

Day 188 – Thursday, Sept 24 – Visiting the Sick

After spending almost a week in the hospital I thought this would be appropriate.

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.

Rediscover Mercy - Visit The Sick

Finding the time or the energy to visit the sick can be rather daunting, even under normal circumstances. So when asked to visit the sick while in Rome, you can imagine my internal struggle. After all, I was in Rome discerning the priesthood. I wanted to see the sights, eat Italian food, and visit a 1,000-year-old church or two. Visiting the sick wasn't on my agenda. I tried to reason with myself. Couldn't I wait until I got home to visit the sick? But something in my heart encouraged me to go. So, full of hesitation, I went. It ended up being the best decision I ever made.

WHEN IN ROME?

The only hospital at the Vatican is a children's hospital. The plan was to go from floor to floor and sing music and maybe meet some of the Italian children. We couldn't talk directly to them since they didn't speak English, but we did have a translator. I had no intention of speaking with any of the children—my plan was simply to sing. After we sang on one floor, however, I wandered into a nearby room with the translator by my side. There was a little girl about 11 years old sitting up. She was weak and alone, perhaps even an outcast.

IT IS IN GIVING THAT WE RECEIVE

The translator said her name was Nicoleta. He asked if I wanted to say anything to her. I told the translator that I couldn't think of anything to say because, even in her weakness and innocence, her beauty had me speechless. He said something to her in Italian, and she started to cry. "What did you say?" I asked him. "I told her you said she is beautiful." Those tears were tears of joy. What if this was the first time this poor, sick, little girl had ever been told she was beautiful? I began to think, what if I had decided not to visit the sick that day? If I had stuck to my plan to tour the city and eat pizza, Nicoleta may never have heard those words she desperately needed to hear . . . and I may have become a priest. Like I said, I was in Rome discerning the priesthood, but it was ministering to Nicoleta that helped me realize I wanted to be a husband and father. As it often happens, we minister to others with the hope of changing their lives, but they are the ones who end up changing our lives. How can you visit the sick? Do you have friends and family who are ill or weak? Is there a hospital you can visit? Whatever it might be, I encourage you to act—it might make someone's week or even year . . . and it may transform your life.

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