



LESSON 18

Works of Mercy



Learning Objectives

In this lesson you will:

- Realize that Christian morality includes compassion for the poor.
- Explain the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.
- Increase your desire to help the poor, as did Saint Basil.

Opening Prayer

O Lord, open my heart to all those around me. Those who are hungry, those who are homeless and estranged, those who are sick, and all whom you call your brothers and sisters. Amen.



Opening Activity

Scan the QR code to access the online resources.

FaithOfTheMountain.org/grade4/lesson18

Introduction

You have learned how love of neighbor includes people next door, people far away, and even your enemies. In this chapter, you will see that “neighbor” also includes those who are poor and in need. Following Jesus also means bringing Jesus to others through our works of mercy as we will see in this lesson.

All Christians have a responsibility to help the poor. Jesus explained this in the parable of the sheep and goats, which we will explore in the Climbing the Mountain section (see Mt 25:31-36).

Reflection Questions

1. *Why do you think Jesus uses animals to tell parables?*
2. *Why is it important to help people who are poor and in need?*



Point 1

Compassion for the Poor

Moral people have compassion for the poor. They care about everyone in need and help those who are less fortunate. The Church calls this love of the poor the “works of mercy.” **Mercy** is a virtue of loving kindness that enables us to reach out to others and help them. We “stand as one” with the poor.

There are two types of works of mercy. The **corporal works of mercy** deal with meeting the physical, or bodily, needs of each person, especially the poor. (The word corporal means “bodily.”) The **spiritual works of mercy** deal with meeting their emotional and spiritual needs. These works deal with a person’s soul rather than his or her bodily needs.

Point **2**

Corporal Works of Mercy

The following works of mercy are based on Jesus' teachings:

1. Feed the hungry.
2. Give drink to the thirsty.
3. Clothe the naked.
4. Shelter the homeless.
5. Visit the sick.
6. Visit the imprisoned.
7. Bury the dead.





Point **3**

Spiritual Works of Mercy

The spiritual works of mercy include the following actions:

- 1.** Counsel the doubtful.
- 2.** Instruct the ignorant.
- 3.** Admonish the sinner. (*To admonish means to point out what is wrong and encourage the person to do what is right.*)
- 4.** Comfort the sorrowful.
- 5.** Bear wrongs patiently.
- 6.** Forgive injuries.
- 7.** Pray for the living and dead.

Did you know that the spiritual works of mercy are not listed, word for word, in the Bible? The Church compiled this list from the ways Jesus ministered to the spiritual needs of others.

Activity 1

Pictionary

Directions: *Divide into two teams. Draw one of the corporal or spiritual works of mercy and see which team can guess it correctly.*



Activity 2

Mercy Poster

Directions: *Use the space below or a sheet of paper to draw one of the works of mercy. Be ready to share with the class to see if they can guess which work of mercy it is.*





Maronite Wisdom

“Jesus Christ our Lord and God, you are worshipped and you are holy. Bless and forgive the priests who are the stewards of your people and of your holy Church. Forgive the servers of your Divine Mysteries and all the faithful who have shared in this sacrifice. Care for orphans, help widows, assist the poor and the distressed, satisfy the hungry, and protect all who call upon your holy name in every place. May your name be glorified, with that of your Father and of your Holy Spirit, who is good, life-giving, and consubstantial with you, now and for ever. Amen.”

— *Book of Offering: Anaphora of Saint Mark*





My Role Model

Saint Basil the Great

During the fourth century, Basil became bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia. During this time, a great famine caused many people to suffer and go hungry. Basil served food and water to the poor. He built shelters for the homeless and soup kitchens. Basil also wrote many letters to Church members, urging them to share with the poor. Here is what he said in one letter:

“The bread you store up belongs to the hungry. The cloak that lies in your chest belongs to the naked. The gold you have hidden in the ground belongs to the poor.”

Another time, Basil told Church members: “We should take only according to our needs and leave the rest to the needy. Then no one would be rich, no one would be poor, and no one would be in misery.”

