



Mercy: The Key to God's Heart

We long to feel close to God. We want to be filled with his love, his joy, his peace, and his assurances that he cares about us. At times he seems distant. We wonder what the key might be that unlocks the warmth and generosity of his love and the power of his helpfulness.

In reality, we only need to unlock our own hearts, trusting in his mercy.

"Day after day... the Lord guides our steps with his grace, and he comes to meet us, to remain always with us, notwithstanding our faults and contradictions. Let us never tire of feeling the need for his forgiveness, because when we are weak, his closeness makes us strong and enables us to live our faith with greater joy." (Pope Francis, February 1, 2016)

Let us pray:

Lord God, I need your mercy. I sin, but I want to grow in holiness. I want to enter into Your heart of hearts, embraced by Your love. It is through my repentant heart that I am joined to Your merciful heart. Thank You for accepting me in my weakness. When I surrender, You rejoice. In your mercy, Your joy becomes my joy.

Daily we encounter people who are seeking Jesus, whether they realize it or not. They want unconditional love. They want healing from their wounds and peace from their stresses. In other words, they want mercy.

Jesus wants to give them what they want, but if we who are his hands and feet and voice are sitting on our hands, pointing our feet only in the direction that feels comfortable, and keeping silent about our faith, what then?



"As Christians, we are called to be missionaries of the Gospel. Just as we naturally seek to share with others the beautiful moments of our lives, we are called also and especially to share the joy of encountering Jesus Christ... To encounter Jesus is to experience his love, which transforms us and compels us, in turn, to share this love.... For the mercy we receive from the Father is not given solely for our benefit, but for the good of all, by transforming us into instruments, missionaries of mercy. By being such missionaries, we come to experience more deeply the gift of mercy in our own lives. May we take seriously our call to be Christians, to live as believers, so that the Gospel may touch the hearts of all people and open them to the gift of God's love." (Pope Francis, January 30, 2016)

Let us pray:

Holy Spirit, embolden me to be a missionary of mercy. Help me to become so immersed in the heart of Jesus that I feel the joy of his mercy and the desire to share it. Help me to recognize the opportunities in my daily life when I can help others experience Your Divine Mercy.

"When in the evening of life, we are asked if we fed the hungry and gave drink to the thirsty, we will also be asked if we helped persons come out of doubt, if we were committed to receive sinners, admonishing and correcting them, if we were capable of combatting ignorance, especially that concerning the Christian faith and the good life. This attention to the works of mercy is important: they are not a devotion. It is the concreteness of how Christians must carry forward the spirit of mercy." (Pope Francis, January 29, 2016)



Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy

Read Matthew 25:31-46

"What you do to the least of these, you do to Me."

Corporal Works of Mercy:

1. Feed the hungry: Provide food and lobby for policies that will help needy individuals and nations solve their food problems.

2. Give drink to the thirsty: Fight against water pollution; lead the spiritually thirsty to Christ; help the needy pay water bills.

3. Clothe the naked: The naked are all those who are poor. Work to change your culture's mentality about living above income from spending on credit; help end drug and alcohol dependency, gambling and other addictions or behavior that takes money from the poor; teach financial management; help people find jobs.

4. Shelter the homeless: Rather than blaming the victim, get involved in building or restoring houses; work in half-way houses for the mentally ill; pay security deposits on apartments; help with utility bills.

5. Visit the sick: The terminally ill would be less likely to desire euthanasia if we offer them the hope and love of Christ; the suffering need emotional support and faith in God; families under huge medical bills need help raising funds.

6. Ransom the captive: Who is held prisoner by addiction, abuse, a dysfunctional family background, the occult, joblessness, a poor education, prejudice, poverty, hopelessness, sin, ignorance or misconceptions about God? Help them find a way out. Visit prison inmates.

7. Bury the dead: Provide comfort for the bereaving; help the widow(er) with meals or activities; stay involved long after the funeral; be sensitive to the pain of loss.

Spiritual Works of Mercy:

1. Instruct the ignorant: Teach the meaning of the Gospel and the spiritual implications of it for our lives; lift people from spiritual poverty; be an example of true Christian living.

2. Counsel the doubtful: Society teaches doubt of God, skepticism, loss of confidence, live your faith in a way that witnesses to the reality of God.

3. Admonish the sinner: Our world tries to remove "sin" from our vocabulary; in whatever you do, firmly but compassionately object to social and personal sin; take a stand against injustices.

4. Bear wrongs patiently: Jesus is our example; bear wrongs with dignity, patience, and conviction that God stands by us, as a witness that suffering can lead to spiritual growth.

5. Forgive offenses: Peace and justice don't work if they're only attempted through legislation. Promote inner conversion and outward forgiveness, first in your own life and then help others discover the same.

6. Comfort the afflicted: Walk with people through their pain. We give them relief by our presence, our prayers, and our loving deeds.

7. Intercede for the needs of others: Pray for loved ones, relatives, friends, neighbors, fellow church members, the souls in Purgatory, leaders, the nation, our world, etc. This motivates us in other ways of ministering.