

Information on the Works of Mercy

From the Catechism of the Catholic Church

2447 *The works of mercy* are charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbor in his spiritual and bodily necessities. **Instructing, advising, consoling, comforting are spiritual works of mercy**, as are forgiving and bearing wrongs patiently. The corporal works of mercy consist especially in feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, and burying the dead. (See Matthew 25:31-46) Among all these, giving alms to the poor is one of the chief witnesses to fraternal charity: it is also a work of justice pleasing to God: (See Matthew 6:2-4)

He who has two coats, let him share with him who has none and he who has food must do likewise. (See Luke 3:11) But give for alms those things which are within; and behold, everything is clean for you. (See Luke 11:41) If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit? (See John 3:17)

2448 "In its various forms—material deprivation, unjust oppression, physical and psychological illness and death—*human misery* is the obvious sign of the inherited condition of frailty and need for salvation in which man finds himself as a consequence of original sin. This misery elicited the compassion of Christ the Savior, who willingly took it upon himself and identified himself with the least of his brethren. Hence, those who are oppressed by poverty are the object of *a preferential love* on the part of the Church which, since her origin and in spite of the failings of many of her members, has not ceased to work for their relief, defense, and liberation through numerous works of charity which remain indispensable always and everywhere."

2044 The fidelity of the baptized is a primordial condition for the proclamation of the Gospel and for the Church's mission in the world. In order that the message of salvation can show the power of its truth and radiance before men, it must be authenticated by the witness of the life of Christians. "The witness of a Christian life and good works done in a supernatural spirit have great power to draw men to the faith and to God."

1815 The gift of faith remains in one who has not sinned against it. But "faith apart from works is dead" (See James 2:26) when it is deprived of hope and love, faith does not fully unite the believer to Christ and does not make him a living member of his Body.

1853 Sins can be distinguished according to their objects, as can every human act; or according to the virtues they oppose, by excess or defect; or according to the commandments they violate. ... But in the heart also resides charity, the source of the good and pure works, which sin wounds.

1473 The forgiveness of sin and restoration of communion with God entail the remission of the eternal punishment of sin, but temporal punishment of sin remains. While patiently bearing sufferings and trials of all kinds and, when the day comes, serenely facing death, the Christian must strive to accept this temporal punishment of sin as a grace. He should strive by works of mercy and charity, as well as by prayer and the various practices of penance, to put off completely the "old man" and to put on the "new man."