

### USING THESE PRAYER RESOURCES

Prayer is essential at the commencement of all meetings for focus, to remind participants of their part in God's mission and to call God's blessings on the proceedings. Prayer time is also formative as it allows those present to examine aspects of life, faith and experience.

The prayers in this package focus on the Corporal Works of Mercy and their application personally and communally within Catholic organisations.

The structure of each prayer is the same:

- **A quote, picture or other focus for gathering** – quiet background music is recommended for this part of the prayer or the lighting of a candle. A focus question has been included. (Allow 3 to 5 minutes for this section).
- **A scripture or other chosen reading** is provided with a short conceptual or contextual statement if needed. Once the reading has been shared, a few minutes of quiet contemplation should be allowed (allow 3 to 5 minutes for this section).
- **A sharing of responses which is critical for formation** and the development of a community of prayer. Leaders should stress that reflection time is not commentary on the thoughts of others but simply a time to share what ideas or thoughts the questions and readings have raised (allow 7 to 10 minutes for this section).
- **Prayer** which can be led by one of the participants or said together. At this time, any specific prayer intentions or remembrances could be included. (Allow 3 to 5 minutes for this section).

Depending on the level of sharing it is estimated that these reflections will take 15 to 20 minutes. They are offered as a guide to the Corporal Works of Mercy and can be supplemented with additional readings.

They let in the Spirit of wisdom, presence, thanksgiving and communion.

They invite participants to open their hearts to new ways of seeing and understanding.

They bring God to the forefront of the meeting: its business, concerns, challenges and interactions.

This prayer resource includes suggestions for practical, everyday action to live the Corporal Works of Mercy. They are just some ways we can bring God's mercy into our world.

*Let us not be closed to the  
newness that God wants to bring  
into our lives ... Mercy is the Lord's  
most powerful message ... (Pope Francis)*

Visit Mercy Partners website to download a printable version of this resource  
for your Board: [www.mercypartners.org.au/prayer-resources](http://www.mercypartners.org.au/prayer-resources)

# 1. Introduction

## GATHERING

Jesus' whole life and ministry reveals God's mercy. Jesus pardoned the sinner, cared for the poor, associated with the marginalised, healed the sick and walked with the suffering. The Corporal Works are derived from the Gospels, especially, Matthew 25:40, where Jesus Christ reminds us that whenever we care for people who are in most need, we care for him.



## READING

Dorothy Day, an adult convert to Catholicism, lived the Works of Mercy in her commitment to the poor, the hungry, the homeless, the rights of workers, social justice and peace. In January 1943 she wrote, "... There are always the poor, as our Lord reminded us. There are always the lame, the halt and the blind, people being discharged from hospitals, unemployable, vagrants. There are always these, our least ..., in whom we may see Christ as he told us to. And the harder it is to see him under dirt and drink and vermin, the more we are exercising our faith." ([goo.gl/GLhfQj](http://goo.gl/GLhfQj))

## BIBLE PASSAGE

When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet." (John 13:12-15)

## DISCUSSION

How does the call to mercy through the Corporal Works inspire the life of your ministry?

## PRAYER (PAUSE FOR ANY SPECIAL INTENTIONS)

Source of Justice and Love,  
Open our eyes to the needs of the people around us.  
Open our ears to the call for justice and equality.  
Open our minds to the reality of exclusion and disadvantage.  
Open our hearts to love and mercy.  
Amen.

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

## **LIVING THE CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY**

### **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**

*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**

*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 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*

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## 2. Feed the Hungry

### GATHERING

Feeding the hungry seems a fairly straightforward process. We can help in many ways including donating to organisations which run food banks or soup kitchens or volunteering to help out at homeless shelters. However there are many causes of hunger and want of food is not the only hunger to which we are called to respond in our communities and our world.

