On such things will we be judged.

For this reason, I expressed my hope that “the Christian people may reflect on the corporal and spiritual works of mercy; this will be a way to reawaken our conscience, too often grown dull in the face of poverty, and to enter more deeply into the heart of the Gospel where the poor have a special experience of God’s mercy.”

The works of mercy are charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbor in his/her spiritual and bodily necessities.
(Catechism of the Catholic Church)

Applying the corporal and spiritual works of mercy in our individual and fraternal lives is a practical way to go “from Gospel to life, and life to Gospel” (OFS Rule).



Corporal Works of Mercy

To feed the hungry

To give drink to the thirsty

To clothe the naked

To give shelter to the homeless

To visit the sick

To visit the imprisoned

To bury the dead

Corporal Works of Mercy

To feed the hungry



- First two corporal works of mercy address our most fundamental human needs: food and drink
- According to UN statistics, 795 million undernourished people in the world today (one in nine people do not get enough food to be healthy and lead an active life)
- Pope Francis: feeding the hungry is an ethical imperative for the universal church
- Abundant goods of this world are not shared
- We worship Christ, the Bread of Life, in the Eucharist; but the worship will be hollow if we do not also reverence and serve him in the poor

Suggested Actions

- Feed the hungry in our own communities (soup kitchens, etc.)
- Educate ourselves on the needs felt in other parts of the world and help as resources allow
- Reach out to people experiencing stress or grief and who may not have the energy to cook (eg. neighbor who has been going through difficult time, elderly shut-in, etc.)
- Re-visit the practice of fasting and abstinence; by foregoing a meal, we can curb our own appetite and use the resources to help someone who needs a meal





Corporal Works of Mercy

To give drink to the thirsty



- Giving drink to the thirsty is even more fundamental than giving food to the hungry (water is a more basic necessity than food)
- According to UN statistics, 884 million people in the world do not have access to safe drinking-water
- Every 60 seconds a child dies as a result of water-borne diseases
- 20% of the world's drinking water is in Canada
- Water is a limited resource. What each of us does in the world, how we live, does make a difference.
- “Whoever gives to these little ones even a cup of cold water because they are disciples, truly, I say to you, shall not lose their reward” (Mt 10:42)

Suggested Actions

- Given that there is a limited supply of water on the planet, take steps to protect it and to get it to people who lack access today
- Become informed and involved in local watershed projects in your community
- Use water responsibly (become acquainted with tips for water conservation)
- Provide funds to projects that assist communities in Africa and Asia to secure safe drinking supplies (eg. digging wells)

Corporal Works of Mercy

To clothe the naked



- Clothing provides for two basic human needs: protection and dignity
- Clothing provides protection from the elements - cold, wind and sun
- Clothing also accentuates our dignity
- When the prodigal son returns home, the (merciful) father gives him his best robe, shoes on his feet and a ring; these items symbolize the young man's dignity as the father's son
- By contrast, Jesus was stripped of his clothing and in so doing was robbed of his dignity in the human community and humiliated profoundly

Suggested Actions

- Contribute to organizations that provide clothes to those in need
- Go through our own closets a couple of times a year and donate some of the clothing crammed into our closets and drawers
- Become sensitive to what goes on behind our « bargains »; ie. The sweat of people laboring in inhumane conditions here and abroad
- Look behind brands of popular clothing, and determine if these items have been produced at the cost of the human dignity of those who made it - act accordingly
- Confront the crime of sexual exploitation in society which strips people of their basic human dignity

Corporal Works of Mercy

To give shelter to the homeless



- Jesus was a homeless person - born in a manger, no fixed address when he began his public ministry and buried in another man's grave
- Need to open our eyes to the misery of those who, for many reasons, have no place they can call home
- According to UN Statistics, over 1 billion people are homeless globally
- Along with providing a roof, we also need to help those homeless to get back on their feet - provide a "hand up" as well as a "handout"

Suggested Actions

- Join faith communities that endeavour to provide shelter for the homeless through financial and personal support as well as ongoing accompaniment
- Provide support to refugees driven from their homes by war
- Become involved in Habitat for Humanity both locally and abroad



Corporal Works of Mercy

To visit the sick



- “Do not shrink from visiting a sick person, because for such deeds you will be loved” (Sir 7:35)
- Illness isolates people, and visits and cards remind them that they are not alone
- Also need to be sensitive to individual needs (preferring privacy when unwell)
- “Institutions are very important and indispensable; nevertheless, no institution can by itself replace the human heart, human compassion, human love or human initiative, when it is a question of dealing with the sufferings of another” (St. John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*)

