

St. Michael Church
Newark, NY



***The Journey to Jesus:
Acts of Mercy***

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March 12, 2018



***The Journey to Jesus:
Acts of Mercy***

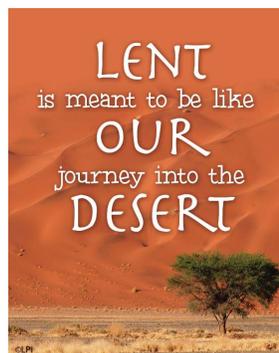




The Journey to Jesus: Acts of Mercy

Last session – *The Journey to Jesus*
→ I spent a lot of time talking
about “silence.”

The Journey to Jesus: Acts of Mercy
How do silence and acts of mercy
go together?



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"There is no genuine action or
major decision except in the
silence of the prayer that
precedes them."

(Sarah, *The Power of Silence*, 154,
paragraph 297)





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“What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well,” but you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it? So also faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”

James 2:14-17



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“There are souls who claim solitude so as to find themselves, and others who seek it in order to give themselves to God and to others.”

(Sarah, *The Power of Silence*, page 69 – paragraph 117)



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GPS

“global positioning system”

Or

“God positioning system”



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“Once someone asked Mother Teresa how she could justify her sisters' spending so much time in private prayer instead of using that time to serve the sick and the poor. Mother Teresa replied, "If my sisters did not spend so much time in prayer, they could not serve the sick and the poor at all". Their prayer before the Holy Eucharist is the source of the strength and all that is needed to carry out their extremely difficult apostolate.”

<https://www.bedevea.org/media/1/Adoration%20and%20Mother%20Teresa%20by%20Mary%20Ann%20G.pdf> by “Adoration and Mother Teresa” by Mary Ann Gurliaccio.





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“She later explained the answer to her sisters: “Did you see how the priest treats the body of Christ with such love and gentleness during the Holy Mass? Try to do the same in the houses [of the dying] you visit: there you will discover Jesus in the guise of pain.” And many of her sisters later said that they completely understood that Eucharistic expression “the Real Presence of Jesus” *when touching the aching limbs of the sick.*”

(*The Saints in Mercy*, 30, italics my emphasis)



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Silence opens our eyes...

“Let us open our eyes and see the misery of the world, the wounds of our brothers and sisters who are denied their dignity, and let us recognize that we are compelled to heed their cry for help”

(Pope Francis, *Misericordiae Vultus*, 15)



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To how the world needs mercy

“We recall the poignant words of Saint John XXIII when, opening the Council, he indicated the path to follow: “Now the Bride of Christ wishes to use the **medicine of mercy** rather than the taking up the **arms of severity**.... Show her herself a loving mother to all.”

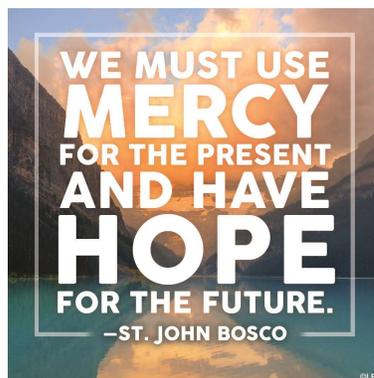
(Pope Francis, *Misericordiae Vultus*, 4, italics & bold my emphasis)



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What comes to mind when you hear the word “mercy”?

Can you give examples from your own life?





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“The word for mercy in Latin is *Misericordia*. The etymology of the word derives from the Latin *misere* (misery, necessity) and *cord/cordis* (heart) and is identified with having a heart full of solidarity with those in need.”
(*The Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy*, 15)

“Vultus” means face

→ *Misericordiae Vultus* - Jesus is the face of the Father’s Mercy



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Lent becomes a time of
self-evaluation

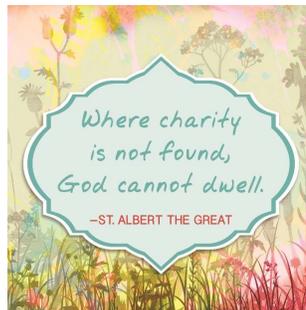
- Ten Commandments
- Seven Deadly Sins
- **Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy**



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Corporal & Spiritual Works of Mercy

“The works of mercy are charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbor in his spiritual and bodily necessities.”



(Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC),
2447)



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- Doing works of mercy is good but do our acts reflect who we are on the inside?
- Our care for others **can shape who we are** on the inside → **lead us on *The Journey to Jesus***
- Does what we give up for Lent lead/free us to do works of mercy? For example, fasting → feed the hungry



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Corporal
Works
of
Mercy



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Corporal Works of Mercy

#1 Feed the hungry

- Matthew 25:35, Isaiah 58:7a, Tobit 1:16-17, Tobit 4:16
- Hunger leads to insecurity (*The Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy*, 37)
- "In short, since hunger is the symbol of the need for real food, the Gospel of John states that Jesus alone can satisfy it, being himself "the bread of life" (John 6:35)." (*The Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy*, 37)
- What can you do?
 - Community Food Closet
 - Stop Hunger program
 - Fasting →



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Why Fast and & Abstain?

Why give something up?

"Fasting weakens our tendency to violence; it disarms us and becomes an important opportunity for growth. **On the one hand, it allows us to experience what the destitute and the starving have to endure.** On the other hand, it expresses our own spiritual hunger and thirst for life in God. Fasting wakes us up. **It makes us more attentive to God and our neighbour.** It revives our desire to obey God, who alone is capable of satisfying our hunger."

(Francis, "Message for Lent 2018", 3, italics my emphasis)



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Corporal Works of Mercy

#2 Give drink to the thirsty

- Matthew 25:35, Job 22:7
- “I thirst” John 19:28
- “It also has a deeper meaning linked to Jesus’ ardent desire to return to the Father according to the invocation of the psalmist: “O God... for you my soul thirsts” (Ps 63:1-2).... These resonate with the emphatic request, “Give me a drink!” (John 4:7), spoken to the Samaritan woman by Jesus.” (*The Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy*, 38)
- What can you do? – Awareness of water usage (“fast”)



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Corporal Works of Mercy

#3 Welcome the Stranger

- Matthew 25:35
- “You shall treat the alien who resides with you no differently than the natives born among you; you shall love the alien as yourself; for you too were once aliens in the land of Egypt. I, the Lord, am your God.” (Leviticus 19:34)
- We are a country of immigrants
- What can you do?
 - Welcome new people
 - Migrant ministry/Hispanic ministry



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Corporal Works of Mercy

#4 Clothe the naked

- Matthew 25:36, Job 22:5-6, Isaiah 58:7b, Tobit 1:16-17, Tobit 4:16
- What can you do?
 - How many old clothes do you have in your house (or in storage that you are paying for!) that you will never wear again?



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Corporal Works of Mercy

#5 Visit the sick

- Matthew 25:36, Sirach 7:35
- “Illness and suffering have always been among the gravest problems confronted in human life. In illness, man experiences his powerlessness, his limitations, and his finitude. Every illness can make us glimpse death.” (CCC, 1500).
- What can you do?
 - ““Do not shrink from visiting a sick man, because for such deeds you will be loved” (Sir 7:35). This text expresses the Jewish understanding *which emphasizes the visitor and not the sick*” (*The Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy*, 43, italics my emphasis)



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Corporal Works of Mercy

6 Visit the prisoners

- Matthew 25:36, Isaiah 58:6, Isaiah 61:1
- “Be mindful of prisoners as if sharing their imprisonment”
Hebrews 13:3
- What can you do?
 - Supporting the families of the imprisoned
 - Probation worker – She was motivated to help those on probation because she knew that if not for the grace of God, she could be in their situation.
 - Jail Ministry (two-fer cf. instructing the ignorant)



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Corporal Works of Mercy

#7 Bury the dead

- Tobit 1:16-18 (the only one NOT in Matthew 25:31-46)
- “In Israel, to be deprived of burial was seen as a horrible evil (see Ps 79:3).” (*The Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy*, 46) cf. 1 Kgs 14:11-13
- What can you do?
 - Dignified burial
 - Rosary Altar Society – rosaries at wake
 - Martha Ministry – funeral receptions



