

Learning about the Works of Mercy

Teaching Plan

Teaching Tips

Ahead of introducing *Learning about the Works of Mercy* to the children, take time to familiarize yourself with the contents. Review this handout and how it correlates to the children's resource.

The resource is designed for children to interact with. Have the children follow along as you read aloud, and engage them in hands-on interaction with the resource, as suggested in the teaching steps below.

Background

The Church bases the Works of Mercy on these teachings of Jesus: "I was hungry and you gave me food... thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me... whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 25:35-40). The Corporal Works of Mercy are ways we respond to this teaching by caring for the physical and material needs of our neighbors. The Spiritual Works of Mercy guide us to care for their spiritual and emotional needs.

Cultivating compassion in children begins with helping them feel and express gratitude for the gifts they've been given. Help them see that all gifts come from our loving Father, who calls us to love others as he loves us. Help children understand that even the smallest works of mercy can be great in God's eyes.

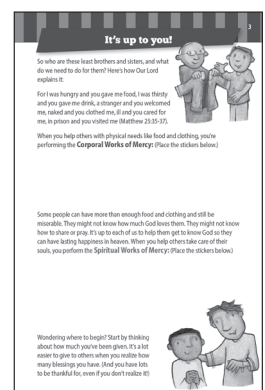
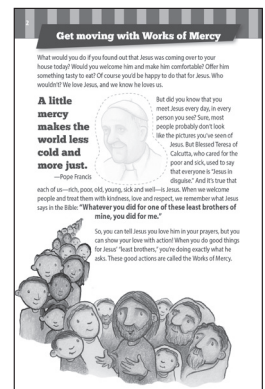
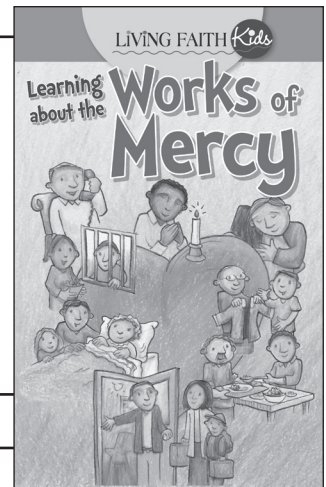
Opening Prayer

Begin your lessons with prayer. Use the following or modify it each time you pray it with the group.

Loving Father, you have given us so much. Show us how to be grateful for all you have given us. Help us to be aware of those who have less, and guide us in ways we can share our blessings and gifts, in the name of your Son Jesus. Amen.

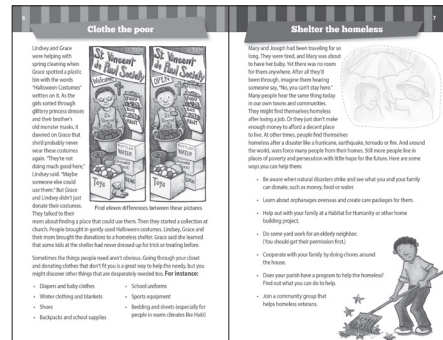
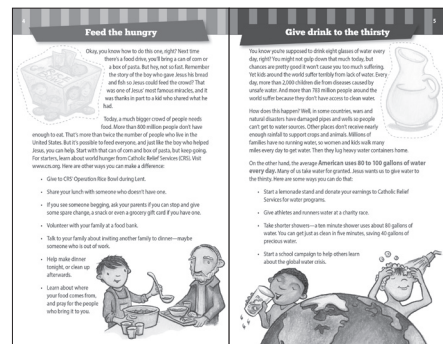
Teaching Steps

Page(s)	
COVER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct the children to look at the cover of their booklets. Ask, <i>What do you think is meant by “works of mercy”?</i> Direct the children’s attention to the heart in the center of the picture and talk about how hearts symbolize love. Explain that works of mercy could also be called works of love. • Discuss the art. Invite the children to look at the images surrounding the heart. Ask if they can identify what is happening in each. Invite them to share about similar acts of kindness and love that have been done for them.
2–3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the header and first paragraph on page 2. Invite the children into a few moments of silence, picturing how it would be to have Jesus at their home. If comfortable, the children may wish to share their thoughts about this. • Read the second paragraph. Repeat the last line: “Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you do for me.” Ask, <i>What do you think Saint Teresa meant when she said that Jesus is “in disguise”?</i> • Have the children place the Pope Francis sticker, then read the quote aloud together. Ask, <i>What does it mean that the world is less cold with a little mercy?</i> • Read the header and first three paragraphs on page 3. Have the children circle the action phrases (“gave me drink,” “welcomed me,” etc.) in the second paragraph. • Help the children with the stickers, if needed. Explain that <i>corporal</i> means “body”. • Read the fourth paragraph and help the children with the stickers, if needed. Read the page header again, and ask the children what it means that “it’s up to you.” • Read the final paragraph and invite the children to make lists of blessings they have been given, by God and by their families. Have them choose one or two to illustrate if they wish. Display the lists and/or pictures as a reminder of the gifts we have been given.