Suggested Actions

- Become a volunteer at local hospital
- Visit homes for seniors
- Provide meals for those who have returned home after a stay at the hospital
- Make arrangements to take those who do not drive for medical appointments
- Contact those whom you usually see at church or elsewhere to ensure they are OK
- Bring Holy Communion to those who are not able to come to church
- Be informed about the range of health care decisions taken on the range of right to life issues



Corporal Works of Mercy

To visit the imprisoned



- “Remember those who are in prison, as if in prison with them” (Heb 13:3)
- Recall how many holy people have spent time in prison (Jesus, Paul, Peter, Francis ...) and do not withhold our care from those in prison today
- Jesus has made the prison cell sacred ground
 - Even those who are guilty of the most heinous crimes possess human dignity (“the Divine Seed”, Rule 19)

Suggested Actions

- Consider training as a volunteer in a prison
- Reach out to those whose parents, children or spouses are incarcerated
- Assist prisoners who are released in job training and finding employment so they can get a fresh start
- Welcome released prisoners into our faith communities, commit to walking the journey with them and help them not to give up hope
- embrace those who are imprisoned by the circumstances of life (elderly shut-ins, residents of homes for the aged, those trapped in addictions of various kinds)

Corporal Works of Mercy



- “Give graciously to all the living and withhold not kindness from the dead” (Sir 7:33)
- “The bodies of the dead must be treated with respect and charity, in faith and hope of the Resurrection. The burial of the dead is a corporal work of mercy; it honors the children of God, who are temples of the Holy Spirit” (CCC 2300)
- The final act of kindness extended to Jesus was a decent burial

Suggested Actions

- Attending visitations and funerals - offers great consolation to the family of the bereaved
- Read and reflect on the Church's funeral liturgy and meditate on the beauty of our faith enshrined therein
- Participate in providing meals after the funeral service
- Offer grief counselling if appropriately trained
- Assist in establishing funds to help those who cannot meet funeral expenses with their own resources
- Arrange to have masses celebrated for the repose of the souls of those who have died



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“God’s mercy can make even the driest land become a garden, can restore life to dry bones (cf. EZ 37:1-14) ... Let us be renewed by God’s mercy, let us enable the power of God’s love to transform our lives; and let us become agents of this mercy, channels through which God can water the earth, protect all creation and make justice and peace flourish.”

(Pope Francis, *Easter Urbi et Orbi* message - March 31, 2013)

**Heart of Jesus, Heart of Mercy
(Michael Herry, fms)**

REFRAIN:

Give us new hearts, O Lord.
Give us new hearts, O Lord.
Give us hearts of flesh,
Remove our hearts of stone.

Spiritual Works of Mercy



Spiritual Works of Mercy

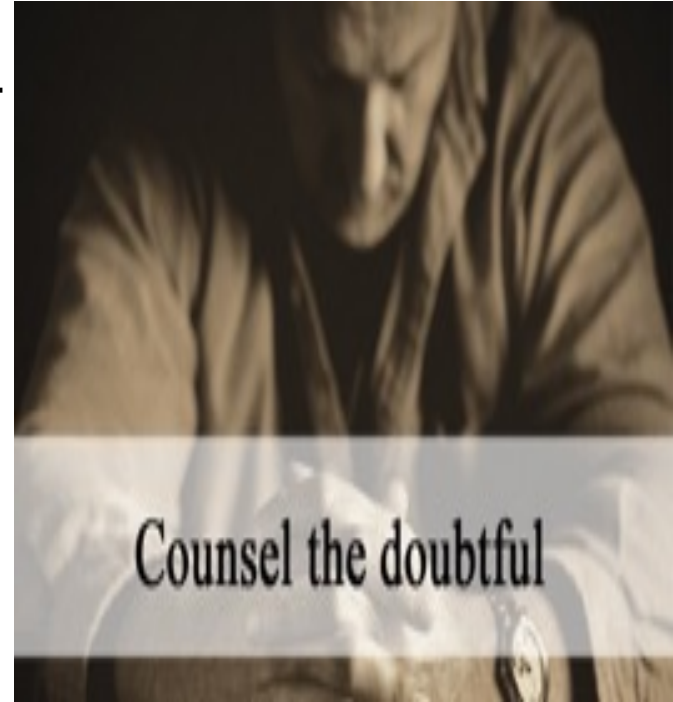
- *Counsel the doubtful*
- *Instruct the ignorant*
- *Admonish sinners*
- *Comfort the afflicted*
- **Forgive offenses**
- **Bear patiently those who do us ill**
- **Pray for the living and the dead**

