

## Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy

### Overview

The works of mercy are those charitable actions where we come to the aid of our neighbor. We often hear them mentioned but do we understand that they come from God?



### The Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy

The Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy are those teachings of the Catholic Church that requires us to comfort and console the spiritual and bodily necessities of our neighbors. That is, what we do we do out of love and not of obligation.

### What are the Corporal Works of Mercy?

1. To feed the hungry
2. To give drink to the thirsty
3. To clothe the naked
4. To visit the imprisoned
5. To shelter the homeless
6. To visit the sick
7. To bury the dead

### What are the Spiritual Works of Mercy?

1. To admonish the sinner
2. To instruct the ignorant
3. To counsel the doubtful
4. To comfort the sorrowful
5. To bear wrongs patiently
6. To forgive all injuries
7. To pray for the living and the dead

### What does it mean?

The above list of Works is pretty clear – but what can we do? Look around you and you will see where need is there and some of these Works are within our grasp. While you may not have the opportunity to visit a prison – many of God’s children are hungry, thirsty and lacking in clothing or shelter. Many Catholic Churches have ministries that try to provide these essential necessities of life – such as the Saint Vincent of Paul Society and others.

In Luke 3:11 we hear the expression – *“He who has two coats, let him give share with one who has none”*. This is a simple way of saying that to share our gifts and treasures with those in need is pleasing in the eyes of God.

God blesses those who come to the aid of the poor and rebukes those who ignore them. It extends not only to material poverty but to those in cultural and religious poverty.

The church’s love for the poor is as inspired by the Gospels – especially in the Beatitudes, of the poverty of Jesus and the concern for the poor that Jesus showed.

Among the Works are alms giving to the poor which is the chief witness to charity. In James 5:1-6 we hear that earthly treasures not shared would cry out to the Lord.

Saint John Chrysostom said that the goods that are not shared are as stolen from those in need.

Jesus said that whatever we do for the least of His children – that we do it for Him.

Refer to the Catechism of the Church paragraphs 2443-2447 for a further discussion.