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Spiritual Works of Mercy



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Spiritual Works of Mercy

#1 Counseling the doubtful

- Proverbs 11:14
- Doubt
 - Even the disciples doubted when they saw the risen Jesus (Luke 24:38-41, CCC, 644)
 - CCC 2088 – “*Voluntary doubt* about the faith disregards or refuses to hold as true what God has revealed and the Church proposes for belief. *Involuntary doubt* refers to hesitation in believing, difficulty in overcoming objections connected with the faith, or also anxiety aroused by its obscurity.”
- What can you do
 - The question of the problem of evil



The Journey to Jesus: Acts of Mercy

Spiritual Works of Mercy

#2 Instructing the ignorant

- Isaiah 61:1
- Acts 8:30b-31a “Do you understand what you are reading? He replied, “How can I, unless someone instructs me?”
- What can you do?
 - quoting JP2 in *Fides et Ratio* “He concludes that the most urgent task today is “to lead people to discover both their capacity to know the truth and their yearning for the ultimate and definitive meaning of life (102).” (*The Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy*, 52).
 - → learn more ourselves
 - Volunteer to help with children’s faith formation, youth, or RCIA



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Spiritual Works of Mercy

#3 Admonishing the sinner

- John 8:1-11, John 8:11 – “Then Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you. Go, [and] from now on do not sin any more.””
- “In this sense, then, it should be noted that correction should be made not as a judgment, but as a service of truth and love, since it addresses the sinner not as an enemy but as a brother (see 2 Thessalonians 3:15). It can thus result in leading a brother who was becoming lost back to life (Jas 5:19). This fraternal correction is to be exercised firmly (see Ti 1:13), but without harshness (Ps 6:2), without exacerbating or humiliating the one admonished (Eph 6:4).” (*The Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy*, 53).
- What can you do?
 - We need to speak up but we must ask how and when



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Spiritual Works of Mercy

#4 Comforting the sorrowful

- Isaiah 40:1 – “Comfort, give comfort to my people, says your God.”
- Isaiah 61:2
- What can you do?
 - Ministry of **presence**
 - Calling hours
 - Take food
 - Corporal Work of Mercy #5 “Visit the Sick”



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Spiritual Works of Mercy

#5 Forgiving injuries

- Matthew 5:38-46 “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, offer no resistance to one who is evil... Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you... For if you love those love you, what recompense will you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?”
- Why we start Mass with the Penitential Rite
- What can you do?
 - FORGIVE!
 - How holding grudges hurts our own journey to Jesus



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Spiritual Works of Mercy

#6 Bearing wrongs patiently

- Job 1:21 “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I back there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.”
- What can you do?
 - Think before speaking and/or acting
 - Why we need silent prayer



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Spiritual Works of Mercy

#7 Praying for the living and the dead

- “In short, “Christian prayer is a covenant relationship between God and man in Christ” (CCC, 2564) and therefore sustains all the works of mercy.” (*The Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy*, 50).
- What can you do?
 - Pray!





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To conclude:

- “Small acts of mercy can change the world”
- No one of us alone can save the world but if we each do our part strengthened by:
 - God’s Word
 - Eucharist
 - Silent prayer

Then →



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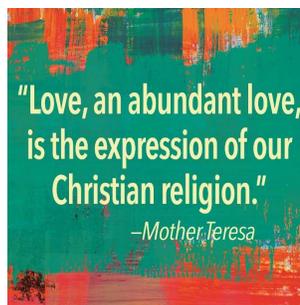
God can take what we have done, multiple it and save the world!

- If we try to do it alone, we are but one
- Working together: $1 + 1 = 2$
- But if we invite God in
 - divine - not just $1 + 1$ or 1×1
 - but $1 \times \text{infinite} =$ “For human beings it is impossible, but not for God. All things are possible for God” (Mark 10:27).
- but if we do nothing - $0 \times \text{infinite} = 0$



The Journey to Jesus: Acts of Mercy

Then others can
come to know God
from our acts of
mercy
and we come to see
Jesus in them as we
love our neighbor.



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Resources

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