

Works of Mercy Prayer Service

All: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Leader: In Jesus we have the perfect example of who God is. By following his actions and teachings, we can become more like him. Let us listen now to the words of our Lord and take to heart the message he shares with us today.

And the crowds asked [Jesus], "What then should we do?" He said to them in reply, "Whoever has two tunics should share with the person who has none. And whoever has food should do likewise." (Luke 3:10-11)

The Word of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Leader: Lord, when did I see you hungry or naked?

All: Open my eyes to the needs of those who are struggling to survive. Help me find ways to correct the injustices that lead to so many having so little. I will work to feed the hungry and give clothing to those in need.

Leader: Lord, when did I see you homeless?

All: So many in the world are lost. They are alone. They have no one to protect them from trials and hardships. Lord, help me offer shelter, both physical and emotional, to those who are left alone to weather the storms of life.

Leader: Lord, when were you sick or imprisoned?

All: Prison walls come in many forms. Sickness has many symptoms. Make me aware of those who suffer and struggle against pains and imprisonment, no matter what their form. Help me offer comfort and care.

Leader: Lord, what can I do for the dead?

All: Dignity and respect are deserved by all. Help me find ways to offer these to those who need them. With my prayers, make me available to the deceased and those whom they leave behind.

Leader: Lord, what else can I offer to those in need?

All: I will continue to learn more about my faith so that I can be a source of help, counsel, comfort, and patience for all whom I meet. Guide me in my journey. Keep me focused on you, O Lord.

In your name, we pray. Amen.

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Choose to Serve

FOR AGES 12–15

FAITH FOCUS:

Works of mercy put compassion into action by bringing blessing and relief to others. Jesus calls us to take care of one another just as God takes care of us.

GROUPING: Large group

LEARNING STYLE: Kinesthetic

MATERIALS: None

BEFORE YOU BEGIN:

Write questions about service activities. Each question should have four different options. For example:

- Would you rather work at a soup kitchen, visit a nursing home, write a letter to a senator about the death penalty, or collect used clothing for a homeless shelter? Why?
- Would you rather clean up trash at a local park, teach children the Rosary, babysit for a neighbor's children, or go to a pro-life rally? Why?

DIRECTIONS:

1. Ask young people to gather in the center of the room. Explain that you will ask a question that has four different response choices. Tell them to choose one response.
2. Direct young people with the same responses to the four different corners of the room.
3. Give young people five minutes to discuss their responses and tell whether their choice is a Spiritual or a Corporal Work of Mercy and why they made their particular choice.

INCLUSION:

If you have young people with communication challenges, you may wish to have them pair with a peer to share their responses. These young people may be more comfortable sharing with just one person rather than speaking to the whole group.



Service Challenge

FOR AGES 12–15

FAITH FOCUS:

Jesus performed many acts of mercy. We are called to follow his example. We should develop an attitude of service. We can serve by helping others meet their emotional and spiritual needs. When we work for justice, we share God's love.

GROUPING: Individual

LEARNING STYLE: Visual

MATERIALS:

- strips of paper (one for each young person)
- bowl
- paper for service sheets



BEFORE YOU BEGIN:

On separate strips of paper, write a simple service activity for each young person to perform at home, in the parish, at school, or in their local community. Fold them and place them in a bowl. Then write a service questionnaire with these questions:

1. How did you prepare yourself to follow through with your act of service?
2. What challenges did you face during the service?
3. How did completing the service change you?
4. How do you think you helped the person or people you served?
5. Did prayer play a role in your act of service? How?
6. Was your act of service a Corporal or Spiritual Work of Mercy?

DIRECTIONS:

1. Say: *Today we are beginning a service challenge. Jesus calls us to show love and care for others through our actions. We can do this through the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy. Each strip in the bowl has a service activity that you will have to complete before our next meeting. You must keep the strip you choose—no switching with friends. Do not tell others in the group what your service activity is. You will respond to the service questionnaire after you have completed your service.*
2. Have young people choose a strip from the bowl. Ask them to perform the activity outside of class.
3. Distribute the service questionnaire and ask young people to complete it and bring it to your next meeting.
4. Invite volunteers to share their experiences at your next meeting.

