

Nurturing Faith at Home ***Involving Your Children in Corporal Acts of Mercy – Part 2***

Last month, you were introduced to the seven corporal acts of mercy, which the Church identifies as:

- Feed the hungry.
- Give drink to the thirsty.
- Clothe the naked.
- Shelter the homeless; welcome the stranger.
- Visit the sick.
- Visit the imprisoned.
- Bury the dead.

We looked more closely at the first two, and in this issue of *Nurturing Faith at Home*, the remaining five acts will be examined individually. I have provided some suggestions as to how you can provide opportunities for your children to be 'Good Samaritans' and to participate in acts of mercy. Keep in mind that your child(ren) will follow your example.

Clothing the Naked

Clothing is useful in that it protects our bodies and keeps us warm and dry. Clothes express who we are and can make us feel good about ourselves. When we clothe people's bodies, we also clothe their dignity.

- Take a look in your closets and collect any clothes you have outgrown or no longer wear. Donate these to the local share shop or Salvation Army store.
- Collect diapers, blankets, and baby clothes for the local pregnancy center.
- Sew or collect lap blankets for seniors in nursing homes.
- Organize a shoe and sock collection. (Many homeless people suffer from foot problems, and it is hard for them to keep their feet clean and dry.)
- Collect quilts and pillows for the homeless.
- Collect winter clothes (coats, mittens, scarves, and toques) for those who need it.

Sheltering the Homeless

This corporal act is also known as 'Welcoming the Stranger'. There is a saying: "A stranger is a friend you haven't met yet." Mary and Joseph were strangers in Bethlehem when Jesus was born, and were welcomed by the innkeeper. God asks us to treat the strangers we meet with care and compassion. When you welcome a stranger, you make them feel 'at home'.

- Prepare duffel bags with a stuffed animal and other gifts for foster children who are often moving from one home to another.
- As a family, welcome newcomers to your neighborhood.
- Help the parish put together welcome baskets for new parishioners at your church.
- Contribute money or your time and effort to Habitat for Humanity and the building of affordable homes for the disadvantaged.

Visiting the Sick

Sometimes, sick people feel rejected by others. People stay away, either because they are afraid of becoming sick or because they don't know how to help. When we comfort the sick, we make them feel better by our caring and compassion.

- Collect pop tabs and support the purchase of a wheelchair for a physically disabled person.
- Pray every day for the sick.
- Collect books and toys and donate them to the local hospital, for young patients to enjoy.
- Invite your children to draw pictures or send cards to people in the hospital or in nursing homes.
- From their allowance, encourage your child to donate to an organization that is trying to find a cure for a particular disease (e.g. Cancer Society).

Visiting the Imprisoned

Jesus said that he came to set the captives free and to preach the Good News to prisoners. The imprisoned include not just those in prison, but those who are handicapped or disabled, housebound or 'shut-in', sick or elderly.

Prisoners have committed crimes and, like us, have made mistakes, but they are still God's children and are deserving of our care, compassion, and prayers. We are to forgive others for their wrongdoing; we are not to judge. Prisoners still need to know that God loves them and that people care about them.

Sometimes people are in jail for protesting at abortion clinics or speaking out against unjust conditions in the world. Even St. Paul was a prisoner, imprisoned for preaching the Good News.

- Invite your child to make Easter cards or decorate candy bags for inmates in a nearby prison.
- Collect books, including bibles, for the prison library.
- Make Christmas stockings for inmates
- Give cards & stamps for prisoners, so they can write to their families.

Burying the Dead

As parents, you must discern when it is appropriate for your child to attend the funeral of a loved one, considering the child's emotional maturity and understanding of death.

- Invite your child to make a sympathy card for the family.
- Take your child regularly to visit and to tend to the gravesite of deceased loved ones.

Louis Kloster, Religious Education & Christian Family Life consultant
lkloster@gsacrd.ab.ca