

2021-2022 ST. GREGORY CHURCH
SERVICE HOURS

CONFIRMATION WORKS OF MERCY
FOR CONFIRMATION 2: 10 HOURS DUE BEFORE JANUARY 9, 2022
FOR CONFIRMATION 1: 10 HOURS DUE APRIL 24, 2022

STUDENT NAME: _____

Date	# Hours Served	Description of Service Performed	Supervisor/Parent Signature

On the back of this form, once you've completed all 10 hours, please reflect on all the acts of service you've performed while answering these questions:

1. Why did you choose the service projects that you did?
2. How did these acts of service make you feel during and after performing your service? Think about how it relates to your journey as a Confirmation Candidate. How, if any, did it help you grow closer to Christ? How did it affect your faith?

THE WORKS OF MERCY

CORPORAL & SPIRITUAL

FEED THE HUNGRY



INSTRUCT THE IGNORANT

GIVE DRINK TO THE THIRSTY



COUNSEL THE DOUBTFUL

SHELTER THE HOMELESS



ADMONISH SINNERS

CLOTHE THE NAKED



FORGIVE OFFENSES

VISIT THE SICK



COMFORT THE AFFLICTED

VISIT THE IMPRISONED



BEAR WRONGS PATIENTLY

BURY THE DEAD



PRAY FOR THE LIVING AND THE DEAD

"A BIT OF MERCY MAKES THE WORLD LESS COLD AND MORE JUST" (POPE FRANCIS)



the corporal WORKS OF MERCY



Feed the hungry

Give drink to the thirsty



Clothe the naked

Shelter the homeless



Visit the sick

Visit the imprisoned



Bury the dead

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the spiritual WORKS OF MERCY

Admonish the sinner 

 Instruct the ignorant

Counsel the doubtful 

 Comfort the sorrowful

Bear wrongs patiently 

 Forgive all injuries

Pray for the living
and the dead 



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The Spiritual Works of Mercy

The Corporal Works of Mercy

FEED the hungry

**GIVE
DRINK**
to the
thirsty

CLOTHE
the naked

HARBOR
the harborless

VISIT the sick

RANSOM
the captive

BURY the dead

Lord, when did we see You hungry, or one of the least of my brothers, You did it to me.
In so far as you did it to one of the least of my brothers, you did it to me.
Lord, when did we see You thirsty, or one of the least of my brothers, You did it to me.

ADVISE
the sinner

INSTRUCT
the ignorant

COUNSEL
the doubtful

COMFORT
the sorrowful

BEAR WRONGS
patiently

FORGIVE injuries

PRAY for the living
and the dead

Matthew 25: 31-46

What is Mercy?

14 Ways to Show You Know

by *Jim Auer*

If you're studying a foreign language, you know how difficult it is to translate certain words accurately and completely. Most words are simple enough; translating *airplane* from English to Spanish or French won't cause any problem. But some words have a small world of ideas packed into them. Take *cool* for example. It can mean many things.

Mercy also has many meanings. The topic of this *Youth Update* is the many expressions of mercy's meaning, traditionally known as "**the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.**"

Our typical picture of "mercy" is misleading. It brings to mind a person in power taking it easy on a potential victim. We think of a teacher "having mercy" by giving a relatively easy test on a complicated chapter, or a powerhouse basketball team "having mercy" on a weak opponent.

But that's not the concept of mercy in the Bible, or in these 14 "works of mercy." The meaning of mercy here is much broader and richer. It includes things like care, making someone else's problem your concern, and readiness to help those in need.

Give Us the Works

In religious terms, a "work" is simply a good action—something you do. Our Christian heritage lists 14 traditional "works."

History doesn't tell us when the official lists were drawn up, but ways of showing mercy are described in Isaiah 58 and in Matthew 25, among other scriptural places. Seven of them concern physical needs and are called the corporal (from the Latin word for *body*) works of mercy:

- To feed the hungry;
- to give drink to the thirsty;
- to clothe the naked;
- to shelter the homeless;
- to visit the sick;
- to visit those in prison;
- to bury the dead.

The other seven respond to spiritual and emotional needs:

- To instruct the ignorant;
- to counsel the doubtful;
- to admonish the sinner;
- to comfort the sorrowful;
- to forgive injuries;
- to bear wrongs patiently;
- to pray for the living and the dead.