"Mostly, people are looking for someone to listen to them. Someone willing to grant them time, to listen to their dramas and difficulties. This is what I call the 'apostolate of the ear,'"

-Pope Francis, "The Name of God is Mercy"

Counsel the doubtful

- “Where there is no guidance, a people falters; but in an abundance of counselors there is safety” -Prov. 11:14
- “Asking for help is a sign of strength”
- It is a great privilege to listen to another
- we help others when we listen, show support and help others in their discernment
- it is important to respect the uniqueness of each person



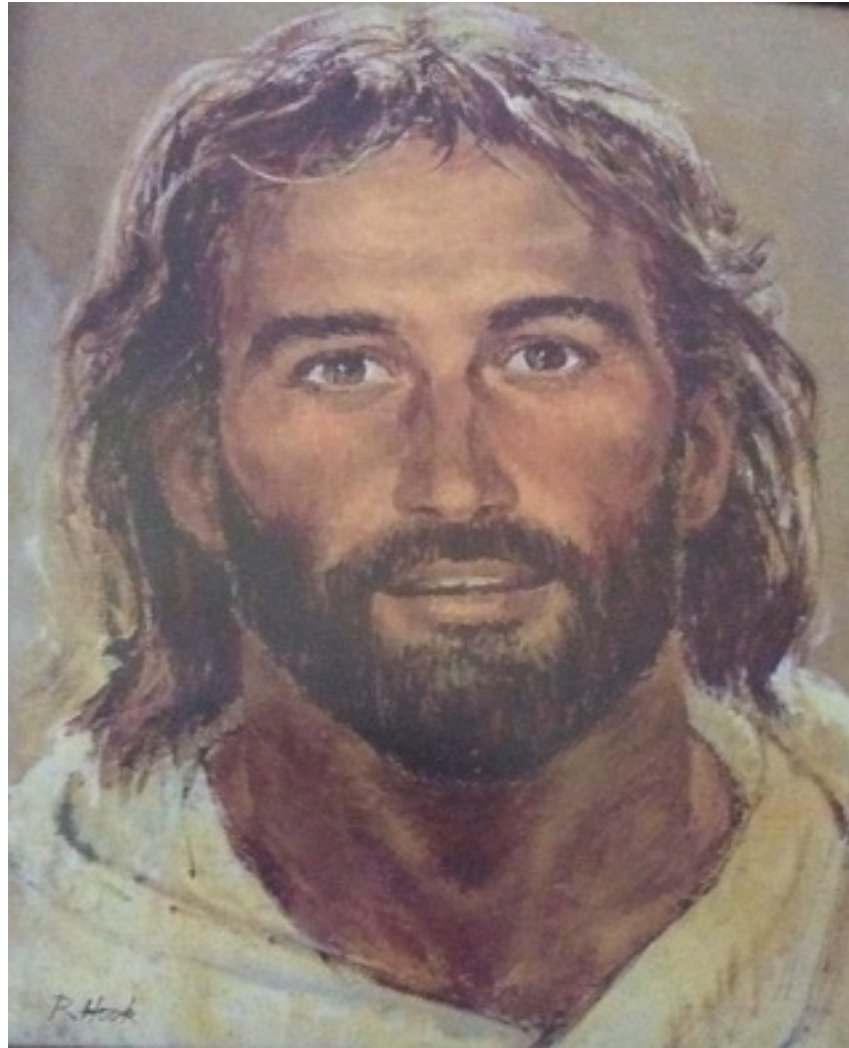
Jesus, our model

Jesus listening to the doubts and concerns of the disciples on the Road to Emmaus:

He demonstrates how to live out the apostolate of the ear!

What are some other gospel stories that demonstrate this?





