

Day 171 – Monday, September 7

Today I am starting a new series. The **Works of Mercy** are broken up into two categories: the Corporal Works of Mercy and the Spiritual Works of Mercy. Sacred Scripture defines seven corporal works of mercy (Matt 25:31-46): Feed the hungry, Give drink to the thirsty, Clothe the naked, Shelter the homeless, Visit the sick, Visit the imprisoned, Bury the dead. The corporal works of mercy are concerned primarily with meeting the physical needs of others.

Feed The Hungry

FREE TO BE GENEROUS This exercise clearly is about living more generously and giving to the poor, but let's dig a little deeper. In order to do that authentically, we need to focus on detachment from the things of this world. In the midst of the complexities of this modern era, we find ourselves enslaved and imprisoned by a thousand different whims, cravings, addictions, and attachments. We cannot live out the works of mercy if we are attached to our desire for things. By separating ourselves from a love of things, we can more fully love people. To love is to give yourself freely and without reservation. Yet, to give yourself—to another person, to an endeavor, or to God—you must first possess yourself. The person who has little self-possession thinks only of himself and constantly places his desires before the needs of others. The very act of loving is an act of self-donation, of giving ourselves to another. All the spiritual disciplines that make up the incredible landscape of Catholic spirituality are designed in one way or another to restore our lost self-possession so that we can once again love God and neighbor, and be loved the way we were created to be loved. Living with a one-level-down mentality is just one way that we can practice this self-possession and free ourselves to love through the works of mercy.

In the light of eternity, we're here for a very short time, really. We're here for one thing, ultimately: to learn how to love, because God is love. - James Finley

Sincerely,
Fr. Jim Kaptein