Many of these mercies sound like actions that *other* people take, usually other "official" and often "church" people. Peace Corps volunteers feed the hungry and shelter the homeless. Chaplains (priests and other ministers) visit those in prison. Missionaries teach the gospel to people who haven't heard it. Priests admonish or advise sinners. Counselors comfort the sorrowful.

If we leave the works of mercy completely to professionals, though, the needs of many hurting people won't be met. Every one of us is called to do what Jesus did, as Peter said of him in the Book of Acts: He "went about doing good" (10:38). Our faith challenges us to do the work of Jesus today, so doing good (expressing mercy) is your call too.

And you probably are doing more works of mercy than you've even recognized already. Sometimes we think of "*really* Christian" living as something we'll get around to in the future when we have more time, feel more inspired or somehow get holy. But that doesn't mean we're doing nothing now.

Physical Christianity

Let's move from the outside inward, looking at the corporal works of mercy (those that help bodies) first.

•**Feed the hungry.** •**Give drink to the thirsty.** These are separate items on the traditional list, but they belong together. Perhaps more than any others, they suggest images of "professional volunteers" on mercy missions to Ethiopia and similar areas of the globe. We certainly don't mean to minimize such efforts, but let's explore some ways in which you're already doing these.

Have you ever made lunch or dinner for the family—or picked it up for them at the drive-through? Ever made a peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwich for a younger sister or brother? Ever poured a glass of milk for someone?

Those things don't sound noble and heroic. But there's no clause that says the hungry and thirsty have to be near death in order for these works of mercy to count. The crowds of people whom Jesus fed by multiplying loaves of bread and fish weren't on the brink of starvation. They were just hungry.

But we do need to give special attention to our sisters and brothers who *are* desperately hungry and near death from starvation and dehydration.

For most of us, this amounts to a "work" that again doesn't look or feel heroic or spectacular. But it gets the job done. It's called sharing your own resources with people who do work in the places of special need where we can't go at this point. To do this, you may have to go without something you'd like to have, but don't actually need. To do this, you also need a big heart. All the works of mercy exercise and enlarge your (spiritual) heart.

Between the "ordinary hungry" family member and the literally starving person across the globe are people who don't eat very well and will benefit from your school's canned food drive and similar projects. Show some enthusiasm for projects like that.

•**Clothe the naked.** Few people are literally naked, but millions of people own no more clothing than what they wear each day. If you search your closet and your heart, you may discover that you have more than you need. You can lend something to a friend for a special occasion. You can also restrain yourself from an unnecessary purchase and give the money to an agency that helps people in need of clothing.

Other ways include donating your own outgrown but usable clothing to a local relief agency rather than selling it at a yard sale. Another is helping poor people care for the little clothing they do have by collecting and delivering donations of soap and shampoo to places that offer facilities for the homeless to shower and do laundry.

•**Shelter the homeless.** You're not likely to drive to the inner city, locate some homeless people and invite them to stay with you and your family for a while. This is partially because you are not a homeowner with a place of your own to invite them. That doesn't mean you can't shelter the homeless in other ways.

Here's one: If you do some checking, you'll probably find a group in your area that rehabs old housing to make it safe and habitable for families on low incomes. There may be a group in your parish that does this on weekends. If you're skilled in construction, that's a plus. If you can't tell a jigsaw from a piece of drywall, they'll find a way for you to help anyway. This is a terrific work of mercy to do with a group of friends!

•**Visit the sick.** If a classmate is injured or seriously ill, take the time to stop at his or her home or send a note. Maybe best of all, organize a card from the class—perhaps a huge, poster-size card that incorporates everyone's extra effort and cheerful craziness! A visit to a grandma or grandpa who hasn't been feeling well—there's no way to measure the effect that can have. An hour or so of your time will create a treasured memory. A letter or card is nice as well, but a personal appearance has more impact.

•**Visit those in prison.** The options here are not many, but there are some. Visiting would have to be done by mail, of course. There are organizations which link prisoners who would enjoy correspondence with people on the outside. (This would require a parent's permission obviously.)

The best resource for any kind of visiting of prisoners is probably the local prison chaplain. You can find out how to contact him or her through your diocese. You could make and/or send cards or letters to inmates at holiday times, making your arrangements through the chaplain. Don't put any enclosures in the card, or use glue, tape, etc. (It won't get delivered.) And, of course, be sensitive to how your message might affect someone who has lost many of the freedoms you take for granted.