INCLUSION:

Check with young people with physical challenges to see if the service act they chose is something they will be able to do. If it is too difficult for them, help them choose an appropriate service activity that they will be able to perform on their own.

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Service Questionnaire

NAME: _____

SERVICE ACTIVITY: _____

1. How did you prepare yourself to follow through with your act of service?
2. What challenges did you face during the service?
3. How did completing the service change you?
4. How do you think you helped the person or people you served?
5. Did prayer play a role in your act of service? How?
6. Was your act of service a Corporal or Spiritual Work of Mercy?

Mercy, Mercy

FOR AGES 15–18

FAITH FOCUS:

We are called to show the warmth, love, and acceptance of Jesus Christ to those in need. He calls us to love and serve others. The Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy are acts of justice and love in which we can participate to help build up God's kingdom.

GROUPING: Large group

LEARNING STYLE: Kinesthetic

MATERIALS:

- note cards
- two bells

BEFORE YOU BEGIN:

Prepare note cards with the names of the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy. Clear a space for two lines of young people to stand behind two desks with bells.



DIRECTIONS:

1. Arrange the group into two teams. Have teams line up next to each other behind two desks. There should be one bell on each desk.
2. Explain that you will read aloud a work of mercy from the note card. The two people at the desks will ring the bell if they know whether it is a Corporal or a Spiritual Work of Mercy. Whoever rings first must identify which kind of work of mercy is named and give an example of how someone can demonstrate that work of mercy.
3. If the team member is correct, he or she stays in the game and moves to the end of the line. If the team member is wrong, he or she is out. The next person in line then takes the bell.
4. Continue playing until one team no longer has any players. The team with the remaining players wins.

INCLUSION:

If a young person with attention challenges has trouble with this game, ask him or her to read aloud the note cards for the teams. Giving these young people an active role will help them feel included and keep them focused.

Saints of Mercy

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

Read the description of each saint. Then write the Work of Mercy that best fits the saint.
Some items may have more than one correct answer.

1. John Bosco believed that young people develop character and virtue in an atmosphere of love. He helped orphaned or neglected boys by teaching them to know God and to practice a skill.

2. John Chrysostom was renowned for his preaching. In A.D. 397 people were tempted to doubt their faith and believe heresies. John guided them to have faith.

3. Martin de Porres, the son of a former African slave and a Spanish nobleman, cared for those who were sick and poor. He forgave those who mistreated him because of his race.

4. Frances of Rome was the wife of a nobleman and a devoted mother. She went to the hospital every day to nurse those who were sick. During a plague, she turned part of her house into a hospital.

5. Margaret of Scotland cared for those who were poor. She washed and served them herself, and made sure they had food and drink.

6. Vincent de Paul wrote more than three thousand letters. He counseled people to forget their own sorrows and to think of others.

7. Louise de Marillac was a friend of Vincent de Paul. She formed the Daughters of Charity in the 17th century. They went into hospitals and cared for the dying and saw that even the poorest person had a decent burial.

8. Francis of Assisi was disowned by his family when he gave up all his possessions. Francis offered up this wrong and continued to practice charity.

9. Before becoming a bishop, Martin of Tours was a soldier. One winter night he saw a shivering man begging at the city gate. Martin cut his own cloak in two and gave one half to the man.

10. Peter Claver saw the misery of those who were enslaved. He dedicated his life to caring for these imprisoned people, and would run to the port with medicine when the slave ships arrived.

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Works of Mercy Pledge

DIRECTIONS:

Complete the pledge below with your own ideas of how you can live out the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy. When finished, cut out and display somewhere as a reminder to live as Jesus did.



