

SPIRITUAL WORKS OF MERCY

Instruct the Ignorant.

Not everyone can be a school teacher, but taking time out to help a child with math or spelling or religion homework is instruction as well. So is showing the ropes to a new person at work, teaching CCE, and reminding oneself and one's family about basic morality. In a Godless environment, a word about one's own religious values often leaves a thought-provoking impression on others.

Counsel the Doubtful.

Advice is cheap, so the saying goes, but counsel implies something more loving. It's a Christian approach to solving problems. Doubts about one's faith, about abortion, marriage, or questions arising from death or divorce, do not need a brush-off with an excuse. Doubts need direction in the Christian point of view.

Comfort the Sorrowful.

Sorrow and suffering take many forms: death, divorce, grave illness, unemployment, family problems, mental distress, surgery. How many of these sorrows afflict the people around us and yet go unnoticed without so much as a kind word, without so much as a whispered prayer? Sometimes giving a sympathetic ear or just "being with" a sorrowing person is a great act of mercy.

Bear Wrongs Patiently.

Patience— the bane of a world which hurries only to have to stand in line. Strive for patience with the slowness of the freeway traffic or the drudgery of a job; with those who never say a kind word, with those whose nagging puts your teeth on edge. Have patience with your own personal pain and suffering.

Forgive All Injuries.

Forgive the sharp criticism, the angry retort so easily and thoughtlessly said. Physical injuries heal faster than mental or spiritual ones; dwelling on a wrong only increases its size, breeding hatred, the antithesis of Christ's love. Injuries, voluntary or not, are inescapable; forgiveness heals them.

Admonish the Sinner.

Correction is sometimes as hard to give as it is to take. It means standing up for moral principles at work, at school, in politics, or in the home. It means taking time to give needed correction.

Pray for the Living and the Dead.

It is impossible to physically aid the many people—even those in our own families— who need our help. But we can reach out to them in prayer. All people, dead or alive, benefit from a remembrance in prayer.