

The Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy During the COVID-19 Pandemic

“Often it is the people closest to us who need our help.

We should not go out in search of some unknown business to accomplish.

It is better to begin with the simplest, which the Lord tells us is the most urgent.”

– Pope Francis General Audience (10/12/2016)

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” (*U.S. Catholic Catechism for Adults*).

FEED THE HUNGRY

- Check in with your parish community to see if there are parishioners who cannot (or should not) go grocery shopping themselves.
- Check in with your parish to see if the food pantry is adequately stocked.
- Organize a network of volunteers in each parish/community to grocery shop for parishioners in need, especially the more vulnerable populations in our community.

GIVE DRINK TO THE THIRSTY

- Do not purchase or hoard more water than you need.
- While handwashing is vitally important, make an effort not to waste water—in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Christ who do not have access to clean water and suffer from the lack of this basic necessity.

SHELTER THE HOMELESS

- Consider donating toiletries and sanitary items to a local shelter since those who suffer homelessness—and the facilities that minister to them—are especially vulnerable at this time.
- Financially support organizations that are working to support the homeless population in your community.

VISIT THE SICK

- While in-person visits are not advisable during this time, please invest time in reaching out via phone/video call or by sending a letter or card to those who may feel particularly isolated during this time.
- Offer to assist caregivers of chronically sick family members by grocery shopping or cooking for them so they do not have to risk exposure.
- Reach out to health care workers in your community who may be overworked, burdened, or in need of specific support at this time.

VISIT THE PRISONERS

- Explore whether your parish or diocese has a prison ministry and, if so, check whether they are in need of supplies or support.
- Given that people in prison can be especially isolated and vulnerable during this pandemic, consider how to support those who are ministering to them and bringing them the Word of God.

BURY THE DEAD

- Now that funerals may be limited or restricted, reach out with cards or phone calls to those who have recently lost a loved one.
- If possible, visit the cemetery to pray for those you have lost—and to ask their intercession on behalf of all those facing death today.

GIVE ALMS TO THE POOR

- Reach out to those who may have been especially burdened during this pandemic, especially those whose occupations make them more vulnerable to economic instability.
- Remember that the lack of public celebration of Masses may result in parishes struggling financially in the next few months; be sure to continue your support and if possible, increase offerings for those who cannot donate due recent financial hardship or inability to work.
- Remember that Catholic Relief Services continues to serve the most vulnerable and consider making a donation or praying for them as you are able.

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” (U.S. Catholic Catechism for Adults).

COUNSELING THE DOUBTFUL

- Reassure and support those who may be especially anxious during this time.
- If someone asks you for advice, orient your response to Christ, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

INSTRUCTING THE IGNORANT

- With public celebration of Masses unavailable, learn and/or teach someone else how to make a [Spiritual Communion](#).
- Take this time to recommit to your own study and formation and, for those home with children, take advantage of this time to reflect on the faith as a family.

ADMONISHING THE SINNER

- Being confined in close quarters for long periods of time with families or housemates can test us in more ways than one, so be supportive in helping others find their way and correct their mistakes.
- Recognize the reality of spiritual warfare in daily interactions and strive to cultivate the corresponding virtues needed to resist your personal temptations.

COMFORTING THE SORROWFUL

- Write a letter or send a card to someone who is suffering and let them know you are thinking of them.
- Remember that a few moments of your day may make a lifetime of difference to someone who is going through a difficult time.
- Consider sharing links to spiritual resources with those who may be isolated, such as livestreamed Masses, so that they can participate in community worship from home.

FORGIVING INJURIES

- For families, this time may maximize opportunities to exercise forgiveness, so take this

time to model the importance of forgiveness both for this life and the next.

- If the sacrament of Reconciliation is not available in your parish at this time, commit to making a regular [examination of conscience](#).
- Learn and/or teach your family members the [Examen prayer](#) and/or the [Divine Mercy Chaplet](#).

BEARING WRONGS PATIENTLY

- Practice developing and strengthening the virtues of temperance, prudence, fortitude, and justice.
- When frustrated with someone, step away from the situation, take a few deep breaths, and pray the Our Father, asking God for patience.
- Commit to praying the [Stations of the Cross](#) once a week.

PRAYING FOR THE LIVING AND THE DEAD

- Pray the rosary with family members, via video conference or conference call if needed, for all those who are suffering from the effects of this pandemic.
- Keep your own book of prayer intentions, writing down the names of those who you are keeping in your prayers, and let people know that you are praying for them.
- Ask a friend or family member if there is anything you can pray for them about.