

Chapter 5

A Priority to Love the Poor and to Be Poor

[*Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit* by Jen Norton]

This assignment will confront students with what it means to live out the commandment to care for others that appears in Matthew 25:31-46. Through a mix of group discussion and individual work, students will reflect on their experiences of performing and receiving the corporal works of mercy, and strategies for incorporating these practices in their future. Share the following in your own words:

The corporal works of mercy are commanded by Jesus in Matthew 25. In fact, he says: “What you do to my least brothers and sisters, you do to me.” Helping those who are less fortunate than us is not an option for a committed Catholic, even if we ourselves count among the less fortunate. (And at some point in our lives, every one of us will in one way or another.) We help those around us because they are created in the image and likeness of God, and we help them because when we help, we help the Lord Jesus who lives in them. These are the corporal works of mercy.

Display the corporal works of mercy where all can see:

- ***Feed the hungry.***
- ***Give drink to the thirsty.***
- ***Clothe the naked.***
- ***Shelter the homeless.***
- ***Visit the sick.***
- ***Visit the imprisoned.***
- ***Bury the dead.***

Pass out the worksheet. Have the students write their responses on the worksheet. Then have the students discuss what they wrote, first with a partner and then as part of a full class discussion.

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1. The corporal works of mercy seem pretty straightforward. But what do they mean in practice? Do you think that simply giving money every month to a charity fulfills your obligation to those who are less fortunate? Why or why not?
2. Think of a concrete way in which you have performed one of these corporal works of mercy in your life. Describe it. Do you remember how it felt? Why did you do it? If you can't think of an example, think of the people in your life – even people who are not friends or family – and ask yourself if anyone you know would be served by you obeying Jesus's commandments here.
3. Have you ever been on the receiving end of one of these corporal works of mercy? How does it feel to be cared for like this? Did you thank the person? Did you feel like "paying it forward" in some way? Why or why not?
4. What are ways you can be more consciously ready to help others in your life and your community who are in need. Do you think you could start an initiative at your school or with a group of friends that could put one or more of the corporal works into practice on a larger scale? What would it take to do so? What kind of resources? What kind of time commitment? Who would you help?