I _____ (name) pledge to live as Jesus did by

_____ (a Corporal Work of Mercy)

I will accomplish this goal by _____

I chose this Corporal Work of Mercy because _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____



I _____ (name) pledge to live as Jesus did by

_____ (a Spiritual Work of Mercy)

I will accomplish this goal by _____

I chose this Spiritual Work of Mercy because _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

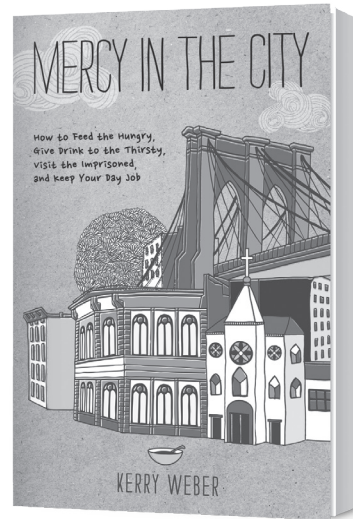
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Mercy in the City Video Discussion

Kerry Weber is the author of *Mercy in the City: How to Feed the Hungry, Give Drink to the Thirsty, Visit the Imprisoned, and Keep Your Day Job* (Loyola Press). With your group, watch this video that introduces her journey to practice the corporal works of mercy in New York City:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TZkfdHRAudw>



Then use these questions to spark discussion about the works of mercy:

1. Kerry says that city living can make you stop seeing Christ in people. What part of your daily experience may be causing you not to see Christ in people?
2. It takes work to see Christ in people. Do you feel as though you are “putting in the work?” Who is someone you know who regularly “puts in the work?”
3. What does it mean to say that “mercy is a whole new way of life?”
4. Even the smallest acts of mercy matter. What was a small act of mercy that someone recently performed for you? How and why did it matter?
5. What can you do today to help someone know that he or she doesn't have to “go it alone?”

Guided Reflection: Corporal Works of Mercy

Let's take a moment to get comfortable now.

Make sure you're in a position where you can be comfortable and still for the next 20 minutes.

Let's quiet ourselves. Slowly and quietly breathe in to the count of 5. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)

Hold your breath for one second.

Now slowly and quietly breathe out to the count of 5. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)

Let's do that again. (repeat)

Now, imagine that everyone else in this room just vanished and that you are all alone, enjoying the quiet. Before long, Jesus walks in and sits next to you. He asks how you are doing. Talk to him. He explains that he is here today to ask you to reveal his presence to others.

You ask him, "Jesus, what do I have to do to reveal your presence to others?"

Jesus says, "The most important thing to do is to care for the needs of others. I want you to show mercy to others by tending to their needs whenever you can."

You ask Jesus, "What do you mean? What kind of needs?"

Jesus says, "Let me tell you about the needs that people have and how you can help them: I want you to recognize when people are hungry and thirsty. Start in your own home. People don't have to be starving to be hungry. Think about how you can help at meal time in your family. Help set the table. Help to prepare the food in the kitchen. Help to clean up afterwards. But also, keep in mind all the people in the world who don't have food and water like you do. Pay attention to how you can help with food drives, support food pantries, work at a soup kitchen, or give money to people who feed the hungry.

"I want you to shelter the homeless. You are very lucky to have a good roof over your head. Take care of your home. Help your neighbors to care for their homes. Pay attention to some of the ways that you can support people who work with the homeless. Homeless shelters need donations of soap, shampoo, and other personal items...maybe you can help by donating some of these.

"I want you to clothe those who have no clothing. Again, you are very lucky to have warm clothes and shoes on your feet. Thank your parents for providing you with clothing and try not to get hung up on spending a lot of money on clothes. Go through your drawers and your closet and pack up some clothing that you can give to someone less fortunate.