### READING

Catherine's (McAuley) response to hunger is both practical and personal. She provides food and meets the "hungry" face to face. It's not an arm's length benevolent response, but an intimate sharing of her food and herself. Secondly, she invites others of means and influence to join her – they too become personally engaged as part of the solution, building both capacity and awareness. ([goo.gl/t3Ew9g](http://goo.gl/t3Ew9g))

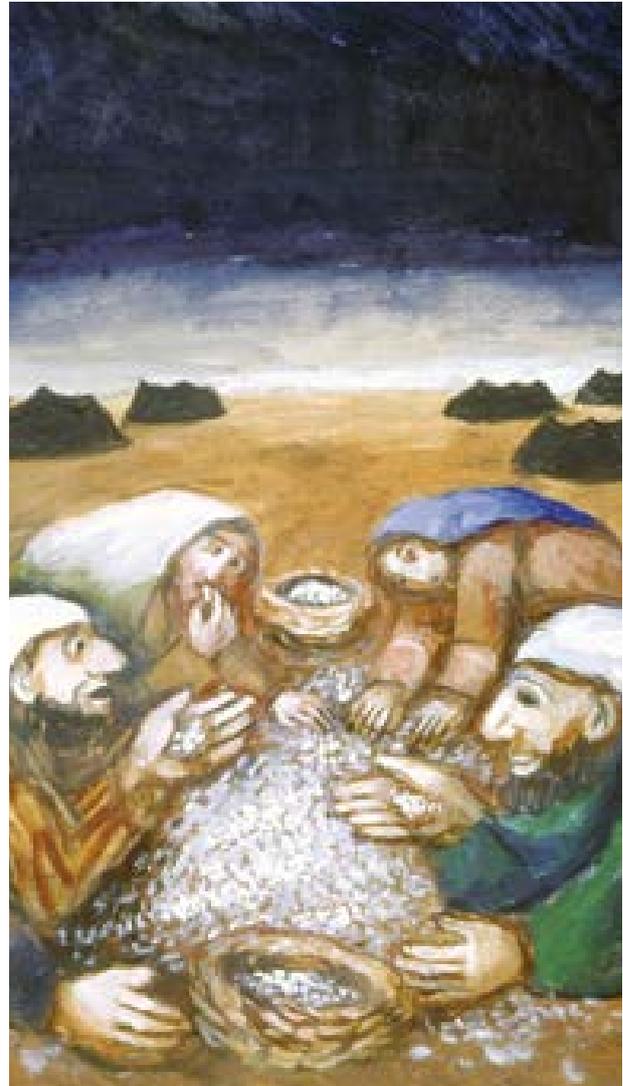
Tackling hunger and malnutrition is about more than just supplying enough food and increasing incomes. The structures that inhibit people from building their own food security must also be challenged.

Another serious issue is the wild fluctuation in food prices. The world's poor spend on average 70 percent of their daily income on food – and the cost of food rose by more than 40 percent between 2007 and 2011.

As a nation Australia should ensure that its agricultural trade policies are formulated on the basis of the "right to food". Trade agreements with other countries must focus on the needs of the poorest and ensure that small farmers are able to obtain fair prices. (Justice Trends "Poverty Challenge Remains" No. 150, September 2013, Secretariat of the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council)

### BIBLE PASSAGE

Then the Lord said to Moses, "I will rain down bread from heaven for you." (Exodus 16:4)



### DISCUSSION

How does the call to mercy through the Corporal Works inspire the life of your ministry?

### PRAYER (PAUSE FOR ANY SPECIAL INTENTIONS)

God of Abundant Means,

May we be ever conscious of the hunger which surrounds us

Hunger for food and nutrition among those living in poverty, famine or social upheaval

Hunger for attention in those living with loneliness and heartbreak

Hunger for justice in the marginalised, victimised and downtrodden

Hunger for meaning, for hope, for forgiveness, for love ...

May we, like Catherine McAuley, find ways to help those who hunger and become solution builders for a fairer world.  
Amen.

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

## LIVING THE CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY

### 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

### Clothe the naked

Ask: Who is the vulnerable?

Protect the old, young, homeless, poor

Act for those who need human warmth

Be grateful for those who surround you

### 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 are unjust

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 unwell

### 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 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

- > **Support** organisations that serve the hungry (donate and volunteer time, talent and treasure).
- > **Think** about food waste. If you notice that you end up throwing groceries away each week, purchasing less groceries would eliminate waste and allow you to donate the savings to those in need. Reduce the global amount of food waste by buying imperfect fruits and vegetables.
- > **Make a change**, begin composting (full list on what can be composted here ([goo.gl/WwIzLo](http://goo.gl/WwIzLo)). By nourishing the earth, you are helping nourish your community too.
- > **Give** to the supermarket “food bank” cart by dropping in a few nonperishable food items each time you shop.
- > **Serve** meals at a soup kitchen or shelter and offer kindness and dignity to people who have come for food.
- > **“Feel”** the hunger by skipping lunch, a snack or the coffee and instead donate the money to a food program.

