

Corporal Works of Mercy Introduction

**FEED &
GIVE DRINK &
CLOTHE &
SHELTER &
VISIT &
CARE &
BURY.**

Supplies for Session:

- Supplies for team building activity if doing one
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- Bible for Matthew 25 reading
- 7 Poster papers up around room
- Marker for every person
- List of examples of Corporal Works of Mercy for reference if needed:
 - [USCCB](#)
 - [Salt & Light Media](#)
- Mercy quotes printed & cut – at end of document
- 6 pieces of paper
- Colored paper for each person
- Scissors
- Technology to show video for closing prayer (laptop, projector/TV)
 - The video suggested is on Formed.com (if you parish does not have a Formed account, please reach out to Kelsey; or use the alternative reflection)

Team Building/Icebreaker (10 min)

- If your session is only 45 min, you may not have time for the icebreaker
- If you group still needs some community building, do another team building activity (see introduction meeting outline for some ideas)

Opening Prayer (4 min)

- Read Matthew 25: 31-46

Intro & Brainstorm Activity with Corporal Works of Mercy (7-10 min)

Preparation/Supplies

- 7 Poster papers up around room
- A Marker for every person

Activity

- Ask: In our Gospel reading, did you hear the physical actions Jesus listed as necessary for helping our neighbors and in turn loving our Lord? Six were listed, what are they?
 - As students list them off, give them a marker and ask them to write that title on top of one of the posters
 - Feed the Hungry, Give Drink to the Thirsty, Shelter the Homeless, Clothe the Naked, Visit the Imprisoned, Care for the Sick, Bury the Dead (*bury the dead in not technically stated in Matthew 25*)
 - Explain: These are what the church calls The Corporal Works of Mercy.
 - Brief explanation to share (From USCCB.org): "The Corporal Works of Mercy are found in the teachings of Jesus and give us a model for how we should treat all

others, as if they were Christ in disguise. They "are charitable actions by which we help our neighbors in their bodily needs". They respond to the basic needs of humanity as we journey together through this life."

- Ask the group to move around the room and write examples of living these on the corresponding poster
 - First round might be 'obvious' examples (Feed the Hungry – volunteer at a food bank)
- Once everyone has made a round and written a few examples, ask them to have a seat and read a few of them aloud
 - Then challenge them to think beyond the 'obvious'. What if a person in your school is *hungering* for friendship, how could we *feed* them? What are some *dead* or *non-life giving* things in our lives that we need to bury? If people in our world are thirsting, what can you change about your life to acknowledge their plight?
 - (Use list of examples from session supplies if group is stumped)
 - Give them 2 minutes to think-pair-share with a partner to chat out some ideas.
 - Then ask them to write some of these more in depth ideas on the posters
- Once everyone is seated, ask a few people to share one of the ideas they came up with in the second round. Some ideas for follow up questions:
 - How did you come up with that?
 - What would it look like to live that out?
 - How is that an example of living your faith?

What is Mercy? (15-20 min)

Preparation

- Print quotes on mercy from different holy men & women (at end of document)
- Cut the quotes out so they are ready to hand out
- Paper for their definition/examples of Mercy

Activity

- Explain: The way we can serve others and their physical needs can be easy for us to understand. But the title of these are the Corporal Works of MERCY. What is mercy? And how are we giving it when we feed someone or care for someone? So, we're going to try to understand mercy a little more.
- Split the group into 6 groups, giving each group one of the quotes on mercy
- Explain their goal: with the quote and any additional research you want to do on your phones:
 - Create a definition of mercy in your own words
 - What are 3 tangible examples of giving or receiving mercy in the life of a teen based off your quote/research/own definition
- Once groups are done (7-10 minutes), have each group share their definition & examples

- If further explanation is needed, ask how they came up with that based on their quote

Application Activity: Hands-On Gospel (5-7 min)

Preparation

- Colored paper for each person
- Scissors, markers

Activity

- The Hands-On Gospel According To (student name)
 - Each person makes a hand-print cut-out with their name in the middle
 - Ask each person to write 3 things they can do semi-regularly between now & Agape to live out the Corporal Works of Mercy
 - After the meeting you could create a Mission Team poster with all the hands as a demonstration of unity and accountability and the mission of living the Gospel
 - You can 'check in' on these goals each time you meet
- Close this activity with brief commentary/reflection about how the Corporal Works of Mercy are not only a way to show love for all people, especially those who cannot 'repay' us, they are also a way that we live out the Gospel and our faith

Closing Prayer: Saint Connection (4 min)

