

Continuing Our Spiritual Journey

The Spiritual Works of Mercy

One of the greatest instructions Our Lord gave was to go out to all the nations and preach the good news of salvation. Granted, few of us are able to abandon all and preach as valiantly as the apostles. However, through the *Spiritual Works of Mercy* we can reach out to those in our immediate community with the same good news. Following the instruction of St. Francis to "Preach the gospel, and use words if necessary", it is as much by our actions as our words that we can reveal the gospel message. To practice these first four in their true spirit, we have included references where they are best exemplified in the New Testament:

1. To counsel the doubtful.

Never dismiss another's doubts about any element of faith. Our Lord set the example by patiently dealing with the doubts expressed by the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well and with those of St. Thomas after the Resurrection. (John 4, 1-26 and 20, 19-29) As did He, so too should we patiently answer questions and doubts about our faith.

2. To admonish sinners.

Of His mission on earth, Our Lord said "And indeed, I did not come to call the virtuous, but sinners" (Mt 9,13) St. Paul advises "Brothers, if one of you misbehaves, the more spiritual of you who set him right should do so in a spirit of gentleness, not forgetting that you may be tempted yourselves." (Gal. 6,1-2)

3. To bear wrongs patiently.

The virtue of Patience is echoed throughout the *Eight Beatitudes* and through every moment of Our Lord's Passion. Patience is rooted in wisdom, strength and endurance. It gives us the power to rise above immediate hurt and find permanent peaceful resolutions to all wrongs.

4. To forgive injuries.

One of our greatest human characteristics is that of self-preservation. This can lead us to retaliate whenever we suffer a loss of any kind. Vengeance is a natural response, but it is of the world. Our Lord's greatest instruction on the subject is found in His petition "Father, forgive them, they do not know what they are doing." (Luke 22, 34)

May the Spiritual Works of Mercy help to form our lives to be as merciful as Jesus.