

# MERCY



## *Leader Guide*



Faith and Family Life  
Catholic Ministries

# AN INVITATION

You have been invited to accompany your families in understanding and experiencing the heart of the Father. Mercy is the capacity of the heart to love and care for others. As human beings, we have the opportunity to incarnate who God is by the way we share mercy with the world. Families will begin this series by discussing what mercy is and how God desires that we serve others as if they are Christ. Families will learn concrete ways to live out mercy and care for others in their home and community.

*The essence of the mystery of the Christian faith is mercy, which is made visible in Jesus of Nazareth. Mercy, at the center of the Revelation of Jesus Christ, reveals the very mystery of the Trinity. It is the ideal of evangelical life, the true criterion of the faith's credibility and the deepest storyline of the Church's story. (Directory for Catechesis 51)*

*The practice of mercy is already itself an authentic catechesis; it is catechesis in action, an eloquent testimony for believers and nonbelievers alike and a manifestation of the bond between orthodoxy and orthopraxy: "the New Evangelization . . . cannot but use a language of mercy which is expressed in gestures and attitudes even before words." (DC 51)*

*Catechesis is to teach believers to be "merciful like the Father" (Lk 6: 36), both by fostering knowledge and practice of the spiritual and corporal works of mercy and by encouraging the search for new works that respond to the needs of the present. (DC 52)*

## FAMILY MEETINGS

Mercy is an at-home family experience about the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. Over 15 Family Meetings, families will wrestle with and live out the command of Jesus: "love one another as I love you" (John 15:12). Each Family Meeting includes: a gathering ritual, opening prayer, check-in question, a teaching about a corporal or spiritual work of mercy, an activity that lives out the teaching, and a closing prayer. These meetings are designed to take 30-40 minutes each.

## GATHER

The gathering ritual will include meditating on an image of the face of Jesus and leading families in praying a Litany of Mercy. When families continually share in rituals of their faith, they can become more grounded in Christ and united as a family. This gathering ritual will help provide a regular rhythm to begin Family Meetings.

# CHECK-IN

The check-in is meant to get the conversation started between family members. The question is loosely based on the session's theme, and is one that is easy to answer.

# ACTIVITY AND TEACHING

Each family meeting includes a teaching about one corporal or spiritual work of mercy rooted in Scripture and Tradition with practical application. Families will create a set of St. Therese good deed beads that they will use throughout the series as they live out the works of mercy. The activity for each session also gives families several ideas for how to live out a spiritual or corporal work of mercy in their daily life at-home and in their community.

# PRAYER

To end each family meeting, a prayer is included for families to pray together.

# A FEW TIPS

- By reading and experiencing the content yourself, you will be best equipped to accompany this program. We recommend first becoming familiar with the material before implementing it.
- Mercy is part of our ongoing formation resources. It was designed for post sacramental preparation. Although Mercy is beneficial for a variety of age groups, this program would be a great fit for a junior high program.
- For families with younger children we have provided ideas for how to adapt the experience in the parent guide.
- Mercy is designed to be led at-home, but can be accompanied by at-church experiences. For example, consider planning a few service opportunities for the family pods to experience together that reflect a corporal or spiritual work of mercy.
- Facilitate or send families the Family Meeting Video Guides to help them better understand how to lead a family meeting in their home. Best tips for this can be found in the Pathways Leader Guide.
- You may even consider asking the parents that are using this resource to create

some service opportunities for the other families to join in on. Part of our ongoing formation is aimed at empowering families to desire leading other families in the faith.

## SCOPE AND SEQUENCE

Family Meeting	Theme	Activity
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Learning to see Jesus' face in the face of others.</li> <li>-God calls us to love and serve others.</li> <li>-The Corporal and Spiritual works of Mercy.</li> <li>-Living merciful lives within our families.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Make your own set of good deed beads.</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Overview of people experiencing food insecurities.</li> <li>-Jesus showed concern and took action to relieve hunger. Read Matthew 15:32.</li> <li>-God feeds us in many ways, particularly the Eucharist.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Double your dinner recipe, and bless a neighbor or friend in need with a meal.</li> <li>-Donate to your parish food pantry or local food bank.</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Overview of Americans with lack of access to running water.</li> <li>-Review Isaiah 55:1 and John 7:37.</li> <li>-Jesus is the one who fills our longing and deep thirst- He is our living water!</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Help a sibling, parent, or grandparent who needs a drink.</li> <li>-Keep water bottles in your car in case an opportunity arises to share one with someone in need.</li> </ul>



