



"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 won sinfulness." (Pope Francis's 2016 Lenten Message).

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" ([USCCA](#)). The seven Spiritual Works of Mercy are listed below. After each work of mercy there are also suggestions for living them out in our daily lives.

COUNSELING THE DOUBTFUL

Everyone has moments of doubt in their faith journey.

"Listen to counsel and receive instruction, that you may eventually become wise" (Proverbs 19)
"The foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength" (1 Corinthians 1)

- Do I support those who are on a spiritual journey, listening to them and sharing my own story?
 - Have I reached out in love to someone I know who is struggling through despair, anger, fear or confusion?
 - Do I hold in prayer those who find life meaningless and yet long for deeper meaning in life?
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INSTRUCTING THE IGNORANT

As we learn about our faith, be open to sharing it with others. There is always something more to discover by listening to what others have to reveal to us.

"Seek the Holy One, while God may be found; call God while God is near..." (Isaiah 55)
"Wisdom is better than corals and no choice possession can compare with her...For the one who finds wisdom finds life..." (Proverbs 8)

- Am I willing to share the Gospel message that gives hope and meaning to my life?

- Do I speak kindly and lovingly about those on the margins of society—racial minorities, immigrants, etc?
 - Do I speak truth to power when the powerful neglect or oppress the weak and vulnerable?
 - Do I live the Gospel value of active non-violence in a way that inspires and empowers others?
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ADMONISHING THE SINNER

Do not judge, but be supportive in helping others to find their way and to act justly, with respect for all creation. In humility we must strive to create a culture that does not accept evil, while realizing that we all fall at times.

“Don't judge, but guide others towards the path of salvation” (Matthew 7)

“Remove the wooden beam from your eye first; then you will see clearly to remove the splinter from your brother's/sister's eye” (Matthew 7)

- Do I speak out when I hear racist or sexist remarks? Do I always speak of others with respect?
 - Do I take action to prevent bullying and gun violence? Do I live, speak and act nonviolently?
 - Do I care for Earth in a manner that reflects the sacredness of all creation?
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COMFORTING THE SORROWFUL

Be open to listening and comforting those who are dealing with grief. Even if we aren't sure of the right words to say, our presence can make a big difference. A few moments of your day may make a lifetime of difference to someone who is going through a difficult time. “People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” (Bonnie Jean Wasmund)

“Blessed are those who mourn; for they will be comforted.” (Matthew 5)

When Jesus' friend Lazarus died, “Jesus wept.” (John 11)

- Do I lend a listening ear to those in grief? Do I offer loving presence, even when words fail me?
- Am I willing to stay with a grieving person, even when it is uncomfortable for me, when I sense that my presence might make a difference?
- Do I write a letter or send a card to someone who is suffering with illness, loss or death?

BEAR WRONGS PATIENTLY

This work of mercy challenges us to bear wrongs patiently. Sometimes this is a tall order. Patience is not just a matter of temperament; it is a gift of the Holy Spirit This work is aimed at those situations that are part of life: misunderstood motives, slights and insults, backbiting and gossip. It is only natural that we want to strike back, and of course there may be occasions where it is appropriate or even necessary to set the record straight. The wisdom required is to know when to speak and when to keep silent.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.” (Galatians 5)

“Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.” (Colossians 3)

- Do I seek to understand when decisions and actions are confusing or contrary my experience?
 - Do I actively seek to be less critical of others; overlook minor mistakes, and give others the benefit of doubt.
 - Do I send a blessing of peace to those who have wronged me intentionally or unintentionally?
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FORGIVING INJURIES

Forgiving others is difficult at times because we do not have God's limitless mercy and compassion. But Jesus teaches us that we should forgive as God forgives, relying on God to help us incarnate God’s mercy in our world through forgiveness. Forgiveness transforms hearts and lives.

“Lord, if my brother or sister sins against me, how often must I forgive...and Jesus answered: I say to you, not 7 times but 70 times 7.” (Matthew 18)

“...forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us” (Matthew 6)

- Do I let go of grudges when I have been hurt and offer a word of reconciliation when I have caused harm?
- Am I willing to take the first step toward healing, even when the other shows no remorse?
- Have I taken the time to reflect on God’s unconditional love for me and limitless mercy toward others and allowed this realization to create empathy in my own heart?

PRAYING FOR THE LIVING AND THE DEAD

Prayer is one of the most powerful ways we can support others. Joining together in prayer for the living and the dead entrusts us all into God's care. It unites our prayers with the rest of humanity and with creation, across time and space, uniting us with the great communion of saints present and past. It is a witness to the oneness of all creation.

"...We shall always be with the Lord. Therefore, console one another with these words." (1 Thessalonians 4)

"...As for the saints who are in the earth, they are the majestic ones in whom is all my delight." (Psalm 16)

- Do I pray through the great communion of saints who have gone before us for wisdom and guidance?
- Do I request a mass intention for a friend or family member who is going through a tough time?
- Do I prayerfully send forth healing and loving energy into the world as a means of transformation?

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