The following pages describe each of the Corporal Works of Mercy. Notice that each page header describes an action to take, such as “feed the hungry.” Be aware of any opportunities for taking these actions in your parish or community as you follow the steps for each page below:

- **Vary the reading experience.** Read aloud as the children follow along, or have the children read some paragraphs aloud.
- **Repeat statistics for emphasis** (such as, “800 million people don’t have enough to eat”) and any explanatory text.
- **Invite the children to picture themselves taking actions.** Have them check the things they do currently, and underline actions they would like to take.
- **After each page,** brainstorm additional ways you can accomplish action in your community. Remind the children that as we go about our daily tasks, we are called by Jesus to not look past anyone in need, and to help in ways that we are able.
- **Help the children with sticker placement, if necessary.**



The following pages describe each of the Spiritual Works of Mercy, and can help children take tangible steps. Follow the teaching steps for the Corporal Works of Mercy, with the following additions:

- **When appropriate, share your own experiences** of receiving these Spiritual Works of Mercy and invite the children to share their experiences as well.
- **Connect to the Mass.** Explain that during the Prayer of the Faithful at Mass, we pray for others. Using this liturgical prayer as a guide, have the children write their own petitions for:

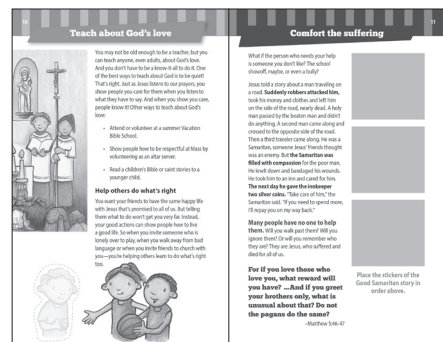
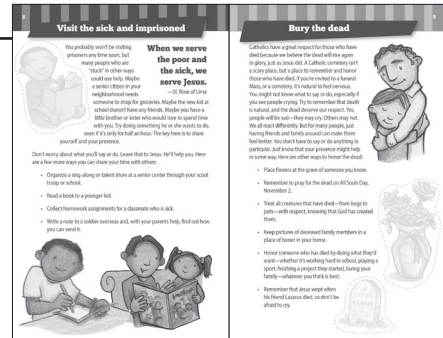
The needs of the Church (such as your parish community, the Pope, priests and religious, etc.)

The salvation of the world

Those who suffer due to a current situation anywhere in the world (such as pandemic or natural disaster)

Individuals who are sick and those who have died

Have the children read aloud their prayer petitions. All who are present may respond, *Lord hear our prayer.*



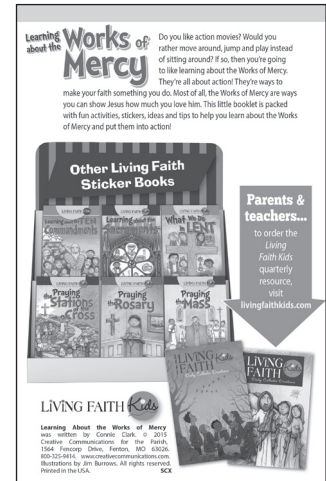
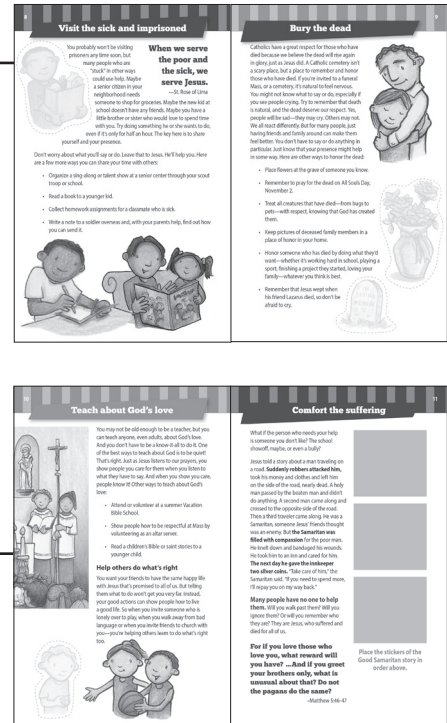
8-15

- **Note that page 9** offers thoughts and ideas for children coping with friends or family members who are in mourning and is a helpful guide to keep on hand and review when these situations arise in the future.
- **Optional Extension.** Look at your parish bulletin or website for ways people serve others. Ask the children to identify whether each is a Corporal or Spiritual Work of Mercy. Pay attention to opportunities for the children to be involved and suggest ways you can get involved as a group or family.

Closing Prayer

Lead the children in prayer. Close with "Amen. Alleluia."

Jesus, help us to see you in every person we meet, especially those who are suffering, sick, poor, lonely, and in need of help. Help us take loving action just as you would. Bless all of your people with your eternal love and life.



Living Faith Kids

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