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## 3. Give Drink to the Thirsty

### GATHERING

Water is something we take for granted. Turn on a tap and it is there. But this is not the case for everyone on our planet and scientists predict water access and security will be major causes of future conflict. No-one can seriously practise the Works of Mercy and not change the way we use water. If we maintain our current usage we simply will not sustain humanity in the future.



### READING

Access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right, since it is essential to human survival and, as such, is a condition for the exercise of other human rights. Our world has a grave social debt towards the poor who lack access to drinking water, because they are denied the right to a life consistent with their inalienable dignity. This debt can be paid partly by an increase in funding to provide clean water and sanitary services among the poor. But water continues to be wasted, not only in the developed world but also in developing countries which possess it in abundance. This shows that the problem of water is partly an educational and cultural issue, since there is little awareness of the seriousness of such behavior within a context of great inequality. (*Laudato Si'*, 30)

### BIBLE PASSAGE

The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?" Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." (John 4:9-14)

### DISCUSSION

How do we ensure everyone has access to water in our ministry?

### PRAYER (PAUSE FOR ANY SPECIAL INTENTIONS)

Living Water, Source of Life,

Flow through us into the world.

Wash away our selfishness and blindness so that we truly care for our Earth.

Create in us a thirst for justice and hearts which respond to the cry of those made poor.

Refresh our hope and compassion as we seek to nourish and transform our world.

May we draw everyday on the wellsprings of hope for change.

Amen.

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

## LIVING THE CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY

### 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

*Ask: Who is the vulnerable?*

*Protect the old, young, homeless, poor*

*Act for those who need human warmth*

*Be grateful for those who surround you*

### 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 enslave*

*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*

### 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 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

- > **Support** organisations that build wells for water or raise funds for a water well in a specific area of need.
- > **Think** about waste water. Remembering to turn off the water tap when you are brushing your teeth or washing dishes can help, especially in regions suffering from drought.
- > **Make a change** to preserve clean, fresh water by using environmentally friendly laundry detergents or by trying to be moderate in the amount of water we put on our lawns or use in showers
- > **Give** drink to the thirsty in the form of making monetary or food donations to the local food bank, soup kitchen and other initiatives that bring food and drink to the poor.
- > **"Feel"** the thirst by not having another glass and instead donate the money to a clean water initiative.

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## 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](http://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 their families

### 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](http://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.

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## 5. Welcome the Stranger

### GATHERING

William Butler Yeats is reputed to have said: “There are no strangers here; only friends you haven’t met yet.” This perspective underpins Jesus’ call to shelter the homeless and welcome strangers. To be a stranger is to not fit in or be recognized, but this state is only temporary – once words are exchanged the stranger becomes an acquaintance and eventually maybe a friend. The challenge then is to connect, build relationships, say hello, smile and include.

### READING

Ruth is the story of a young woman who found herself in Israel, a country that differed in culture, religion and background from the one in which she was raised ...

