



## **Meeting #5: The Corporal Works of Mercy**

*Preparatory Reading and Reflection [Attachment A, p. 2]*

The attached readings (or other readings preferred by the local group) can be distributed prior to the meeting so that all can read and reflect beforehand. Or some portion of them may be read out loud at the meeting. Or one member of the group may summarize the readings.

Corporal Works of Mercy & Scriptural References

Excerpts from:

*Misericordiae Vultus* (the Papal bull that proclaimed the Year of Mercy)  
Pope Francis' Address on June 16, 2014  
Readings from Christopher William Jones, Robert Barron, James Keenan  
Membership in the Order of Malta, Regulations & Commentary (2011)

*Opening Prayer: Prayer to Perform the Works of Mercy [Attachment B, p. 5]*

*Scripture Reading: Matthew 25:31-46 [The Last Judgment - Attachment C, p. 6]*

*Discussion questions:*

1. What are some examples in my daily life of how I could perform corporal works of mercy to those near to me?
2. In what ways does membership in the Order give me opportunities to perform these works? Is doing these works as part of the Order different from doing them on my own?
3. How will I act differently as a result of this group reflection? (This may be discussed, or it may be a question for each to consider in a few minutes of silence.)

*Closing Prayer: Prayer of the Order [Attachment D, p. 7]*

## Attachment A

### Corporal Works of Mercy and Readings – Meeting 5

#### *The Corporal Works of Mercy*

- Feed the hungry
- Give drink to the thirsty
- Clothe the naked
- Shelter the homeless
- Visit the sick
- Visit the imprisoned
- Bury the dead

#### *Some Sources in Scripture*

Matthew 25:31-46

Matthew 5

Isaiah 58:6-7

Hebrews 13:3

1 John 3:17

2 Timothy 4:3

Tobit 4:5-11

Matthew 6:2-4

Luke 3:11, 11:41

James 2:15-16

*Excerpts from Misericordiae Vultus [this is the document declaring and opening the Year of Mercy] for Meeting 5*

9. Love, after all, can never be just an abstraction. By its very nature, it indicates something concrete: intentions, attitudes, and behaviors that are shown in daily living. The mercy of God is his loving concern for each one of us. He feels responsible; that is, he desires our wellbeing and he wants to see us happy, full of joy, and peaceful. This is the path which the merciful love of Christians must also travel. As the Father loves, so do his children. Just as he is merciful, so we are called to be merciful to each other.

15. It is my burning desire that, during this Jubilee, the Christian people may reflect on the *corporal and spiritual works of mercy*. It will be a way to reawaken our conscience, too often grown dull in the face of poverty. And let us enter more deeply into the heart of the Gospel where the poor have a special experience of God's mercy. Jesus introduces us to these works of mercy in his preaching so that we can know whether or not we are living as his disciples. Let us rediscover these *corporal works of mercy*: to feed the hungry, give drink to

the thirsty, clothe the naked, welcome the stranger, heal the sick, visit the imprisoned, and bury the dead....

*Excerpt from Address of Pope Francis, June 16, 2014*

We must have the heart of Jesus, who “when he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Mt 9:36). Seeing the crowds, he feels compassion for them. I like to dream of a Church who lives the compassion of Jesus.

Compassion is to “suffer with”, to feel what the others feel, to accompany them emotionally. It is Mother Church, who caresses her children with compassion like a mother. A Church that has a heart without borders...

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I am thinking of  
the road to Jericho  
the man beaten  
and fallen.  
And when someone asks me what Christianity is all about,  
it is the one parable in the Gospels  
that I think about  
because I think  
this is it. (*Christopher William Jones*)

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Dorothy Day once said that everything a baptized person does should be, directly or indirectly, related to the corporal and spiritual works of mercy: feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, visit the imprisoned, visit the sick, bury the dead (the corporal works); counsel the doubtful, instruct the ignorant, admonish sinners, bear patiently the troublesome, comfort the afflicted, forgive offenses, pray for the living and the dead (the spiritual works)...Following Jesus is not, for her, a matter of inner states or private convictions...Rather it is a set of very definite, embodied practices, things that one does on behalf of another....Feeding *this particular* hungry person and visiting *these* lonely prisoners and taking care of *this* homeless man with one’s own resources – that is the form of the Christian life....(Robert Barron, *The Strangest Way*, pp. 151-2)

[Burying the Dead]

“While living, a person identifies with his or her body in such a way as to render the dignity of the two inseparable. A person not only has a body, she is her body....Even in death, it still

reminds us of the presence that once was utterly inseparable from it.'... Even as ashes, the dead human body is still seen as the continued presence of the one we have lost. What differentiates the Christian understanding is that as Christians we believe that we each will be raised precisely in our human body. Small wonder at the care we take in accompanying though the centuries the bodies of the familiar and also of the abandoned as we lay them to rest." (James F. Keenan, SJ, *The Works of Mercy* pp. 42-43, quoting William F. May)

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*Excerpt from "Membership in the Order of Malta, Regulations and Commentary" (2011)*

### I. §3

Serving the Lord by serving "the least of his brothers" (Mt 25:40), the Order of Malta realizes one of the fundamental precepts of Christian faith. The unity of love of God and love of neighbor (Lk 10:27) has always been practiced by the followers of Christ by serving the sick and the poor, whom Christ himself served and with whom He has identified himself. Since the days of the first hospital in Jerusalem up to today, members of the Order of Malta have responded to what Christ meant when He said: "In so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did to me" (Mt 25:40).

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A new and recommended book of reflections on each work of mercy , which includes reflections from the Pope and our Conventual Chaplain Donald Cardinal Wuerl, is *Beautiful Mercy* (Dynamic Catholic Institute, 2015), available from Amazon.

## **Attachment B**

### **Opening Prayer: Meeting 5**

#### **Prayer to Perform the Works of Mercy**

Merciful God, your mercy is inexhaustible.

Help us to extend your mercy to those around us through the corporal and spiritual acts of mercy.

May we always be willing to do the good that is before us.

Help us always to be witnesses of your mercy in our words and in our deeds.

May we pay special attention to those who are poor or vulnerable, sick or lonely, or marginalized.

And may we also never forget to be merciful with family members and others who are closest to us. Amen. (Our Sunday Visitor)

## Attachment C

### Scripture Reading: Meeting 5

#### Matthew 25:31-46 – The Last Judgment

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left.

Then the king will say to those at his right hand, "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.'

Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?'

And the king will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'

Then he will say to those at his left hand, "You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.'

Then they also will answer, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?' Then he will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." (NRSV)

## **Attachment D**

### **Closing Prayer: Meeting 5**

#### **The Prayer of the Order**

Lord Jesus, Thou hast seen fit to enlist me for Thy service in the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem. I humbly entreat Thee, through the intercession of the Most Holy Virgin of Philermos, of Saint John the Baptist, of Blessed Fra' Gerard, and of all the Saints, to keep me faithful to the traditions of our Order.

Be it mine to practice and defend the Catholic, the Apostolic, the Roman Faith against the enemies of religion. Be it mine to practice charity towards my neighbors, especially the poor and the sick.

Give me the strength I need to carry out this my resolve, forgetful of myself, learning ever from Thy Holy Gospel a spirit of deep and generous Christian devotion, striving ever to promote God's glory, the world's peace, and all that may benefit the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem.

Amen.