

Is this not, rather, the **FAST** that I CHOOSE: -SHARING YOUR BREAD WITH THE HUNGRY...



The Works of Mercy are a wonderful way to grow in love for God and neighbor. Making these small sacrifices of love detaches us from ourselves, turning our hearts back to God. Here are some creative ideas for practicing the works of mercy during Lent.

THE CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY

Give Food to the Hungry: Making a personal sacrifice to nourish another person's body and soul

- Pack a lunch for someone in your family.
- Serve with your family at a soup kitchen or offer to bring a meal to a shelter.
- Say "thank you" to those who serve you food today.
- Learn the names of the maintenance and cafeteria workers.
- If you're sharing a treat, give away the better portion.
- Deliberately leave the best food option for someone else at lunch or snack time.
- Eat something you do not like that you are tempted to throw away.
- "Clean your plate" at dinner rather than wasting food.
- Fast from a treat you like to remind yourself to hunger for God.
- Save the money from fasting and donate to help feed the hungry, such as buying items for canned food drives or donating to missions that help the physically hungry.
- Pray for vocations to the priesthood that God may continue to feed us with the Bread of Life.

Give Drink to the Thirsty: Giving others refreshment to sustain their physical and spiritual life.

- Pick up milk or another special drink (juice, tea, coffee) for a shut-in.
- Take a shorter shower to save water, and offer up the sacrifice.
- Fast from a favorite beverage treat (such as soda or your morning latte) and donate the money to projects helping to build wells in rural, poor villages.
- Delay getting a drink of water to enter into Jesus' thirst; offer it up for those who don't have water.
- Prayer is the encounter of God's thirst with ours. Quench Jesus' thirst and your own by praying a favorite aspiration (such as "Come, Holy Spirit!" or "Jesus, make my heart like Yours!") throughout the day.
- Offer up a prayer, act of virtue, or sacrifice for the salvation of a soul.
- Satisfy the spiritual thirst of others by leading them to faith, prayer, and teaching them about God.

Clothe the Naked: Aiding others in recognizing the dignity of their bodies by treating them in a manner that expresses this dignity

- Deny yourself a little comfort by sharing your coat, sweater, or scarf with a peer who has forgotten his or her things.
- Pick up clothing left lying in the school hallway or locker room and put it in the lost and found.
- Knit or crochet hats and scarves for the homeless.
- Fold the laundry for someone else in your home.
- Simplify your wardrobe—think about what you really need and donate some things that are "nice" but not "necessary."
- Dress up for Sunday Mass.
- Take pride in your uniform (or school dress code) and wear it well.
- Model modest speech. Avoid speaking of or promoting things that are not decent.

Shelter the homeless: Welcoming others and making them feel at home; giving them an experience of kindness and security

- Don't complain about cold or heat—offer it up for those who lack shelter.
- Offer to help at a shelter.

- Donate money and goods to Christian refugees.
- Take advantage of sales to buy small toothpastes, soaps, shampoos, socks; donate them to those in need.
- Help organize a fund-raiser for a family adopting a child.
- Show kindness to someone whom you find difficult or unpleasant.
- Invite a peer who is frequently left out to work with you on a group project or to study with you.
- Make a point to make conversation with someone who is not in your everyday circle.
- Smile and greet others when you pass them in the hall.
- Sit with someone new at lunch.

Visit the Sick: Supporting those bearing Christ's Cross with your prayer and presence

- Make an effort to be aware of other's needs and offer help.
- Offer to make a meal for the family of someone who is sick.
- Call your grandparents or another elderly relative and talk with them.
- Offer to take over a chore for someone in your home who has a headache or a cold.
- Pray for the sick and for their families.
- If you can, visit a nursing home. Offer to pray a rosary, play a game, or read a book with an elderly person to lift his or her spirits.
- Send a "get well" or "thinking of you" cards expressing your prayers
- When a student is absent, let him or her know that you noticed and missed them.
- Bear illness or pain cheerfully, without complaint, in communion with those who are ill.

Visit the Imprisoned: Reaching out through prayer and kind support to those in prison or who have less freedom

- Pray for prisoners.
- Read the news and pray by name for the conversion of those involved.
- Allow others to go first.
- Hold open the door for the person behind you.
- Donate spiritual books, magazines, and newspapers to prison ministries.
- Offer to babysit for a busy parent and tell the parent to go out and have a couple of hours alone.
- Offer to run an errand (groceries, dry cleaning pickup, dog walking) for a busy parent or homebound person.

Bury the Dead: Laying to rest the body of someone who has died and helping their loved ones grieve

- Venerate a relic or make a pilgrimage to the grave of a saint.
- Provide support (a meal, sympathy, phone calls, etc.) to family of the dying.
- Make a visit to a cemetery.
- Pray for the repose of those who have died today.
- Bring flowers to honor the grave of a loved one.
- Attend wakes and funerals when possible.
- Send a sympathy card to the family of the deceased, expressing your sympathy, prayers, and, if you knew the person, a few kind words about the deceased.
- Participate in Memorial Day celebrations.
- Send a card, flowers, gift, note to someone on the six-month anniversary of his or her loved one's death.

