

Jubilee of Mercy – Spiritual Works of Mercy

Just as we help our neighbors in their bodily needs through the corporal works of mercy, so we can attend to their spiritual well-being like Jesus did through the spiritual works of mercy. A long history of Christian tradition enumerates seven spiritual works of mercy: counsel the doubtful, instruct the ignorant, admonish the sinner, comfort the sorrowful, forgive injuries, bear wrongs patiently, and pray for the living and the dead.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops website offers these suggestions for living out the spiritual works of mercy:

Counsel the doubtful – We all have moments of doubt on our faith journey. As we struggle with these doubts, we should turn to Christ, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life, asking His help. If someone asks for your advice in a spiritual matter, try to orient your response to Christ. Follow Christ with the witness of your life, so that others may see God's love revealed in your actions. If a friend is struggling with belief, share a resource that strengthened your belief – a faith-sharing session, a book, or a prayer.

Instruct the ignorant – There's no shame in not knowing, only in refusing to learn. The more we learn about our faith, the more we will be able to share with others. Volunteer in parish religious education programs. Participate in faith formation offerings. Be open to discussing and explaining your beliefs with others. Read the Catholic Catechism for Adults or papal documents – so many things are readily available online at no cost!

Admonish the sinner – This is a work of mercy, not judgment. While we strive for a sinless world, we all fall at times. Sinners need guidance towards salvation, not a verdict. Our acts of correction must be loving, not arrogant. Remember Christ's admonition to remove the beam from your own eye so that you can see clearly to remove the splinter from your brother's. (Mt 7:5)

Comfort the sorrowful – Even if you don't know what to say to someone dealing with grief, your presence can make a big difference. Lend a listening ear. Offer a gesture of comfort and compassion. Bring a meal to someone beset by problems. Send a note of encouragement to someone suffering. Your kindness can reflect God's care for them.

Forgive injuries – Learn from God's mercy towards you and forgive others as you have been forgiven, relying on His mercy to help you extend mercy to others. Don't bear grudges. Celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet.

Bear wrongs patiently – Avoid bitterness. Put your hope in God so that you can endure troubles and injustice. Pray for patience when you're frustrated with someone.

Pray for the living and the dead – Prayer is one of the most powerful ways we can support others. Through prayer, entrust those you are concerned about to God's love. Request a Mass intention for a person who is in difficulty or who has died. Remember specific people when praying for those "in the silence of our hearts" at Mass. Prayer is something you can always do for others, even from your home.