

4. Clothe the Naked

GATHERING

Clothing has many functions in our world – yes it keeps us warm, but it also denotes status, identifies us a member of a group or profession, allows us to express joy and celebration and marks religious occasions and positions. This Work of Mercy challenges us to ask about the impact of vulnerability in life: physical, social, emotional and spiritual.



READING

We probably do not see people very often who are literally shivering in the cold, but many poor and homeless people rely on charitable organizations for their clothing. One very direct way to carry out this Work of Mercy is to go through our own closets a couple of times a year and donate some of the clothing there.

There is a social dimension to this work, too: often our “bargains” are paid for by the sweat of people laboring in inhuman conditions here and abroad. We have a moral responsibility to take a peek behind the stylish logo of popular clothing and shoes and if we find that the item has been produced at the cost of the human dignity of those who made it, we should boycott that product and let the manufacturer know why.

Clothing is not only necessary for protection; we need it to maintain our human dignity. Contrast two scenes in the Gospel: when the prodigal son returns home, the father gives him his best robe, shoes on his feet, and a ring. These items symbolize the young man's dignity as the father's son, and show that his position has been restored to him. By contrast, in the Stations of the Cross we meditate on the stripping of Jesus; this act of humiliation was inflicted on him several times during his Passion. To take away his clothing was to steal from him any standing in the human community, and to humiliate him profoundly. (goo.gl/dJ999p)

BIBLE PASSAGE

But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate. (Luke 15: 22-24)

DISCUSSION

Where do we see vulnerability in our ministry?

PRAYER (PAUSE FOR ANY SPECIAL INTENTIONS)

Comforting God,
May we always give thanks for those who wrap us in warmth and comfort.
Clothe us in humility and compassion so we might understand the vulnerability of those with whom we live and work.
Help us to enfold others in caring concern, forgiveness, encouragement and respect.
Remind us of the importance of small acts of kindness and mercy.
Amen.

May the works of mercy inspire and enrich your ministry in Mercy Partners

LIVING THE CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY

Clothe the naked

Ask: Who is the vulnerable?

Protect the old, young, homeless, poor, trafficked...

Act for those who need human warmth

Be grateful for those who surround you in warmth and comfort

Welcome the stranger

Ask: Who needs a safe space?

Reach out to the unloved and the unloving

Practise radical hospitality

Visit the imprisoned

Ask: What captures people today?

Give up attitudes and habits which cause imprisonment

Help those who are prisoners and the prisoners

Visit the sick

Ask: What brings comfort to the sick?

Be there for people who need you

Be aware of those in your community who are sick

Bury the dead

Ask: What do you need to bury?

Put away those things which can bring back the dead

Move on from the negatives of the past

Remember with gratitude those who have died and how they have impacted on your life

Show mercy to our common home

Ask: What you can do to nurture the environment?

Practise simple daily gestures which break with the logic of violence, exploitation and selfishness

Show mercy to all of creation

Support action for the environment and support those who care for creation

Feed the hungry

Ask: Who is hungry and why?

Protect food sources and biodiversity and oppose waste

Share resources – 'be more' rather than 'having more'

Support those who feed the most vulnerable

Give drink to the thirsty

Ask: What are people thirsting for?

Oppose the privatisation of water

Be ever mindful of people who need the basics of life

CLOTHE THE NAKED

- > **Support** organisations that have the ability to provide support and services for those in need.
- > **Think** about the excess clothes in our wardrobes. Consider owning less and offering support to those who don't have enough.
- > **Make a change** to your purchasing habits. Buy less, buy pre-loved, buy pieces that work with your current wardrobe. Take the Project 333 challenge (bemorewithless.com/project-333)
- > **Give** by cleaning out wardrobes and donating the extras. Decide to downsize your wardrobe to basics and donate more just than out-of-date and outgrown clothing.
- > **"Feel"** the nakedness by skipping a purchase from a website or clothes store and make a donation instead to a women's shelter or a social service agency.

Illustration © Pauline Books & Media/Sieger Köder. All rights reserved. Bible: Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition.

COMPASSION JUSTICE RESPECT HOPE



© 2018 Mercy Partners. All rights reserved.