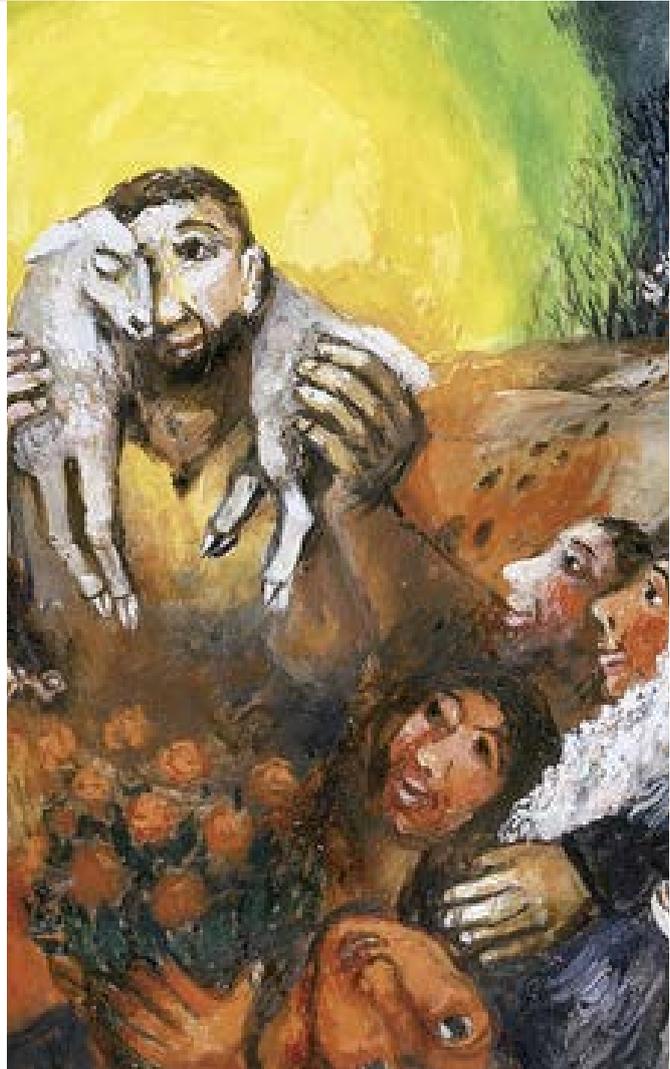
This is a story about crossing boundaries, of an immigrant who came from a country that was deemed “suspicious,” and about overcoming prejudices by showing compassion and financial generosity specifically to the displaced within our communities.

The book of Ruth is a reminder that people of faith are called to stand in prayer, friendship and practical support with all those within our community. ([goo.gl/QZW65U](http://goo.gl/QZW65U))

But Ruth said, “Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God. (Ruth 1:16)

### BIBLE PASSAGE

I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. (John 10: 14-16)



### DISCUSSION

**Are there groups in your experience who are labeled and treated differently? How can you work against this and build inclusive structures?**

### PRAYER (PAUSE FOR ANY SPECIAL INTENTIONS)

Source of Unity and Life

May we be shepherds in our world

Seeking out the lost and isolated

Including with a word and smile those who are marginalised

Challenging prejudice and division based on race or religion.

Like Ruth may we put relationships at the centre of all that we do

Amen.

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

## LIVING THE CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY

### 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*

*Help those who are prisoners and the*

### Visit the sick

*Ask: What brings comfort to the sick?*

*Be there for people who need you*

*Be aware of those in your community*

### Bury the dead

*Ask: What do you need to bury?*

*Put away those things which can bring*

*Move on from the negatives of the past*

*Remember with gratitude those who*

### Show mercy to our common home

*Ask: What can you do to nurture the earth?*

*Practise simple daily gestures which*

*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 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

*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

- > **Support** a local homeless shelter and volunteer your time.
- > **Think** of the millions of children and families who are on the move, fleeing from war, illness, hunger and impossible living conditions, and searching for peace and safety. Engage your ministry, friends and family to discuss this issue and then encourage each other to do something about it (e.g. write to politicians, join advocacy groups or donate to organisations that support refugees, migrants and asylum seekers).
- > **Make** with your hands (and your heart) warm knitted or sewn blankets.
- > **Give** time and skills to Habitat for Humanity to ensure those who are disadvantaged and isolated can have a place to call home ([habitat.org.au/what-we-do/australia/qld](http://habitat.org.au/what-we-do/australia/qld)).
- > **"Feel"** what it is like to sleep rough by participating in the Vinnies CEO sleepout through individual or team registration and/or by donation (<https://www.ceosleepout.org.au/>)

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## 6. Visit the Imprisoned

### GATHERING

There are many prisons in the human experience and many opportunities to practise this corporal work of mercy. The lonely, the excluded, the shut-in, those who are caught up in cycles of dependency and violence or those crippled by fear and self-doubt: these are people for whom visiting is a life-line, a connection to others which reinforces that we are all one.