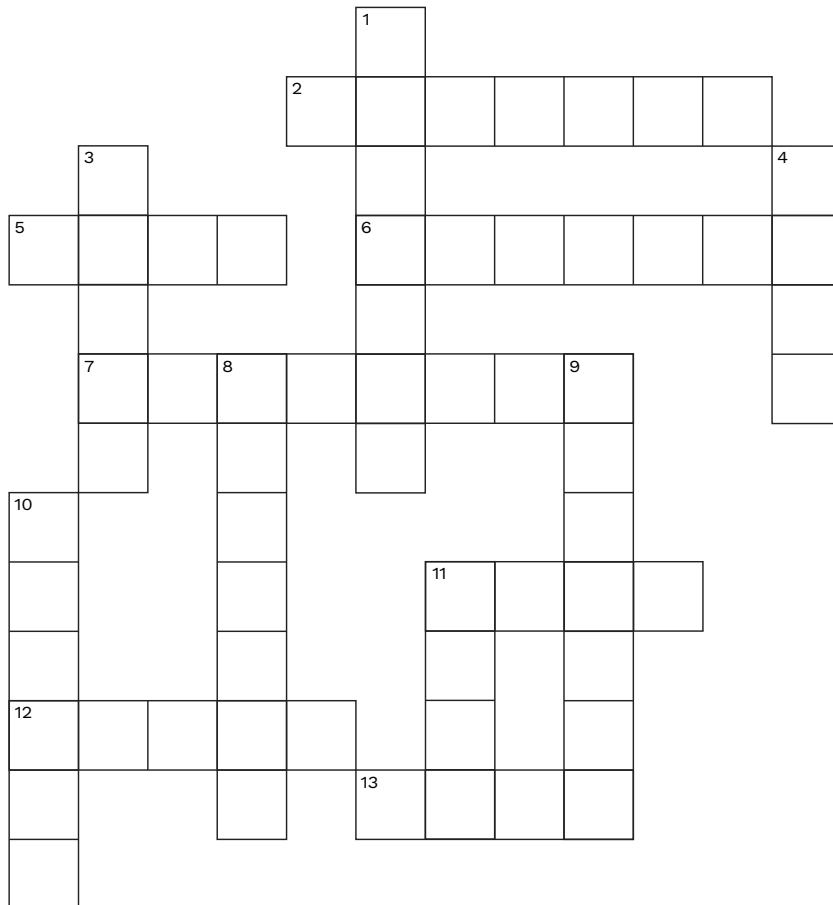
Today, the Church honors Saint Basil as a Doctor of the Church. We celebrate his feast day on January 1.

Saint Basil, pray for us.

Recall



Use the clues to complete the crossword puzzle.



The corporal works of mercy are:

[4 DOWN] the hungry, give drink to the **[9 DOWN]**,
 clothe the **[12 ACROSS]**, **[3 DOWN]** the imprisoned,
[8 DOWN] the homeless, visit the **[5 ACROSS]**, **[11 ACROSS]** the dead.

The spiritual works of mercy are:

[2 ACROSS] the doubtful, **[7 ACROSS]** the ignorant,
 admonish the **[10 DOWN]**, **[1 DOWN]** the sorrowful, **[6 ACROSS]** injuries,
[11 DOWN] wrongs patiently, **[12 ACROSS]** for the living and the dead.



Weekly Journal

How do you feel when you have done one of the Spiritual or Corporal Works of Mercy?

Write: One way your family has performed a work of mercy this past week and one work of mercy you can perform this coming week.

Concluding Prayer



Most good and kind God, have mercy on us and all people who seek your aid. Grant forgiveness to sinners and give food to the poor. Provide health to the sick and fill the broken-hearted with hope. Bring comfort to the depressed and give eternal rest to the dead. Bring freedom to prisoners and be a companion to travelers. Guide those who are far away and protect those who are near. This we ask in union with your Son Jesus and your Holy Spirit. Amen.

Climbing the Mountain

Bonus Materials for Students & Teachers



Mt 25:31-36

The Judgment of the Nations

“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.’”

Reflection

The parable above is about the Judgment of the Nations by Jesus Christ the King, when He will come to judge the living and the dead. We will not be judged on how successful we are, or how much money we have earned. We will be judged on one criteria: love. Saint John of the Cross said, “In the evening of life, we will be judged on love alone.”

