

## Living the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy

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Reflection on the Gospel of Luke during this season of Lent, calls us to action. In Luke, Jesus is portrayed as a kind, merciful and compassionate Lord who is always ready to listen, to help, to heal and to forgive.

In the famous sermon on the Last Judgment from Matthew's Gospel (25:31-46), Jesus clearly provides us with a model of how we are to treat others and tend to their bodily needs. He also reminds us that we should treat others as if we were treating Jesus himself and ignoring to do so could lead to dire circumstances at judgment day.

*"When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.' Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, in as much as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.' Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.' Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?' Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, in as much as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.' And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." Matthew 25:31-46*

Therefore, as baptised members of God's family, we are called to follow Jesus' mandate and live as he did. We must strive to exercise the following works of mercy each day.

The seven Corporal Works of Mercy are:

1. **Feed the hungry**
2. **Give drink to the thirsty**
3. **Clothe the naked**
4. **Shelter the homeless**
5. **Visit (Care) for the sick**
6. **Visit the Imprisoned**
7. **Bury the Dead**

As disciples of Christ, we not only have a responsibility for other's physical needs, but we must also endeavour to assist in their spiritual needs. Hence, the church also presents us with seven Spiritual Works of Mercy which pertain to and aim to relieve spiritual suffering. These spiritual needs are often more pressing because they touch the person's soul, and often create the greatest suffering.

The following is a list of the Seven Spiritual Works of Mercy and a brief explanation which may shed light of their meaning and how they can be exercised in our lives.

1. **Instructing the ignorant:** We are called to learn about our faith and be open to talk to others about our beliefs.
2. **Counselling the doubtful:** Everyone has doubtful moments in their faith journey. We are called to support and remind one another that we should trust in Christ who is the way, the truth and the life.
3. **Admonishing the sinner:** We are called to be supportive in helping others find their way and correct their mistakes without being judgemental.
4. **Bearing wrongs patiently:** We are called to not be bitter or judgemental about wrongs done against you.
5. **Forgiving offenses:** We are called to forgive others as God forgives us.
6. **Comforting the sorrowful or afflicted:** We are called to listen and comfort those who are dealing with grief.
7. **Praying for the living and the dead:** We are all called to entrust everything into God's care by praying together for the living and dead.

In one of his articles, Pope Francis, calls us *"to reawaken our conscience [and] ...enter more deeply into the heart of the Gospel"* (*Misericordiae Vultus*). He encourages us to make every effort, to devise specific and responsible ways of practising charity and the works of mercy, particularly in these troublesome times. Pope Francis also reminds us that *"these works of mercy are the features of the face of Jesus Christ, who takes care of his littlest brethren in order to bring the tenderness and closeness of God to each of them."* - Taken from *People Francis: General Audience 2016*

Therefore, this Lent, let us pay particular care to the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy and pray that the Holy Spirit may plant in us the desire to live our lives like Jesus did. May we be empowered and strengthened to put these works of mercy into action every day of our lives.

God bless,  
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