### READING

In a world of electronic monitors, predictive policing, interagency data sharing, hidden cameras and registries, imprisonment extends not only beyond the walls of the jail or penitentiary, but beyond any contained space. In the new world of incarceration, your house is your prison. Your block is your prison. Your school is your prison. Your neighbourhood... your city... your state... your country is your prison. ([goo.gl/fnS8AL](https://goo.gl/fnS8AL); [goo.gl/tP5GKK](https://goo.gl/tP5GKK))

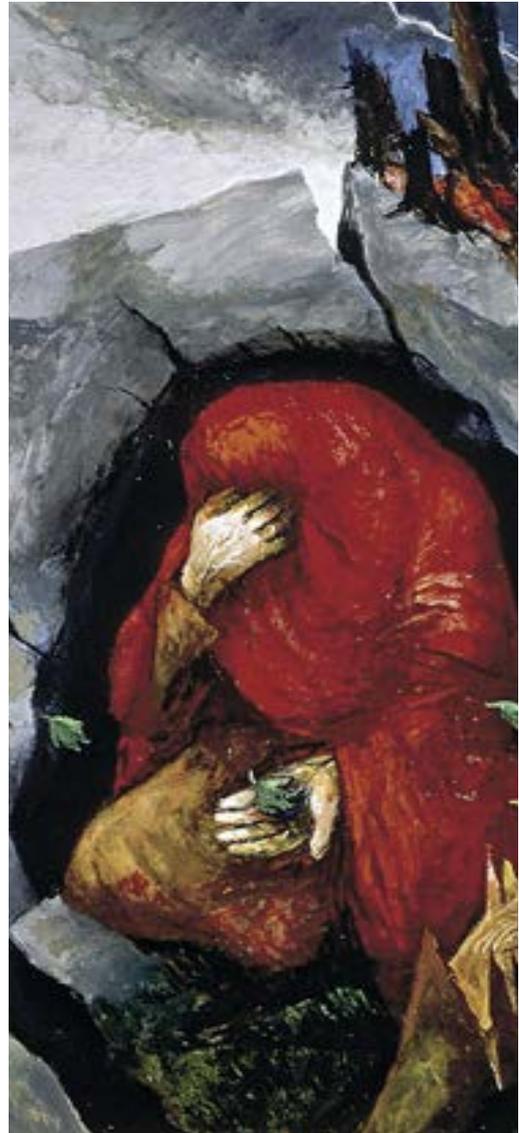
We want and therefore need people to love; we want and need to be conjoined with them in meaningful ways; we want and need response from them. And when we do not have people to love, with whom we feel some bond of affection and united thought, or when we do not feel response from them, we feel a certain quiet grief or emptiness which we call "loneliness." ([goo.gl/rr/QrFQ](https://goo.gl/rr/QrFQ))

### BIBLE PASSAGE

And the word of the Lord came to him: "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

Elijah replied, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too." The LORD said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by." Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.

(I Kings: 19: 9-13)



### DISCUSSION

Who are the isolated and imprisoned in your world?

### PRAYER (PAUSE FOR ANY SPECIAL INTENTIONS)

God of the Gentle Whisper

You have created us to live in community

We pray for all the imprisoned, those on the inside, whose confinement is obvious and those on the outside, whose imprisonment is subtler.

May we like Elijah, hear your call.

Help us to bring your comfort to those who feel abandoned.

Amen.

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

## LIVING THE CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY

### 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

### Bury the dead

Ask: What do you need to bury?

Put away those things which can bring pain

Move on from the negatives of the past

Remember with gratitude those who have died

### Show mercy to our common home

Ask: What you can do to nurture the earth?

Practise simple daily gestures which respect 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 the basics of life

### 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

- > **Support** local prison ministry programs, such as Centacare Prisoner Services, Prison Transport Group Inc. and Prison fellowship Australia.
- > **Think** about all of those who have been forgotten, left to rot in a cell or their own living room and offer them a gift. A program called "Angel Tree" has been established by a Church group in America to present children of incarcerated men with a gift from dad. How can your ministry support those who need to connect with their family to maintain the bond?
- > **Make a change** that creates joy and encourages the recipient to make a change too. Write a letter to an inmate and/or supply them with envelopes and cards to write to their loved ones.
- > **Give** to charities that give Christmas presents to children whose parents are in prison.
- > **"Feel"** through prayer. Participate in this work of mercy by imitating Saint Thérèse of Lisieux. Before she entered the convent Saint Thérèse learned about a criminal sentenced to death and decided to fervently pray for his conversion.

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## 7. Visit the Sick

### GATHERING

The sick are vulnerable. They are often unable to help themselves, are locked in fear about their capacity to get well and yearn for company in the long hours of confinement. When poverty and sickness intersect, human dignity is often the first casualty. There are many examples of people who have reached out to the impoverished poor – two shining examples are Nano Nagle, foundress of the Presentation Sisters and St Theresa of Calcutta.