- Explain: Mother Teresa is a great example and role model of what it looks like to live the Corporal Works of Mercy.
- Watch Video on [Formed: You Did It To Me](#)
 - This video beautifully connects Mother Teresa and the Corporal Works of Mercy
 - (You can skip the intro and start the video at 0:30)
- Close with one of Mother Teresa's favorite prayers written by St. John Henry Newman:

Dear Jesus, help us to spread Your fragrance everywhere we go.
Flood our souls with Your Spirit and Life.
Penetrate and possess our whole being so utterly that our lives may only be a radiance of Yours.
Shine through us and be so in us that every soul we come in contact with may feel Your presence in our souls.
Let them look up, and see no longer us, but only Jesus!
Stay with us and then we shall begin to shine as You shine, so to shine as to be a light to others.
The light, O Jesus, will be all from You; none of it will be ours.
It will be You, shining on others through us.
Let us thus praise You in the way You love best, by shining on those around us.
Let us preach You without preaching, not by words but by example, by the catching force, the sympathetic influence of what we do, the evident fullness of the love our hearts bear for You. Amen.

If you don't have a formed account, share this closing reflection and then the prayer.

- "People often asked Mother Teresa why she loved the poor so much, how she could honor dignity in such difficult situations. In response, she liked to grasp their hand, slowly wiggle one finger at a time, and explain: "You-did-it-to-me." In her mind, you could count the whole Gospel on just five fingers. ... The secret to her infectious joy and boundless compassion was that in every person—every paralytic, every leper, every invalid, and every orphan—she recognized Jesus." (From '[Jesus in His Most distressing Disguise](#)' by Brandon Vogt)

Quotes on Mercy

Extend your mercy toward others, so that there can be no one in need whom you meet without helping. For what hope is there for us if God should withdraw his mercy from us?

- St. Vincent de Paul

It wasn't until recently, when I heard a priest's homily about mercy, that I finally had a concrete definition to apply to my thoughts and actions in daily living. This priest broke down the Latin word for mercy, which is *misericordia*, derived from the two words *miserere* ("pity" or "misery") and *cor* ("heart"). He then proceeded to say that when we ask for God's mercy, we are essentially asking him to relieve us of a heart that is in misery. And our hearts can be in a state of misery not just from sin, but from the deep hurt caused by a broken relationship with a family member, from the suffering of infertility, from the pain of a physical or mental illness, from losing a job, from being betrayed or abandoned, from spiritual or physical poverty, and so on.

Now when I think about mercy as "relieving someone from a heart of misery," I realize that I've experienced God's mercy much more than I could ever count. And I've also realized that I, in turn, have given mercy to others in more ways than just by forgiving someone who has wronged me.

- Jackie Francois-Angel

How happy I am to see myself imperfect and be in need of God's mercy.

- St Therese of Lisieux

For there are three ways of performing an act of mercy: the merciful word, by forgiving and by comforting; secondly, if you can offer no word, then pray - that too is mercy; and thirdly, deeds of mercy. And when the Last Day comes, we shall be judged from this, and on this basis we shall receive the eternal verdict. (1158)

- St Faustina

Pope Francis writes, "Jesus is the face of the Father's mercy—he reveals the mercy of God by his words, actions and person." Jesus showed compassion and forgiveness to all those whose lives he touched, even those who persecuted him. No sin or wrongdoing was strong enough to outweigh the limitless mercy of our incarnate God. We too, with Jesus as our model, are called to be the merciful face, hands and voice of God to everyone we meet in our daily lives.

As a hospice nurse, each day I witness the mercy of Jesus in the actions of friends and families caring for loved ones in the midst of terminal illness. Some days families are at their best, and some days families are at their worst. But regardless of peace or struggle, the limitless self-sacrifice of caregivers in ministering to their loved ones is the embodiment of mercy and compassion, and the surrendering of the dying to the mercy of caregivers is the embodiment of humility and trust.

- Sister Amy L. Williams, SOSF

But, what does it mean really to be compassionate toward the suffering? It means suffering with others, feeling it in our hearts. And, not just feeling, perhaps, but actually doing. "Compassion goes deeper than mercy," Sister says. "Rather than being restricted to feeling, it is an action based on an awareness of the path of others. We can't offer compassion just because we feel like it. We must invite God into it."

Compassion flows when humanity and divinity flow together. We can't do it alone. Who can we suffer with, and show compassion for, today?

- Sister Cynthia Bauer (Dominican Sisters of Hope)
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God's mercy can make even the driest land become a garden, can restore life to dry bones (cf. Ez 37:1-14). ... Let us be renewed by God's mercy, let us be loved by Jesus, let us enable the power of his love to transform our lives too; and let us become agents of this mercy, channels through which God can water the earth, protect all creation and make justice and peace flourish.

- Pope Francis