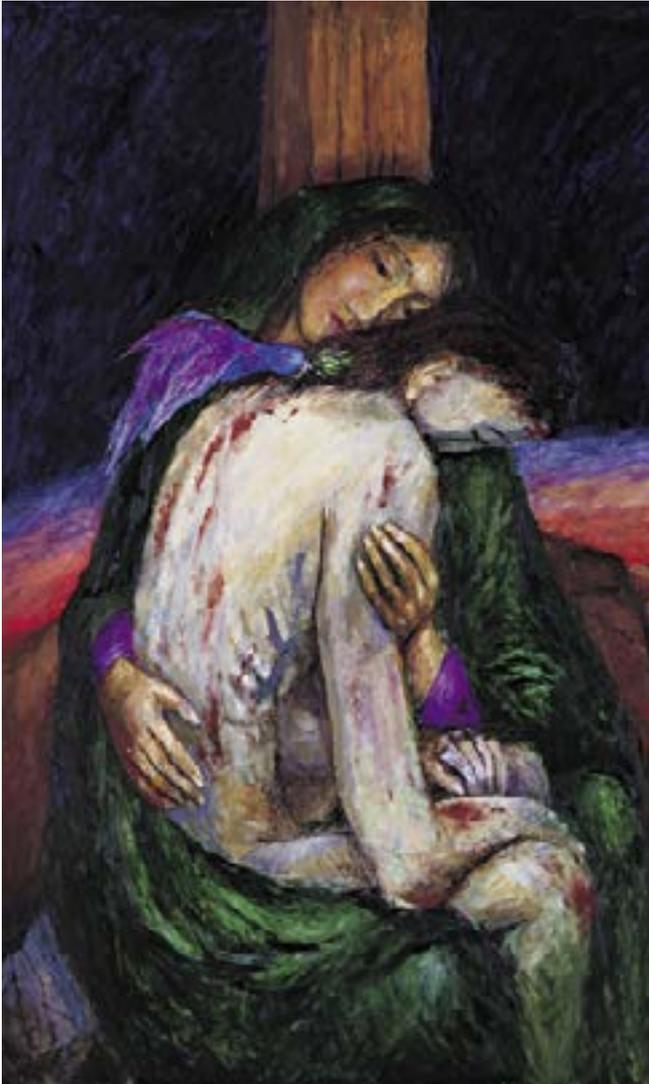


8. Bury the Dead

GATHERING

This corporal work seems obvious, our society has rituals and processes for laying to rest those who have died. But this has not always been the case. Care for the human body is a relatively recent practice and there are still circumstances where respect is not always accorded to those who have died, particularly in times of war or social upheaval. Burial is the first stage in reverencing those who have died; remembering friends and family members with gratitude ensures that love and kindness live on.



READING

The call to bury the dead may seem a curious request; and although, in certain regions of the world which are living under the scourge of war, with bombings day and night which sow fear and claim innocent victims, sadly this work is timely. The Bible gives a fine example in this regard: that of the elderly Tobit, who, risking his life, would bury the dead in spite of the king's prohibition (cf. Tob 1:17-19, 2:2-4). Today too, there are those who risk their lives to bury unfortunate victims of war. Thus, this corporal work of mercy is not far from our daily existence. It makes us ponder what happened on Good Friday, when the Virgin Mary, along with John and several women were near Jesus' Cross. After his death, Joseph of Arimathea – a rich member of the Sanhedrin, who had become a follower of Jesus – came and offered his tomb, newly hewn out of the rock, for Him. He personally went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body: a true work of mercy performed with great courage (cf. Mt 27:57-60)! For Christians, burial is an act of compassion, but also an act of great faith. We bury the bodies of our loved ones, in the hope of their resurrection (cf. 1 Cor 15:1-34). (gll.gl/2VHPPr)

BIBLE PASSAGE

When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. (Mark 16:1)

DISCUSSION

What rituals do you have in your family and workplace to remember those who have died?

PRAYER

Compassionate God,
May we embrace those who are dying
Support those who grieve
and remember those we have loved and whose love lives on in us.
Empower us to fight for life.
We remember those in our community who have died (pause for names)
Amen.

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

LIVING THE CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY

Bury the dead

Ask: What do you need to bury?

Put away those things which can bring physical or spiritual death

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 earth

Practise simple daily gestures which care for the earth

Show mercy to all of creation

Support action for the environment

Feed the hungry

Ask: Who is hungry and why?

Protect food sources and biodiversity

Share resources – 'be more' rather than 'have 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 water

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 unpopular

Practise radical hospitality

Visit the imprisoned

Ask: What captures people today?

Give up attitudes and habits which enslave

Help those who are prisoners and those confined by fear or loneliness

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 unwell

BURY THE DEAD

- > **Support** the grieving. Express your sympathy. Give them a hug or handshake at the vigil or funeral service. Bring food to them. Be a patient friend and help them emotionally to "bury the dead."
- > **Think** about what you need to bury in your own life: habits, thoughts, perspectives which are not life-giving.
- > **Make** every liturgy a time of prayer for departed loved ones and encourage others to do the same.
- > **Give** time to lighting a candle or visiting the grave of a loved one or friend. Celebrate their impact on your life.
- > **"Feel"** the pain or loss – reach out to victims of sudden death or tragedies.

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COMPASSION JUSTICE RESPECT HOPE



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