

## **Day 215 – Wednesday, October 21**

Today's musing is a continuation of Monday's musing. How we need to give hope to the people around us.

The works of mercy are broken up into two categories: the corporal works of mercy and the spiritual works of mercy. The spiritual works of mercy are designed to meet the spiritual needs of others: Instruct The Ignorant, Counsel The Doubtful, Admonish The Sinner, Bear Wrongs Patiently, Forgive Offences Willingly, Comfort The Afflicted, Pray For The Living and The Dead.

### **Counsel The Doubtful**

When it comes to counseling the doubtful, it's hard to know how to begin. If you have ever tried to help someone struggling with doubt, then you know how challenging it can be. The first step is to move away from viewing doubt as a problem that you are meant to fix. Being an instrument of God's mercy is, by its very nature, not about fixing—it's about healing. By not viewing doubt (or the person) as a problem to be fixed, you can encourage the afflicted person to explore the meaning behind their doubt. Doubt, after all, isn't always a bad thing. It can be the driving force behind an honest pursuit of truth. (Just ask any convert!)

The second step is to recognize that counseling the doubtful doesn't always begin with great advice. Sometimes, engaging in the "ministry of presence" is the best way to prepare a heart to receive the counsel they need. Let me explain this, because I think it is a revolutionary point.

When I was in high school, my twin sister received some awful news. After a decade of complete dedication to her craft as a ballerina—I am talking three hours of practice every day, six days a week, for 10 years—she was told she had scoliosis. In the snap of a finger, her dancing career was over. The news devastated her. Her entire world seemed to be crumbling around her. I remember one night going in to our shared bathroom to brush my teeth. I could hear her weeping in her room. I went inside and saw her sitting on the floor with her head against her closet, sobbing. I sat down next to her and put my arm around her. For about 20 minutes she just cried in my arms. When she settled down we both got up, hugged, and said goodnight.

My sister was in a state where she seriously doubted whether or not everything would be ok. How do you convince someone otherwise? How can you provide counsel for this kind of doubt? Sometimes, at first, the doubter isn't ready for words. Before she could start dreaming again, my sister needed to be reminded that she was loved simply for who she is and not because of what she does. Don't we all need that reminder every once in a while? In the weeks that followed, she was ready to hear the counsel that truly healed her doubting heart. So remember, even if you have the perfect words, check to see if the person's heart is ready to truly hear those words.

*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