



*"In the Corporal Works of Mercy we touch the flesh of Christ in our brothers and sister who need to be fed, clothed, sheltered, visited; In the Spiritual Works of Mercy – counsel, instruction, forgiveness, admonishment and prayer – we touch more directly our own sinfulness."* (Pope Francis's 2016 Lenten Message)

## The Corporal Works of Mercy

The Corporal Works of Mercy are found in the Gospel and give us a model for how we should treat all others. They "are charitable actions by which we help our neighbors in their bodily needs" ([USCCA](#)). They respond to the basic needs of humanity as we journey together through this life. The seven Corporal Works of Mercy are listed below. After each work of mercy there are also suggestions for living them out in our daily lives.

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### FEED THE HUNGRY

**There are many people in this world who go without food. The world produces enough food to feed everyone in the world, but hundreds of millions of people who are hungry each day do not have the land to grow the food or money to purchase it.**

*"If you lavish your food on the hungry and satisfy the afflicted; then your light shall rise in the darkness, and your gloom shall become like midday."* (Isaiah 58)

*"For I was hungry and you gave me food"* (Matthew 25)

- Am I careful to only purchase the food I am able to eat, so I avoid wasting food?
  - Do I share food with others through donations to food drives or volunteering at local food pantries and agencies that feed the hungry?
  - Do I make the effort to educate myself about world hunger?
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### GIVE DRINK TO THE THIRSTY

**Many of our brothers and sisters do not have access to clean water and suffer from the lack of this basic necessity. "Access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right, since it is essential to human survival and, as such, is a condition for the exercise of other human rights."** (Laudato Si).

*"All you who are thirsty, come to the water!"* (Isaiah 55)

*"I was thirsty and you gave me drink"* (Matthew 25)

- How can my family and I conserve water?
- How might I support the efforts of those working toward greater accessibility of this essential resource?
- Do I make an effort to educate myself about the crisis of clean, safe water in all parts of the world?

## CLOTHE THE NAKED

**Clothing provides for two basic human needs: protection and dignity. Clothes have so very much to do with our human dignity that Jesus urges us to clothe the naked. Many poor and homeless people rely on charitable organizations for their clothing. There is also a social dimension to this work. Often our “bargains” are paid for by the sweat of people laboring in inhuman conditions here and abroad. We have a moral responsibility to see if the clothing and shoes we purchase is an item produced at the cost of the human dignity of those who made it.**

*“When you see the naked, clothe them” (Isaiah 58)*

*“I was naked and you gave me clothing” (Matthew 25)*

- How might I simplify my life beyond clearing out my closet and donating my old and unwanted clothing, shoes and accessories?
  - How might I support the work of ministries that provide clothing and shoes to people in need?
  - Do I make an effort to be aware of who makes the clothing, shoes, and other materials I purchase, so that I am aware it has been produced in a way that respects the human dignity of the workers?
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## SHELTER THE HOMELESS

**We think of shelter as a basic requirement of life, but many people simply don't have a roof over their heads or a safe place to live. For many of us, the line between our homes and being homeless is a thin one that can disappear with the death of a spouse, the loss of a job, or an illness. Christ encourages us to go out and meet those without homes, affirming their worth and helping them seek a resolution to the challenges they face.**

*“There will be a shelter to give shade from the heat by day, and refuge and [a]protection from the storm and the rain” (Isaiah 4)*

*“For I was ... a stranger and you welcomed me” (Matthew 25)*

- How do I express gratitude for all that I have and share with those in need?
- Do I consider donating my time or resources to organizations that provide shelter for those in need, or welcome to the stranger without a homeland?
- Do I make an effort to educate myself on the causes and challenges of millions of children and families who are on the move, fleeing from war, illness, hunger and impossible living conditions, and searching for peace and safety?

## VISIT THE SICK

**Those who are sick are often forgotten or avoided. In spite of their illness, these individuals still have much to offer to those who take the time to visit and comfort them. Visiting the sick can be challenging for those of us who are healthy, and yet the great gift we receive is the new compassion that is carved out in our hearts as we listen to those who are frail or even dying.**

*“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.” (Galatians 6)*

*“For I was ... ill and you cared for me.” (Matthew 25)*

- How do I move past my own busyness to take time to visit and comfort the sick, or to keep in touch with cards, email, or phone calls?
  - How do I reach out to assist those who are full-time caregivers for family members?
  - Do I make an effort to get to know my neighbors, especially elderly neighbors in need of a driver, assistance around the home, or someone to serve as an emergency contact?
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## VISIT THE PRISONERS

**People in prison are still people, made in the image and likeness of God. Prison can seem like a remote place not connected with our real lives until we learn about someone’s son, daughter or other family member who is behind bars.**

*“Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them; and those who are ill-treated, since you also are in the body.” (Hebrews 13)*

*“For I was ... in prison and you visited me” (Matthew 25)*

- Do I remember that even the prisoner guilty of the most awful crime is still created in God’s image and is loved by God no less than God loves me?
  - How might I work for the abolishment of the death penalty and for adequate funding for services such as addiction treatment, education, and for other aids to rehabilitation that are too-easily disposed of in times of budget cuts?
  - Do I make an effort to educate myself on the plight of immigrants detained in prison as they await deportation?
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## BURY THE DEAD

**Funerals and memory services give us the opportunity to grieve and show others support during difficult times. Grief is a rolling, painful journey with stops and starts and no discernable end. While no one “gets over” a death, those we love can grow through the grief. We can support the grieving process by remembering that no two people grieve in the same way. Resisting the temptation for comparisons will help us support those we love.**

*"I would give my bread to the hungry and clothing to the naked. If I saw one of my people who had died and been thrown behind the wall of Nineveh, I used to bury him." (Tobit 17)*

*"Amen, I say to you, insofar as you did it for one of these least of my brothers and sisters, you did it for me." (Matthew 25)*

- Do I make a serious attempt to go to wakes or funerals even when I am tempted to skip it? Even if we don't talk with the grieving person our presence can be a great comfort?
- Do I take time to send a note of condolence? Notes and cards can touch the heart in the days and weeks after a death, and much later, it can be re-read and offer comfort again.
- Am I able to ignore my own discomfort with another's sorrow and really listen while a grieving person shares the loss in her/his life? A touch on the arm or shoulder, a hug and careful listening help the person know how much we are present to them.

*Compiled and Adapted from various sources by Sr. Beatrice Hernandez (JPIC Office) and Jeanne Connolly (External Communication)*

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