"I want you to visit the sick and imprisoned. I know that you're not old enough to visit people in jail and hospitals even have age limits. But there are other ways you can be present to people. You can call or send a card to someone who is sick. If you have relatives that can't get out of the house often because of their age or sickness, spend some time with them. People don't have to be in jail to be imprisoned. Some people are imprisoned in their own homes because of sickness. Of course, if any of your friends are sick, be sure to visit them or call them—it will mean a lot to them.

Guided Reflection: Corporal Works of Mercy

“I want you to be of help to others who are suffering the death of a loved one. I know it’s not fun to go to a wake or a funeral, but it means so much to the people who are grieving just to know that you care and that they are not alone. If you have grandparents or other relatives who are widows or widowers, spend some time with them. They can be very lonely missing their loved ones who have died. You probably even have friends who have lost a loved one. Be sure to show that you care and that you are there for them.

“Finally, I want you to do what you can to help the poor. I know you probably don’t have a lot of money of your own, but you’d be surprised to know just how many people in the world have far less than you have. Do what you can to share with those in need. Save your change in a jar at home and every once in a while, donate it to those who work with the poor. Instead of buying something for yourself, every once in a while, buy something for the poor or give the money to help those who are poor.”

Jesus pauses and then says, “I’m not asking you to change the world. But if you and all of my followers do what you can, the world will change. I want you to do works of mercy: feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, clothe the naked, visit the sick and imprisoned, bury the dead, and give to the poor. Will you consider revealing my presence to the world?”

Tell him that you want to reveal his presence to others but that you need his help. Talk to Jesus about what’s keeping you from truly revealing his presence to others.

Jesus knows that it’s time for you to move on now. He asks if there’s anything else you want to say to him or ask him. Take time to do that now.

Thank Jesus for this time together. Watch as he walks out of the room. Spend a quiet moment now with the Holy Spirit.

Then the king will say to those at his right hand, “Come, you that are blessed by 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 something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.” Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?” And the king will answer them, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”

—Matthew 25:34–40

Guided Reflection: Spiritual Works of Mercy

Let's take a moment to get comfortable now.

Make sure you're in a position where you can be comfortable and still for the next 20 minutes.

Let's quiet ourselves. Slowly and quietly breathe in to the count of 5. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)

Hold your breath for one second.

Now slowly and quietly breathe out to the count of 5. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)

Let's do that again. (repeat)

Now, imagine that everyone else in this room just vanished and that you are all alone, enjoying the quiet. Before long, Jesus walks in and sits next to you. He asks how you are doing. Talk to him. Jesus explains that he is here today to ask you to share his mercy with others.

You ask him, "Jesus, what do I have to do to share mercy with others?"

Jesus says, "The most important thing to do is to care for the needs of others. I want you to show mercy to others by tending to their spiritual needs whenever you can."

You ask Jesus, "What do you mean by spiritual needs?"

Jesus says, "Sometimes people are unhappy because their physical needs are not being taken care of. They may be hungry, or homeless, or sick. But sometimes, people can have every physical need being cared for and still be unhappy inside. Something is missing in their life or something has hurt them, causing them to need spiritual comfort."

"Can you give me some examples?" you ask.

"Of course I can," replies Jesus. "You can start by recognizing that some people are unhappy because they don't know about my Father's love for them. They have never been invited into a relationship with me. They need instruction or teaching about faith. You can share your understanding of the faith with your friends; you can share your insights, knowledge, and skills with others, especially when you're working in groups with others or on a team; you can take time to 'tutor' those who are just beginning tasks; and you can continue to learn about your own faith so that you will be ready to help others learn as well.

"Some people don't experience true happiness because they are simply doing the wrong things and no one has had the strength or courage to warn or advise them. You can do someone a great favor by gently pointing out to them that what they are doing is not a loving act and is not what God wants them to be doing. This doesn't mean that you should go around judging others or humiliating them. It means that you are doing all you can to bring them closer to my Father and to others. You can help others by stepping in or speaking up when someone is clearly doing harm to themselves or others. You can respond to negative and prejudicial comments with positive statements. You can put an end to gossip by walking away. You can always try to set a good example for others."

