

PPC Discussion Document 9¹

Enable People to carry out the Corporeal and Spiritual Works of Mercy

Step 1: Examine the present reality in our parish

- In what ways is our parish good at carrying out the corporal and spiritual works of mercy?
- In what ways do we fail to carry out the corporal and spiritual works of mercy?

Step 2: Take time to hear God's perspective. Read the following and take time to reflect on it.

Reader 1:

“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. And let us not forget the spiritual works of mercy: to counsel the doubtful, instruct the ignorant, admonish sinners, comfort the afflicted, forgive offences, bear patiently those who do us ill, and pray for the living and the dead”.

Reader 2:

“We cannot escape the Lord's words to us, and they will serve as the criteria upon which we will be judged: whether we have fed the hungry and given drink to the thirsty, welcomed the stranger and clothed the naked, or spent time with the sick and those in prison (cf. Mt 25:31-45). Moreover, we will be asked if we have helped others to escape the doubt that causes them to fall into

¹ This discussion document has been developed by The Pastoral Renewal Team of the Kerry Diocese and is shared with the Parish Pastoral Councils of the Elphin Diocese with permission.

despair and which is often a source of loneliness; if we have helped to overcome the ignorance in which millions of people live, especially children deprived of the necessary means to free them from the bonds of poverty; if we have been close to the lonely and afflicted; if we have forgiven those who have offended us and have rejected all forms of anger and hate that lead to violence; if we have had the kind of patience God shows, who is so patient with us; and if we have commended our brothers and sisters to the Lord in prayer. In each of these "little ones," Christ himself is present. His flesh becomes visible in the flesh of the tortured, the crushed, the scourged, the malnourished, and the exiled... to be acknowledged, touched, and cared for by us. Let us not forget the words of Saint John of the Cross: "as we prepare to leave this life, we will be judged on the basis of love"².³

Step 3: Explore various options

Having looked at the reality in our parish and taken time to reflect on Pope Francis' call to mercy, explore the various possibilities of how our parish could be a reflection of God 's mercy.

Step 4: Identify specific actions

- Informed by the discussion and reflection , identify specific actions that we could carry out in order to respond to the call to be people of mercy;
- If no action has been agree, identify what further research is required.

Step 5: When the action is completed take time to review it by exploring:

- Did the action achieve its purpose?
- What was not effective?
- Is there a follow-up action needed?

² Saint John of the Cross, *Words of Light and Love*, 57.

³ Pope Francis, *Misericordiae Vultus*, 15