

To all the faithful of the Diocese of Prince Albert,

As we journey through the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, we realize that our commitment to faith invites us to works of Mercy. St. James states very clearly that faith becomes alive through our actions: "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead." (James 2:26)

In the last judgement, chapter 25 of Matthew's gospel, we find passages on the works of Mercy that many of us know and have often quoted. The six works of Mercy listed in the text reveal the physical needs of every human being: hunger, thirst, nakedness, shelter, sickness, and imprisonment. When we look at the list, we become aware that some works may seem easier than others to put into practise. Yet, they are all important to implement, as each category is comprised of God's children. These acts of Mercy also appeal to us not to be judgemental, afraid, or selective in our aid to our fellow person. This is quite the challenge but we are supported by our Lord's response "...whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." (Mt 25:40)

A seventh work of Mercy has been added to the list found in Matthew's gospel: burial. How is burial a work of Mercy? It comes from the Old Testament in the time of Tobit when the populace was not allowed to bury the dead according to their own rituals and customs. Consequently, Tobit buried their dead in secret. If we have served our neighbour in his living body, we are also called to serve and respect his body in death. How appropriate for us today! St. Paul tells us that life is changed, not ended. Therefore, during this stage in life when the body has died, our love should be reflected in the way we prepare our loved one's body and in how we express our farewells as family and community. What is interesting is this is a universal call to humankind to help our fellow persons wherever they are, whomever they are, or whether we like them or not. Knowingly or unknowingly, we are serving the Lord in all people. Respect for the dead is a sign of our respect for life. What a paradox!

All our actions towards our brothers and sisters are connected to the presence of Christ in our world. We too have to discover Christ's presence in ourselves as in our neighbours. We are all temples of the world and are surrounded in this Holy presence. The world becomes the Tabernacle of the presence of Christ, still suffering, yet raised from the dead.

*Most Rev. Albert Thévenot M. Afr.
Bishop of Prince Albert*

Care for the Sick
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Visit the Prisoner
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Shelter the Homeless

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Give a Drink to the Thirsty

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Clothe the Naked
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Bury the Dead
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Feed the Hungry



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AN INVITATION AND A CHALLENGE

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During the Jubilee of Mercy, we are both invited to experience the Father's mercy and challenged to become the face of the Father's mercy in the world.

To understand the gift of mercy that the Father offers to us, Jesus tells the story of the Prodigal Son (Lk 15.11-32), whose overflowing mercy toward both his sons is the focus of the story.

First toward the younger son, who has squandered the inheritance the father had given him, the father is seen watching and waiting for his return. He runs to this son of his with open arms to welcome him home not with harsh words of condemnation but as a beloved child.

The father leaves the house a second time to speak with his oldest son who is angry about his father's generosity, seeing as unjust the welcome offered to his younger brother. The father does not address the disrespectful words spoken by the older son; rather he invites this son to follow his example of mercy. In this he is challenging his older son to become the face of the father's mercy.

"In the parables devoted to mercy, Jesus reveals the nature of God as that of a Father who never gives up until he has forgiven the wrong and overcome rejection with compassion and mercy." (MV 9)

As the older son was challenged so are we... "to become merciful like the Father." (MV 14). To meet this challenge, Pope Francis has directed the Church to turn to the works of mercy in order to bring the love of the Father into the world. Six of the seven corporal works of mercy are listed by Jesus in the description of the last judgement in the Gospel of Matthew (25.31-46). It is also from this description that we learn that we will be judged not by how we followed the rules but rather by how we showed mercy and compassion to our brothers and sisters. Like the older son we are challenged to be the face of the Father's mercy.

THE CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY

Seven boxes in this pamphlet contain an image and an example or two of what one might do if they were to perform one of the corporal works of mercy.

Space is also given for each person, family or parish group to write in the action they will take to perform each of the corporal works of mercy.