Saintly Quote

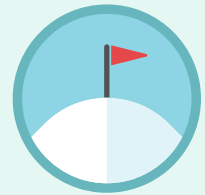
“When someone steals another’s clothes, we call them a thief. Should we not give the same name to one who could clothe the naked and does not? The bread in your cupboard belongs to the hungry; the coat unused in your closet belongs to the one who needs it; the shoes rotting in your closet belong to the one who has no shoes; the money which you hoard up belongs to the poor.” — *Saint Basil the Great*

Questions

1. What emotions do you feel when pondering the Final Judgment of Jesus?
2. How do you think God is inviting us to share with others?

Reaching the Summit

For Teachers & Parents



“God blesses those who come to the aid of the poor and rebukes those who turn away from them” — CCC 2443

Papal Encyclical

“He who has the goods of this world and sees his brother in need and closes his heart to him, how does the love of God abide in him?” (1 Jn 3:17) Everyone knows that the Fathers of the Church laid down the duty of the rich toward the poor in no uncertain terms. As St. Ambrose put it: ‘You are not making a gift of what is yours to the poor man, but you are giving him back what is his. You have been appropriating things that are meant to be for the common use of everyone. The earth belongs to everyone, not to the rich.’”

— Pope Saint Paul VI, *On the Development of Peoples, Populorum Progressio*, no. 23

Catechism of the Catholic Church

“St. John Chrysostom vigorously recalls this: ‘Not to enable the poor to share in our goods is to steal from them and deprive them of life. The goods we possess are not ours, but theirs.’” — CCC 2446

Living Out the Works of Mercy (Examples)

Make sure you do these as a family so everybody stays safe and you follow Jesus together!

- **Feed the Hungry:** Volunteer at a local soup kitchen or food pantry.
- **Give Drink to the Thirsty:** Offer a drink to a poor person.
- **Clothe the Naked:** Donate clothing to shelters or organizations that serve individuals experiencing homelessness.
- **Visit the Imprisoned:** Volunteer with prison ministry programs, write letters of support and encouragement to individuals who are in prison.
- **Shelter the Homeless:** Volunteer at homeless shelters.
- **Visit the Sick:** Visit individuals in hospitals or nursing homes.
- **Bury the Dead:** Attend a funeral Mass and wake to show support.
- **Counsel the Doubtful:** Offer emotional support and guidance to individuals who are struggling with doubts or uncertainties.
- **Instruct the Ignorant:** Volunteer as a tutor for individuals who need assistance. This could even include teaching a religious class on the Faith.
- **Admonish the Sinner:** Offer correction when someone does something wrong, but always do with charity and love and privately between you and the person.
- **Comfort the Sorrowful:** Offer emotional support and companionship to those who are grieving a loss.
- **Forgive Injuries:** Practice forgiveness to those who hurt you and ask forgiveness to those you have hurt.
- **Bear Wrongs Patiently:** Practice patience and understanding in challenging situations.
- **Pray for the Living and the Dead:** Offer your Rosary intentions for the Holy Souls in Purgatory and your living relatives.

Discussion Questions

1. How can you instill the spiritual and corporal works of mercy in your life and in your child's life?
2. Which work of mercy is the most difficult to practice and why?

Words to Know



Q. What are the **corporal works of mercy**?

A. Seven loving acts of kindness that help meet the bodily needs of others. The word corporal means “of the body.” The corporal works of mercy are: feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, give shelter to the homeless, clothe the naked, take care of the sick, visit those in prison, and bury the dead.

Q. What is **mercy**?

A. The virtue of loving kindness, especially toward the poor and needy. Mercy enables us to reach out to others and help them because we “stand as one” with them. Mercy also enables us to forgive others who have hurt us.

Q. What are the **spiritual works of mercy**?

A. Seven acts of loving kindness that are aimed to meet the spiritual needs of others. The spiritual works of mercy are: counsel the doubtful; instruct the ignorant; admonish the sinner; comfort the sorrowful; bear wrongs patiently; forgive all injuries; pray for the living and the dead.



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