

Study Lesson Number 43:

The SPIRITUAL WORKS OF MERCY CONTINUED:

1. To admonish the sinner. It is an act of love to try to make another realize how bad sin is. This might be done by trying to keep him out of sin or an occasion of sin, or by trying to get him to confession afterwards. In cases where we think it might make him worse, we do not correct him directly. We can let him know indirectly, though, especially by our example, that we do not approve of his actions.
2. To instruct the ignorant. It is an act of love to help others in one way or another to learn the truths they need to know to save their souls.
3. To counsel the doubtful. It is an act of love to help others to be certain about what they should do to love and serve God. For example, answering questions about eating meat for lunch on Ember days.
4. To comfort the sorrowful. It is an act of love to help another person in any kind of sorrow, and to refrain from doing anything that would unnecessarily cause another person more sorrow.
5. To bear wrongs patiently. It is an act of love to accept the consequences of another's thoughtlessness or carelessness, and to suffer inconveniences which another should bear.
6. To forgive all injuries. It is an act of deep love to forgive all those who have injured us in any way, even deliberately. Christ demands that His followers have great love and forgiveness for one another in imitation of His own forgiveness of His enemies as He hung on the Cross.
7. To pray for the living and the dead. We have already seen how our sharing in the communion of saints demands that we pray for everyone. This is a great means of spreading the fires of love to others, whether in this world or in purgatory.

Is every one obliged to perform the works of mercy?

Everyone is obliged to perform the works of mercy, according to his own ability and the need of his neighbor.

We must remember, too, that our neighbor is everyone, even our enemies, which means those we do not like.

Are all the ordinary deeds done every day to relieve the corporal or spiritual needs of others true works of mercy?

All the ordinary deeds done every day to relieve the corporal or spiritual needs of others are true works of mercy, if done in the name of Christ.

Doing them in the name of Christ means doing them for the love of Christ. It is really loving Him in the members of His Mystical Body. He Himself has said of all these actions done to help others: "As long as you did it for one of these, the least of my brethren, you did it to Me" (St. Matt. 25/40)