This pamphlet is to help us to take up the challenge given by Pope Francis to become "Merciful like the Father." (MV 9)

We, the faithful, are merciful because the Father first showed mercy to us. Mercy is the Father's love in action. Love is never just a feeling; it is shown through concrete actions. If we are to be like the Father, we too must demonstrate the Father's love by acting mercifully toward our sisters and brothers.

MV refers to the Papal Bull *Misericordiae Vultus* in which Pope Francis announces the Jubilee of Mercy, defines "Jesus Christ as the face of the Father's mercy," and challenges us to be "merciful like the Father." To read the entire document go to <http://www.im.va/content/gdm/en/giubileo/bolla.html>

For more information:
www.padiocese.ca/jubileeofmercy



FEED THE HUNGRY (Matthew 25.35)

- * Collect food for the food bank or help at a soup kitchen
- * Offering to take a homeless person to lunch
- * Avoid wasting food



GIVE DRINK TO THE THIRSTY (Matthew 25.35)

- * Buy a coffee or drink for the person asking for change outside the restaurant door.
- * Donate money to local shelters and food banks.



SHELTER THE HOMELESS (Matthew 25.35)

- * Support or volunteer at a homeless shelter.
- * Support or volunteer with a Habitat for Humanity project.
- * Help a neighbour in need care for their home.



VISIT THE PRISONER (Matthew 25.36)

- * Become a prison ministry volunteer (visit an inmate, join the Sunday Eucharist community at the prison, take a prisoner to Sunday worship or offer to write letters of encouragement and hope).
- * Pray for inmates and their family.



VISIT THE SICK (Matthew 25.36)

- * Visit a fellow parishioner who is in the hospital or homebound.
- * Offer support (a visit, a meal, childcare, etc.) for family, friends or acquaintances who have a loved one in the hospital.



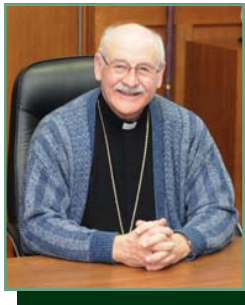
CLOTHE THE NAKED (Matthew 25.36)

- * Give your excess clothing items to local shelters.
- * Do a clothing drive in your community and give the items gathered to those in need.
- * Support the St. Vincent de Paul Society.



BURY THE DEAD (Tobit 1.17 & 12.12)

- * Take the time to attend the funerals of fellow parishioners, even if not well known to you.
- * Offer support (a visit, a meal, childcare, etc.) for family, friends or acquaintances who have lost a loved one.



To all the faithful of the Diocese of Prince Albert,

In life, there are not only physical deficiencies but also spiritual ones. The spiritual works of Mercy, help us to respond to those with a different kind of need. Here too we suggest seven as a sacred number of works but no doubt you may add your own: pray for the living and the dead, admonish the sinner, instruct the ignorant, counsel the doubtful, comfort the sorrowful, bear wrongs patiently, and forgive all injuries.

The spiritual works of Mercy are delicate, fragile, and must be handled with care.

Be vigilant when listening to others who are confiding to you the secrets of their hearts. Answers may not be what they are looking for at the moment but perhaps they need someone to listen or to offer support as they question aspects of their life and faith. They may be searching, so guide them. If you are speaking to the 'ignorant' share the story of your life experience. Admit that we are all sinners in need of one another as we walk to the promise land.

There are also conciliatory suggestions that we may offer. Having gone through similar experiences ourselves can often help our brother or sister to see that our lives are interwoven and are only distorted images of each other. Life's journey can sometimes be travelled on rather rough roads, wounding us in many ways and leaving us to believe that there is no hope as we continue to spiral in one direction. Be with the person to help them with their burden until solutions are found or other avenues of assistance can be gained. Again, be with them. Your presence is comforting. Be quiet and listen.