THE SPIRITUAL WORKS OF MERCY

Teach the Ignorant: Teaching others the knowledge they need to be happy and fulfilled in this life and in the next

- Offer to help a peer study.
- Think about what you watch. Does it accord with what you know is good and true? Does it represent the whole truth?
- Practice speaking about and sharing your faith.
- Be generous enough to allow someone to help you; people need to feel needed.
- Help a sibling with his or her homework.
- Follow directions promptly and the first time they are given to you.
- If someone makes a mistake, refrain from laughing or pointing it out to others. Instead practice saying words of encouragement.
- Take time to thank a teacher or someone in authority who gives much of his or her life to serving you.
- Listen attentively even if you are really bored.

Counsel the Doubtful: Bringing peace of mind to another through good advice and uplifting words and deeds

- Uplift others by kind words.
- Show God's love by smiling at someone who seems fearful.
- Practice listening to others, praying, thinking, and then responding.
- Show God's love for someone by doing a kind and thoughtful act for that person, like sharing a treat or letting them know you're thinking of him or her.
- Acknowledge the accomplishments of others; be quick to give praise or build others up.
- Resist sarcasm or hurtful jokes.
- Advise someone who is doubtful about life, "Pray, hope, and don't worry!"
- If someone you know seems to lack faith, share some of yours — tell him or her how Christ has changed your life.
- Share your conviction of God's love for you with someone having trouble believing in God's love.
- Take the time to ask someone how he or she is doing. Listen to the answer.
- Be generous enough to allow someone to help you; people need to feel needed.

Admonish the Sinner: Calling others to conversion and encouraging them in pursuit of holiness

- Examine your conscience.
- Show kindness to those who do things you know are wrong.
- Thank your parents for disciplining you.
- After prayer, privately confront a friend about harmful or sinful behaviors, choosing the time, place, and words carefully.
- Pray, think, and then speak when you are angry.
- Be receptive to a person who admonishes you.
- When conversations turn into gossip, help change the subject.
- Thank others for rightful correction.
- Be mindful of your behavior online. Is that post designed to improve your image...and leave others feeling bad?
- Ask God to increase your desire for the salvation of souls.

Bear Wrongs Patiently: Receiving slights, insults, and inconveniences cheerfully and without judging or expressing irritation.

- Learn to say this prayer: "Dear Lord, bless [annoying person's name] and have mercy on me!"
- Wait patiently in a long line;
- Answer harsh words gently.
- Remain calm and cheerful while you allow others to make demands on your time.
- Pray, "Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make my heart like Yours."
- Do something kind and helpful for someone who you don't get along with, or who has wronged you.
- 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.
- Hold your tongue when a quick comeback is right on its tip.
- Recall a time you were not given a benefit of a doubt, and extend one to someone else.
- Pick up any trash you see (yours or that left by another).

Forgive Offenses: Extending God's merciful love to someone who has hurt you, and letting go of his or her guilt

- Get in the habit of saying the words, "I forgive you" when someone apologizes.
- If you were mean to someone, admit that you were and ask the person to forgive you.
- At the end of the day, ask for (and extend) forgiveness to those you live with. "...do not let the sun set on your anger" (Ephesians 4:26).
- Make a list of your "enemies." Then, every day, say a prayer for them.
- Learn to review your day before going to bed: recall the ways God showed you his love that day as well as the ways you failed to love like God. Remembering God's mercy each night helps us to be merciful.
- Say "I am sorry." Be the first to apologize.
- Go to confession.

Comfort the Sorrowful: Lightening another's burden of sorrow through care and compassion

- Offer someone a listening ear and a compassionate heart.
- Try to place yourself in the other person's shoes while listening.
- Give advice to a person who is struggling.
- Smile and greet someone going through a hard time. St. Mother Teresa said, "The road to peace begins with a smile."
- Encourage someone to seek counsel if he or she is overwhelmed.
- Lead with a kind comment with friends as well as strangers.
- Envy is sorrow at the good of another. Admit your envy, both to yourself and your confessor.

Pray for the Living & the Dead: Loving your neighbor as yourself through interceding for the needs of all

- Be an intercessor for someone else in his or her trials.
- Pray every day for the souls in purgatory. Pray for your dead.
- Actively and audibly participate in the prayers during Mass.
- Offer to pray with someone.
- Sign up for a Holy Hour to add "prayer support" for a retreat at your parish.
- Have Masses said for the living: friends and family members, even strangers you read/hear about, who are having a hard time.

WANT MORE ON THE WORKS OF MERCY?

Journey deeper into the works of mercy with the *Disciple of Mercy Lectio Divina Journal*. Learn more ideas for practicing the works of mercy, connected virtues, saints who practiced the works of mercy, and listen to the heart of God, the most merciful heart, through reading his word in *lectio divina*. See more at GoLEPress.com

