

52 Ways to Practice Mercy and Suggested Works of Mercy for Groups

Mercy comes from the Latin *Misericordiae* which literally means to have a heart for the miserable. To have a heart for our brothers and sisters who are suffering. “What you did for the least of these, you did for me” (Matt 25:40). Mercy is not necessarily about forgiving a debt or a wrongdoing, but about loving our brothers and sisters in the world as Christ does.

“The Pharisees saw this and said to his disciples, ‘Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?’ He heard this and said, ‘Those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do. Go and learn the meaning of the words, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ I did not come to call the righteous but sinners.’” (Matt 9:11–13).

Corporal Works of Mercy

- Feed people who are Hungry
- Give drink to people who are thirsty
- Clothe people who need clothes
- Visit Prisoners
- Shelter people who are homeless
- Visit people who are sick
- Bury people who have died

Spiritual Works of Mercy

- Help people who sin
- Teach people who are ignorant
- Give advice to people who have doubts
- Comfort people who suffer
- Be patient with other people
- Forgive people who hurt you
- Pray for the living and the dead

God, who is merciful, desires our mercy. Listed below are suggested ways to practice the corporal and spiritual works of mercy during your Confirmation preparation. Some are good examples for individuals to daily seek ways to practice mercy and others offer suggestions for planning group projects with the Confirmation preparation group to plan and participate together.

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR PLANNED WORKS OF MERCY WITH GROUPS:

1. Pare down your possessions: share your things with the needy. Organize a toy, book, or clothing drive for those in need in your community.
2. Plan a mini-pilgrimage, with Candidates and families, to a local shrine; make an effort along the way to live the corporal work of mercy of “welcoming the stranger” as Christ.
3. Organize a “mother’s morning out” where the Confirmation Candidates and their parents provide day care to allow young mothers a morning free to do what they would like to do without the need to care for their child(ren).
4. Organize a collection: toothpaste, soap, shampoo, socks, feminine products, and other toiletries. Make gift bags to deliver to new mothers in a hospital or those being helped by a Crisis Pregnancy Center or abuse shelter.
5. Organize a visit to a nursing home. Bring home made cards, flowers, and art work. Plan to play games and read books together; give a musical performance or skit presentation.
6. With a few other people at your church, plan a party and invite all those from “the highways and byways” to come.
7. Get a group to help out at a local food bank, thrift shop, or soup kitchen. Be sure to interact with the people being served.

***We want to encourage one another to seek daily ways to practice the Works of Mercy.**

Individual Works of Mercy:

1. Resist sarcasm; it is the antithesis of mercy. "Set, O Lord, a guard over my mouth; keep watch, O Lord, at the door of my lips!" (Psalm 141:3).
2. Call someone who you know is lonely, even if you don't understand why they're lonely and *especially* if you do.
3. Write a letter of forgiveness to someone. If you cannot send it, sprinkle it with holy water, ask Christ Jesus to have mercy on you both and then burn or bury it.
4. Learn to say this prayer: "Dear Lord, bless [annoying person's name] and have mercy on me!"
5. Do something kind and helpful for someone with whom you don't get along, or who has wronged you.
6. Be mindful of your Online behavior. Is that post designed to improve your image, and leave others feeling bad? Are you hammering people in order to serve your anger and humiliate others?
7. Have Masses said for the living: friends and family members, even strangers about whom you've read/heard about, who are having a hard time.
8. Be generous enough to allow someone to help you; people need the opportunity to serve and to feel needed.
9. If you didn't mean to be a pain in the neck to someone, admit you were and ask the person to forgive you.
10. Take time in prayer to contemplate the good qualities of someone who is difficult for you. Do the same for each member of your family.
11. Send a card, flowers, gift, or note to someone on the six-month anniversary of his or her loved one's death. By then, most people have stopped recognizing their grief.
12. Offer to babysit for a busy mom. She will appreciate having a couple of hours to herself.
13. Make a meal (or buy a gift certificate) for a mom who's just given birth or adopted a child, or for someone who's just gone through a loss.
14. Hold. Your. Tongue.
15. Offer to run an errand (groceries, dry cleaning pick-up, dog-walking) for a busy parent or homebound person.
16. If you can't sit down beside a homeless person to talk for a while today, at least send a donation to a ministry that does do this (such as St. Vincent de Paul Society or Least of These).
17. If you're sharing a treat, take the smaller portion.
18. Memorize the 14 corporal and spiritual works of mercy and show other children what they mean by teaching them during Children's Formation Sessions Sunday morning.
19. Instead of losing patience with someone Online (or in person), try to hear that person's fear. Ask God for what Solomon asked for: "an understanding heart."
20. Offer to have your family drive an elderly person to Mass.
21. Recall a time you were not given the benefit of the doubt, and extend one to someone else.
22. Put down the phone and really listen to someone else - ***with eye contact***.
23. Create a short end-of-day ritual to ask for (and extend) forgiveness with those you live with. "*Do not let the sun set on your anger*" (Eph. 4:26).

24. Make a list of your “enemies.” Then, every day, say a prayer for them.
25. Make a point to smile, greet, or make conversation with someone who is not in your everyday circle.
26. Give away something of yours (that you really like) to someone you know would enjoy it.
27. Pray a Divine Mercy Chaplet as you are traveling to or from school.
28. When mercy for others is difficult, pray Cardinal Merry del Val’s “Litany of Humility.”
29. Make a gratitude journal and jot down little things for which you are grateful.
30. Learn to make an Ignatian “Examen” every night. Remembering God’s mercy each night helps us be merciful.
31. Respond to provocation with the respect you wish a person would show you.
32. Learn “The Jesus Prayer” and use it.
33. Take a few minutes during the week to stop at a church and sit before the Tabernacle simply to be with Christ, the Merciful. If you cannot do that, meditate upon the crucifix.
34. Pray a novena for the good of someone you dislike.
35. Dig out your most attractive stationery and handwrite an actual letter to someone as a means of demonstrating his or her importance to you.
36. Offer to read to someone who is feeling ill or is just feeling blue.
37. Ask the Holy Spirit ‘to groan for you’ when you cannot bring yourself to pray for someone who has done you an injury.
38. Lead with a kind comment with friends as well as strangers.
39. Visit the graves of your ancestors, or visit a local cemetery and walk around, praying a rosary for all the souls buried there.
40. Admit your jealousy to yourself and your confessor.
41. Keep holy cards, short prayers, or blessed medals handy and give them to people you meet as you are inspired as a blessing to others.
42. If someone you know seems to lack faith, share some of yours — tell him or her how Christ has changed your life.
43. Pay the parking fee, toll fee, or drive-thru fee for the person behind you.
44. Pray every day for the souls in purgatory. Pray for your family members who have died.
45. Have your family keep a small cooler of bottled water in your family vehicle and when you encounter someone on a hot day begging for money at an intersection, offer them a bottle of cool water instead of cash.