Some of us have buried ourselves in guilt and belittlement. Remove the burden and offer freedom by letting others know that the Lord has forgiven them and that we have forgiven them. Scripture says the Lord is compassionate and loving. Like the Father, we are invited to be and do the same, helping others to forgive themselves and the enemies in their lives

We all have our addictions and recovery is easier said than done. The road of healing and reconciliation is made up of a daily commitment to embrace the freedom that God gave each of us at creation. The sacraments and especially the sacrament of Reconciliation will help us but professional help is often needed as well. Relapse will happen but remember to be patient with one another and with ourselves. "Be kind and merciful to one another, forgiving one another, just as God has forgiven you in Christ. (Eph 4:32)

Our prayers interwoven with faith in service will help people to overcome their challenges. So, pray unceasingly and use words if you must. The Trinity and all the angels and saints are ready to receive our petitions for others or for ourselves at all times. They are ready to give strength and support in our efforts. Whether we realize it or not, prayer is the encounter of God's thirst with ours. God thirsts that we may thirst for him. It is a covenant relationship between God and man in Christ. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2560) Whatever our brother or sister may suffer we suffer with them. We are all part of an interwoven blanket that covers the earth, called to love, to holiness, and to be Merciful like the Father.

*Most Rev. Albert Thévenot M. Afr.
Bishop of Prince Albert*

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Comfort the Sorrowful

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During the Jubilee of Mercy, we are both invited to experience the Father's mercy and challenged to become the face of the Father's mercy in the world.

To understand the desire the Father has to bestow his mercy to us, Jesus tells the story of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin (Lk 15.1-10), where the emphasis in the story is on the one seeking the lost.

To Jesus' listeners these stories would have sounded odd. Who would risk leaving 99 sheep in the desert to seek the one? This would put all the sheep at risk. As for the woman seeking her lost coin, the coin was not a coin of high value...not a coin that anyone of wealth would spend a day seeking. The coin's value comes from the woman's desire to find it.

The Father is the seeker who looks for the lost and invites everyone to rejoice when they are found. "In the parables devoted to mercy, Jesus reveals the nature of God as that of a Father who never gives up." (MV9)

Unlike the corporal works of mercy, the spiritual works of mercy call us to move out of our comfort zones in a different sort of way. We are called to witness our faith by going beyond any righteous anger and forgiving those who hurt us. We are called to know our faith in order to share it. We are called to live our lives in order that we may be authentic witnesses of the faith. We are called to journey with those in pain; either as a result of struggling with a challenging life issue or grieving at the loss of a loved one.

How much easier it now seems to go through my closet and give away my gently worn clothing or to provide a few cans for a food bank drive.

As Pope Francis explained, "Jesus introduces us to these works of mercy in his preaching so that we can know whether or not we are living as his disciples." (MV 16)

THE SPIRITUAL WORKS OF MERCY

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INSTRUCT THE IGNORANT (Matthew 16.15)

- * Learn about your Catholic faith so that when asked questions by family, friends, co-workers, etc. you are able to answer their questions about faith well

COUNSEL THE DOUBTFUL (John 14.27)



- * Listen without judgement or fear to those who are struggling
- * Have the courage to be present and do not reject anyone who is struggling with heavy life issues

ADMONISH THE SINNER (Luke 15.7)



- * Live your life witnessing to Gospel values
- * Do not engage in gossip
- * Stop general prejudicial statements by speaking words of truth and enlightenment



COMFORT THE SORROWFUL (Matthew 11.28)

- * Be present to family, friends, co-workers, and community members who have lost a loved one
- * Be a friend in good times and in bad

FORGIVE INJURIES (Matthew 6.12)



- * Forgive those who have hurt you and let go of past grudges
- * Ask others for forgiveness
- * Receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation

BEAR WRONGS PATIENTLY (Luke 6.27-28)



- * Continue to speak well of those who you are in disagreement with
- * Give others the benefit of the doubt
- * Pray for those who have wronged you



PRAY FOR THE LIVING AND THE DEAD (John 17.24)

- * Pray for the needs of others
- * Pray for those who have died