### READING

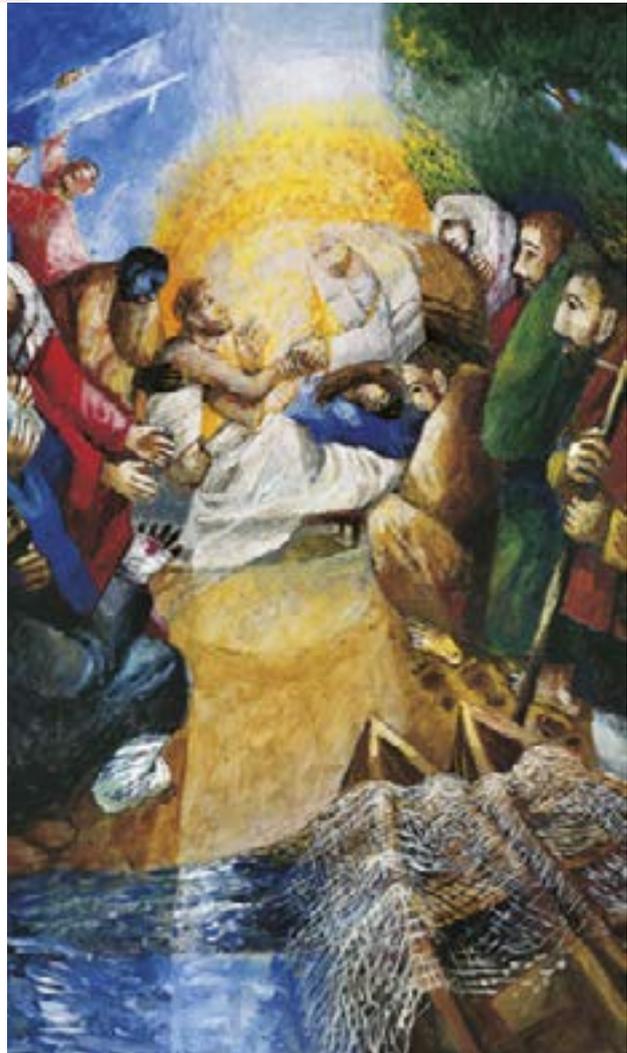
I spotted two nuns in their distinctive blue and white saris. I ran towards them, “There’s a man lying on the roadside. I’m not sure if he’s dead.” They responded immediately by helping him and calling an ambulance. Mother Teresa and her sisters picked people off filthy pavements to allow them to die in dignity. To my knowledge, there’s still no one else doing that. Seeing Mother Teresa through the eyes of the man on the Kolkata street makes me pause. What would happen to these people if it weren’t for the Teresas of this world reaching out to them in ways I certainly couldn’t. ([goo.gl/uRXJrG](http://goo.gl/uRXJrG))

Pius O’Farrell (p 86) refers to the works other than education carried out by Nano as “lantern work”:

‘Lantern work’ was not a step to evangelisation but an early and essential part of evangelisation itself. Nano helped the sick and consoled the wretched. The essence of Nano’s social work was the caring process which fosters community. She added something – an indefinable warmth – to the social vision found in France. She added the leaven of deep compassion and joyful hospitality that reached its peak in her Christmas dinners.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

When Jesus came down from the mountainside, large crowds followed him. A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, “Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.” Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!” (Matthew 8:1-3)



### DISCUSSION

The healing hands, the healing presence... how does your ministry respond to Jesus’ call to visit the sick?

### PRAYER (PAUSE FOR ANY SPECIAL INTENTIONS)

Healer and sustainer,

Remind us of the vulnerability of the sick, the frail and those with chronic diseases

May we be willing, as Jesus was, to reach out to those who struggle with their health.

Inspire us to follow the example of Nano Nagle and St Teresa of Calcutta who courageously encountered sickness and poverty.

We remember those in our community who are sick (pause for names)

Amen.

