Practical Suggestions for practicing the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy in everyday life

based on an article by Joe Paprocki, D.Min.

What are the Corporal Works of Mercy? The Corporal Works of Mercy are kind acts by which we help our neighbors with their everyday material and physical needs. Jesus' definition of our "neighbor" is not just the people we know and want to help, but anyone who needs help, as in the parable of the Good Samaritan. These are the actions by which we love God, by loving our neighbors and ourselves, to the best of our ability, within our means.

Of course, there are some ways we already practice our love of God, neighbor, and self. Whenever you reach out to someone individually, or when you participate in our parish outreach efforts to those in need, you are practicing the Corporal Works of Mercy. Whenever you collect food for a food pantry, you are feeding the hungry. Whenever you let a friend sleep on your couch, or volunteer at a shelter, you are helping to shelter the homeless. Whenever you donate clothing or pass along "hand-me-downs," you are helping to clothe the naked. Whenever you visit a sick friend or family member, you are visiting the sick. Whenever you donate books or games, or write a card or letter to a prisoner, you are visiting the imprisoned. Whenever you do anything for someone less fortunate than you, you are giving to the poor. Whenever you send a sympathy card, bring a casserole, or attend a wake or a funeral, you are helping a family to bury the dead and to grieve. Your kind acts are spreading the Love and Mercy of God to others.

If you are just beginning to consider how you and your family can live out these Works of Mercy, here are a few other ideas to get you started, or come up with your own.

**Feed the Hungry**

~ If someone is hungry for food, give them what you can. If someone is hungry for attention, or for your time, give them some of yours.
~ Find new ways to provide for proper nutrition for yourself and your family.
~ Take time to reflect on all the food we do have, and say a prayer of thanks that we have food to eat.
~ Make time to eat dinner, or as many meals as possible, together as a family every day, without TV, phones, or other interference, and develop deeper relationships with each other.
~ Share a meal and some conversation with someone who might otherwise be alone today, or who might otherwise not eat today.
~ Eat a little less whenever possible, and collect the savings to give to the poor.
~ Consciously avoid wasting food as much as possible. Whatever money is saved by not wasting can be collected and used to help someone in need.
~ Make a few sandwiches to hand out as you walk through areas where you might encounter people in need.

**Shelter the Homeless**

~ Give thanks as a family for the home you live in, and express gratitude to God that you have a roof over your head and a bed to sleep in. Thank God for the safety and security of having a home.
~ Take good care of your home and offer to help neighbors to care for their homes and do repairs. In helping your neighbors, you develop stronger communities of caring.
~ As a family, take time to reflect on all the benefits you receive by having a place to come home to, whether it is rented or owned.
~ Take any opportunity to help a family member or a friend to find a home, keep a home, or make repairs on their home.
~ Consider becoming a foster parent to give a child a safe home.

**Clothe the Naked**
~ Go through your drawers and closets and find clothes and shoes in good condition, towels and sheets too, to give as "hand-me-downs" to someone who can use them, to donate to agencies that assist those in need, or to recycle and “re-purpose” them.
~ Purchase an extra package of socks and underwear to donate to agencies that assist those in need.

**Visit the Sick**
~ Spend quality time with people you know who are sick or homebound, or take the time to call, send a card, or email them.
~ Offer to stay with a sick person for an hour or two to give them and their caregiver a little break.
~ Cook and deliver a meal, or offer to do errands for someone who is sick or homebound.
~ Help your children make cards for someone they know who is sick.

**Visit the Imprisoned**
~ Call or visit someone who you know is imprisoned by fear, or anger, or hatred, or illness. Your kindness can help to free them.
~ Support programs or ministries for those who are incarcerated, or for those unjustly imprisoned, and for their families.
~ Pray for all those who are incarcerated, or who are imprisoned by fear, anxiety, or illness.

**Give to the Poor**
~ Share what you have with the people you know and love. Toys, clothing, food, furniture, books, music… share everything you can.
~ When you see things around the house you don't need or can't use anymore, give them away to someone who does need them or who can use them.
~ Collect all your spare change in a container and periodically donate to the charity of your choice.
~ If possible, make a regular donation to the charity of your choice.

**Bury the Dead**
~ Attend wakes and funerals of people you know whenever you can.
~ Send cards, notes, or Mass cards to families of those who have died.
~ Bring a casserole or a meal to the family of someone who has died.
~ Spend time with people you know who have lost a loved one.
~ Take someone to visit the cemetery if they can't get there on their own.
~ Offer daily prayers for those who are terminally ill, and for those who have died.

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*For more specific information about how you can implement any of the opportunities listed above, please call the parish office.*