Action-Counsel the doubtful

- Seek first to understand, then to be understood
- Reach out to others, be the first to say hello!
- Be available to others
- Help others find the help they need

Instruct the ignorant

- The best instruction comes from example - As Francis said in the Rule of 1221 “All the friars should preach by their deeds”.
- education is transformational “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” - Nelson Mandela
- Pope Francis - a leader in educating the world through his encyclical *Laudato Si*

Action - Instruct the Ignorant

- Share your faith as opportunities arise
- Volunteer to help with the Catechesis program in your parish
- Get involved in initiatives to improve global educational opportunities for people
 - “There are clear linkages between education, poverty reduction and sustainability.” unesco.org

Two initiatives:
1. Mikinduri Children of Hope
Mikinduri.com



Two initiatives:

2. Child Soldier Initiative (Gen. Romeo Dallaire)

<http://www.childsoldiers.org/donate/>



Admonish sinners

- Being aware of our frailty and need for conversion
- if one of you misbehaves, you who are spiritual should recall him in a spirit of gentleness (Gal 6:1)
- “If your brother or sister sins against you, go and tell them their fault, between the two of you alone” (Mt 18:15)



Admonish sinners

“ Who am I to judge?

Before all else comes the individual person, in wholeness and dignity ... let us not forget that God loves all his creatures and we are destined to receive his infinite love. You can advise them to pray, show goodwill, show them the way, and accompany them along it » - Pope Francis (Press conference -World Youth Day 2013)

Action -admonish sinners

- Practice what we preach
- avoid self righteousness with its judgmental view of others. Pope Francis starts by seeking common ground
- A call to conversion
- “We welcome the sinner whose soul is wounded” -Pope Francis
- Proceed with caution!

Comfort the afflicted

- “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).
- “Christ has no body now on earth but yours” -St. Teresa of Avila
- “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God” (2 Cor 1:3-4).



Action - Comfort the Afflicted

- Being there for others - you are not alone
- Visit the sick, the shut-in, the lonely
- Make a note in your calendar to reach out to people periodically
- Don't try to "fix" the situation
 - focus on listening and understanding the other's experience -there is probably a reason God gave us two ears and one mouth!

forgive offenses

- “If you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive yours” (Mt 6:15)
- Maybe the hardest of the works of mercy
- There is a certain pleasure in licking our wounds
- A transgression against us often opens up old wounds. Healing of this deeper wound takes time
- As Pope Francis says, if we have “the desire to take the next step” God’s mercy can work with that.



Action - Forgive offenses

- Pray for the desire to forgive
- Allow God's love and healing to enter your own life so you are able to let go of the offense. Holding on to the offense entraps us.
- Act with charity and respect toward the other.
 - Sometimes we feel we “don't like” another person. We are called to treat them as a child of God.

bear patiently those who do us ill

- “For to this you have been called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. He committed no sin; no guile was found on his lips. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he trusted to him who judges justly” (1 Pt 2:21-23).
- Patience and passion come from the same root word - “to suffer”



Action - bear patiently those who do us ill

- Does not mean we suffer abuse
- Seeing all people through the eyes of Christ
- Prayer is an important part of bearing patiently
 - follow the example of St. Therese of Lisieux “doing small things with great love”

-pray for the living and the dead

- Prayer is not an add on - it is present in all of the previous works of mercy
- Prayer should not be used as cop-out. E.g. Saying “I’ll pray for you” when what the person really needs is “ A God with skin on”
- In some situations, prayer is our only option
“This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer and fasting” (Mk 9:29).

Action-pray for the living and the dead

- “pray constantly” 1 Thessalonians 5:16
 - Offer up prayers for those in need of prayer
 - Have masses said for the dead - for our friends and family -don't forget our Franciscan family Nov. 29
 - Praying the chaplet of divine mercy
- “Whoever will recite it will receive great mercy at the hour of death (687). When they say this Chaplet in the presence of the dying, I will stand between My Father and the dying person, not as the just Judge but as the Merciful Savior” revelation to St. Faustina

The Time Is Now

(Doug Clorey, ofs)

Refrain:

Let us reach out to each other as brothers and sisters.
Let us serve one another, sharing our giftedness.

1. God's commandment to his people is « Love one another ». With the power of the Spirit, we love.

He has called us to be faithful in building up his kingdom;
Let's be open, for the time is now!

2. Jesus calls us to be present in truth to one another. We are gifted, we are special to him.

With our talents, we can reach out and strive to be of service;
Let's be open, for the time is now!

3. He has sent us to bring Good News to everyone around us: To the hungry, to the homeless, the poor.

All are needy, all are waiting for ministry and caring;
Let's be open, for the time is now!