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

## LIVING THE CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY

### 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

*Ask: What do you need to bury?*

*Put away those things which can bring you down*

*Move on from the negatives of the past*

*Remember with gratitude those who have passed*

### Show mercy to our common home

*Ask: What you can do to nurture the earth*

*Practise simple daily gestures which respect 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

- > **Support** caregivers of chronically sick family members on a one-time or periodic basis. Offer the caregivers time off from their responsibilities so they can rest, complete personal chores, or enjoy a relaxing break.
- > **Think** about how you can spend time volunteering at a nursing home and get creative with sharing your talents (e.g. sing, read, paint, call Bingo, etc.).
- > **Make a change** to your weekend plans. Take time to stop and visit with an elderly neighbor or schedule to visit the sick, the homebound, and those in nursing homes — whether they are family, friends, or complete strangers.
- > **Give** your time to the Meals-on-Wheels program where you will find many socially isolated elderly people. Or ask your parish priest to direct you toward those who need visiting in the parish.
- > **“Feel”** for and do not forget your own family. Older relatives can be overlooked and too often forgotten.

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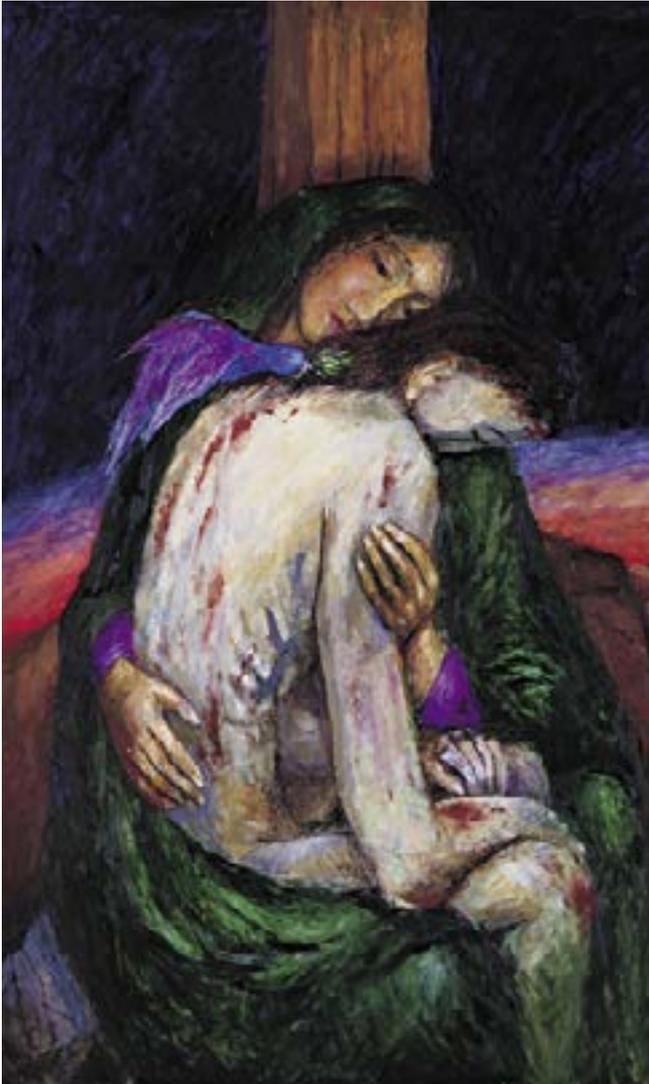


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## 8. Bury the Dead

### 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](http://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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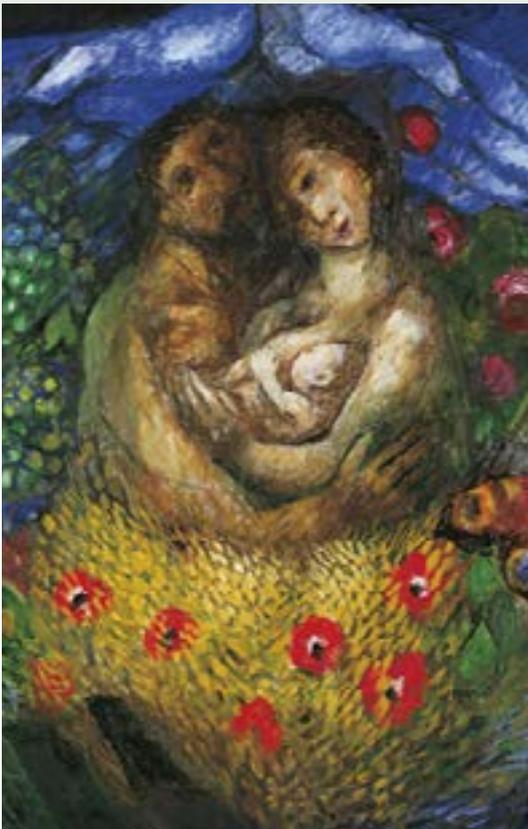