You shouldn't overlook the mode of visiting anonymously by prayer. You might ask God to send some special strength or comfort to the prisoners who feel most despairing right at that moment, to a prisoner whose health or life is in danger, to a prisoner who has been unjustly sentenced or abandoned by his or her family.

•**Bury the dead.** In our society, the actual burial is handled by funeral directors. But even in older times when the actual burial was handled by relatives and friends, this act of service was for the family of the one who had died. Those families are still in need of many things, even though a funeral director handles what we call "the arrangements."

Taking the time to visit the funeral home and say simple, ordinary words of comfort may not seem important, but these actions are important. Look for ways to ease the path for relatives of someone who has died. For example, if a classmate misses two or three days of school at the death of a grandparent, you could go out of your way to make copies of missed notes and have them ready when he or she returns.

Healing Spirits

Kindness, like beauty, is more than skin-deep. These works of mercy reach in to touch people's minds, hearts and emotions.

•**Instruct the ignorant** (Help people understand and learn). The traditional words "instruct the ignorant" are misleading.

Every one of us knows dozens of extremely "ignorant" people whom we would just love to instruct—meaning "see and do things my way." That's not the idea here.

This is a work you've done whenever you've helped a younger sister or brother practice math facts or spelling words, for example, and every time you've helped a classmate with a subject or assignment you understand better than he or she does. It covers all occasions when you've been a teacher of something good, including how to hold a baseball bat or serve a volleyball.

If you want to do this on a more regular basis, tutoring opportunities are all around. Check with a counselor or the moderator of the Honor Society at school.

•**Counsel the doubtful** (Give good advice to those who are uncertain about what to do). This is a tough job to do well, especially when the good advice is something the "doubtful" person doesn't want to hear. As you well know, that's frequently the case.

You may not be aware of how much power you have here. Where do young people usually go first for advice? Friends! That may or may not be a good move, depending on how qualified their friends are to give good advice. But it's a fact that good advice coming from a friend often has more impact than the same message coming from an adult.

When you're asked your advice, breathe deeply, remember that all your wisdom comes from God, and speak out of concern for the other person.

•**Admonish the sinner** (Help people who sin understand and live God's love). This is an even tougher version of the previous work. We all admit in our heads that we're sinners, but nobody likes to be told that he or she really was one on a particular occasion!

Perhaps the most practical way of doing this work is by your own example—by refusing to take part in things you know are wrong. When others see your quiet refusals and also notice that your life is happier and less cluttered with guilt, the message will get across.

•**Comfort the sorrowful.** You could compile a small encyclopedia of opportunities. We sometimes overlook the small ones, though. It's not difficult to see when a death, a parent's divorce or a relationship breakup produces sorrow and to respond to it.

Look for other sorrows, too: the classmate who didn't get a hoped-for scholarship or didn't get asked to the dance, the younger sibling who lost a favorite toy, the parent who received some nasty comments at work.

Remember that comforting a sorrowful person does not usually mean *fixing* what caused the sorrow. It's seldom in our power to do that. But just as "shared joy is doubled," "shared sorrow is halved."

•**Forgive injuries** (Forgive people who cause pain) •**Bear wrongs patiently** (Deal kindly with people who do thoughtless things).

These two similar works go totally against what we see (and sometimes cheer for) in movies. The bad guys do something nasty onscreen in the first half hour, then they are hunted down and made to pay.

Forgiving injuries and bearing wrongs does not mean we stand by and allow truly evil things to keep on happening. It means we don't enter the cycle of revenge and keep hatred breeding by adding our own.

•**Pray for the living and the dead.** This may or may not be the easiest work of mercy, but it's certainly the most possible for everyone. Our Jewish-Christian heritage is loaded with examples of wonderful things accomplished through faithful prayer. Sometimes it really is the only way we can help.

Golden Gifts in Small Packages

Few things hold us back from responding to others' needs more than thinking, "The problem is so huge—what difference can I make?" Or feeling that even what we do to help a small problem won't really matter much. But they're both terribly false.

Yes, many problems are giant-size. But look at the example of Jesus. He did not wipe out all disease in the world, or even all disease in Galilee, Samaria and Judea. He did cure many diseased people.

Jesus himself did not personally counsel every discouraged, confused person in all of Palestine. He did give those whose lives touched his a golden ray of real hope.

And then he told his disciples—including *us*—to go about doing the same thing. We can't fix everyone's problems, but we can support and help lots of people in little ways.