Guided Reflection: Spiritual Works of Mercy

Jesus then pauses and looks at you and asks, “Have you ever experienced moments of doubt? You know, moments when you just felt as though all hope was lost?”

You pause and tell Jesus about a time that you experienced doubt or felt hopeless. Jesus says, “Many people feel this way from time to time. Bad things happen to good people and when they do, they can lose hope and start to doubt my Father’s love for them. It’s normal to doubt but if that doubt goes unchecked, it can lead to despair. When that happens, they need someone to console them; someone to bring them hope so that they believe in my Father’s love for them. You can console others by working at being optimistic and avoiding negative thinking. You can respond to negative statements with statements of hope. You can tell others about your own hopes and ask them about their hopes and support them in trying to attain them.

“Sometimes, people may not actually be experiencing doubt, but they may just be sad because of a bad experience they’ve had. Maybe they had a breakup with a friend, or were cut from a team, or someone they love is sick or has passed away. At times like that, they may need comfort. They just need to know that they are not alone and that they will get through this sad time. You can comfort others by walking with others through their pain and offering words of encouragement to those who seem sad. You can offer positive words to friends who are having a difficult time with their tasks and you can just be present to those who are struggling or in emotional pain or despair. To comfort someone is to let them know that they are not alone. When you are present to them, my Father’s love is present to them.

“Another way that people can experience my Father’s mercy is for you to practice patiently putting up with others’ faults. Nobody is perfect and my Father is always patient and slow to anger. You can show mercy to others by also being slow to anger and patiently bearing wrongs that others do toward you. That’s not easy to do and I’m not asking you to become a doormat and let others walk all over you. But you can help others by being less critical of them and overlooking their minor flaws and mistakes. Try to give people the benefit of the doubt; that means that you should try to assume that people who may have hurt you did so because they are enduring pain of their own. Instead of getting angry and seeking revenge, pray for those who have wronged you.

“You can even take that a step further and show mercy to others by forgiving them when they wrong you. Too many people hold grudges for a long time and only end up making themselves and others unhappy and bitter. One of the ways my Father shows his mercy is by forgiving people when they’ve done wrong. I am always bringing my Father’s forgiveness—his mercy—to his children. You may have heard about how a man tried to kill Pope John Paul II by shooting him. Several years later, Pope John Paul II visited that man in jail and forgave him. If he could forgive someone who tried to kill him, you can show mercy to others by forgiving them for the wrongs they do to you. You can start by praying for those who have wronged you and pray for the courage to forgive them. You can ask forgiveness from others when you’ve wronged them. You can let go of grudges and go out of your way to be positive with someone you are having a difficult time with.

Guided Reflection: Spiritual Works of Mercy

“Speaking of praying for others, one way you can show mercy to others is to pray for all people—all those living as well as all those who have died. Through your prayers, you can help to bring mercy to others in ways that you may not even understand. As long as you are praying for others, you will be closer to doing my Father’s will, which is always to bring his mercy to all of his children.”

Jesus pauses and then says, “There are lots of ways to make the world a better place and many of them begin by helping people to experience my Father’s love on the inside. I want you to join me in doing works of mercy for others: instructing, advising, consoling, comforting, bearing wrongs patiently, forgiving, and praying for the living and the dead. Will you consider bringing my Father’s mercy to the world?”

Tell Jesus that you want to bring his mercy to others but that you need his help. Talk to Jesus about what’s keeping you from bringing his mercy to others.

Jesus knows that it’s time for you to move on now. He asks if there’s anything else you want to say to him or ask him. Take time to do that now.

Thank Jesus for this time together. Watch as he walks out of the room. Spend a quiet moment now with the Holy Spirit.

“Be merciful, just as your heavenly Father is merciful.”

—Luke 6:36