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## 9. Show Mercy to our Common Home

### GATHERING

Pope Francis added care of creation to the traditional sets of both the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy in 2016. Observing that, “We usually think of the works of mercy individually and in relation to a specific initiative: hospitals for the sick, soup kitchens for the hungry, shelters for the homeless ... he expanded the scope to include the whole of creation, “... simple daily gestures which break with the logic of violence, exploitation and selfishness and makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world.” (World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, Sep 1, 2016).



### READING

Human society must redesign its economy informed by ecological knowledge, proposing three simple but evolutionary principles. First, waste equals food. In nature, there is no such thing as waste. ... Second, use available solar energy. Every step toward reducing fossil fuel use and increasing solar energy use is a step toward sustainability. ... Third, value biological diversity. Nature is woven together by diversity, and all life depends upon the function and structure of diversity in ecosystems. ... These three “simple” principles... require us to redesign our systems, indeed, many systems of systems, including our economy. The sustainability revolution requires a transformation of society and also how we think. (*Care for Creation: a Franciscan spirituality of the Earth*, Ilia Delio, OSF, Keith Douglass Warner OFM, Pamela Wood St Anthony Messenger Press, Ohio, 1999)

### BIBLE PASSAGE

Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.” And it was so. (Genesis 1:29-31)

### DISCUSSION

**St Francis and Pope Francis – how do these leaders of our faith challenge us to care for the environment and respect all of God’s creation?**

### PRAYER (PAUSE FOR ANY SPECIAL INTENTIONS)

Extract from the Canticle of the Creatures (St Francis of Assisi, circa 1225)

Praised be you my Lord with all your creatures, especially Brother Sun,  
who is the day through whom you give us light.

Praised be you, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars,  
In the heavens you have made them bright, precious and fair.

Praised be you, my Lord, through Brothers Wind and Air,  
And fair and stormy, all weather’s moods, by which you cherish all that You have made.

Praised be you my Lord through Sister Water, so useful, humble, precious and pure.

Praised be you my Lord through Brother Fire, through whom You light the night  
and he is beautiful and playful and robust and strong.

Praised be you my Lord through our Sister, Mother Earth who sustains and governs us,  
producing varied fruits with coloured flowers and herbs.

Amen.

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

## LIVING THE CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY

### 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*

*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*

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### Clothe the naked

*Ask: Who is the vulnerable?*

*Protect the old, young, homeless, poor*

*Act for those who need human warmth*

*Be grateful for those who surround you*

### 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 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

*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*

## CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME

- > **Support** an environmental charity. Groups and charities such as Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, Global Action Plan and the Soil Association can make a huge impact on people's attitudes to preserving the planet.
- > **Think** of alternatives. If you're a bookworm, instead of buying new books, start a book-sharing club with friends and colleagues.
- > **Make a change!** Switch off the light and use the low energy lightbulbs. Wherever you go take re-useable bags. Use rechargeable batteries instead of disposable ones. The list is endless...
- > **Give** a night each month to being unplugged. Don't use any electricity, instead, play board games, eat raw food, play music with real instruments or simply talk to those around you.
- > **"Feel"** the earth and see the local wildlife in your backyard by creating a garden of plants local to your area.

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# Mercy Partners Prayer

Light of Christ, flame of our hearts,  
lead us kindly  
that we may lead others kindly.

Catherine McAuley, lady of light,  
hold high that flame on the road  
before us.

Nano Nagle, lady of the lantern,  
remind us to shine our own lanterns  
into those places from which  
we would prefer to turn away.

Elizabeth Hayes, bearer of light,  
guide our footsteps in the way of peace,  
gentleness and love.

May we be true leaders  
as we take the light  
forward with Mercy Partners.

We believe in the light.

We are called by the fire.

We share the one flame.

Amen.

Adapted from the Gathering Prayer by Mary Wickham rsm

COMPASSION JUSTICE RESPECT HOPE

*compassion justice respect hope*