4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-God loves his creations, especially you and I.</li> <li>-Review creation story of Adam and Eve. How they sinned, which broke their perfect closeness with God and created shame. They created clothes to cover up their bodies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Older siblings can help younger siblings with getting dressed and tying shoes.</li> <li>-Help with laundry.</li> <li>-Donate clothes from your closet that you have outgrown or don't wear.</li> </ul>
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Sometimes we are physically confined (for example: Covid 19, old age, lack of ability to move around).</li> <li>-Other times, we are in imprisoned situations that we cannot get out of without the help of another.</li> <li>-People in prison are still made in the same image and likeness of God.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Visit a family member in prison or write them a letter.</li> <li>-Visit a local nursing home, or a lonely member of your family or parish family.</li> <li>-Offer to babysit for a mother of young children.</li> <li>-Offer your own prayer and sacrifice to those in need. Abstain from meat, sweets, coffee, etc. as a sacrifice for someone.</li> </ul>
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Overview of homelessness rates in the United States.</li> <li>-Scripture reminds us of the importance and honor of hospitality.</li> <li>-Abraham and Sarah's story in Genesis 18:2-8.</li> <li>-Jesus was born outside of a home, and couldn't return home to Nazareth for 3 years.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Show hospitality to someone who might need to feel the embrace of your home.</li> <li>-Find someone to shelter with love, kindness, and care.</li> </ul>
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Discuss the impact of being sick and who cares for you when you are sick.</li> <li>-Review how Jesus heals St. Peter's mother-in-law.</li> <li>-Jesus is near to us in our sickness.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Send a card to someone sick.</li> <li>-Call to check in on someone.</li> <li>-Send a care package in the mail.</li> <li>-Offer to run errands, help with yardwork, drop off dinner, or offer to help where needed.</li> </ul>



8	<p>-Discuss what grief and grieving looks like and ways you can experience it.</p> <p>-Scripture shows us the goodness of the process of grieving in the story of Lazarus' death, John 11:3-35.</p> <p>-We are not meant to grieve alone. Jesus shows us what sorrow and compassion for someone looks like.</p>	<p>-Visit a cemetery and bring flowers to the grave. Talk about that person while you visit.</p> <p>-Write a letter to God or to a person who has died to express your thoughts and emotions.</p>
9	<p>-We are all imperfect humans who make mistakes.</p> <p>-God still loves us and desires to be close.</p> <p>-We can learn something valuable from past mistakes.</p> <p>-Discuss John 8:7-11. Jesus reminds the Pharisees (and us) that none of them are without sin.</p>	<p>-Encourage a sibling, child, or friend when they make a mistake to do better next time.</p> <p>-Pray with your family or friends to remember God's great love for us.</p> <p>-Go to Reconciliation with your family this week.</p>
10	<p>-Discuss what qualities good teachers possess. Share about your favorite teacher and what made them great.</p> <p>- Jesus is "Rabbi", the Teacher.</p> <p>-Nicodemus was humble and curious before Jesus (John 3:1-2). We, too, are called to be this way towards Jesus so that he can teach us God's way.</p>	<p>-Take time to be curious and learn more about your faith. Read scripture, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, talk to your Pastor or your parents.</p> <p>-After, share what you've learned with others!</p> <p>-Help instruct others in daily life.</p>



11	<p>-It's okay to have questions and difficulties in our faith. We can use this as an opportunity to explore our faith, seek truth, and talk to God.</p> <p>-Jesus meets us where we are with love. He wants to help us understand.</p> <p>-Thomas doubted Jesus' rising from the dead (John 20:25-28). Jesus walked with Thomas from doubt into faith, and He desires to do the same with us!</p>	<p>-Counsel the doubtful with love instead of frustration.</p> <p>-If you have doubts in your faith, talk about it with God, your parents, godparents, or another faithful adult you trust.</p>
12	<p>-We are united in Baptism with other Christians through the Holy Spirit in us.</p> <p>-We can pray for the living and dead to show love to the other members of the Body of Christ just as we do to our own family.</p> <p>-Our final goal is heaven- we need heavenly help!</p> <p>-Discuss what purgatory is and how our prayers can assist souls on their journey to heaven.</p>	<p>-Spend time in prayer asking God to bless and protect all the members of the Body of Christ.</p> <p>-Pray with your family for specific intentions.</p> <p>-Pray the Hail Mary and Rosary.</p> <p>-Attend Mass, where heaven and earth meet, and the whole Body of Christ joins together to praise God.</p>
13	<p>-During the Passion Narratives from Holy Week, we are reminded how human Jesus also was. We see how much suffering He endured emotionally and physically (Mathew 27:30-32).</p> <p>-Jesus met Simon of Cyrene, who helped Jesus carry the weight of the cross.</p> <p>-We can comfort someone going through sorrow by carrying their burden with them.</p>	<p>-Read a story or sing a song to a sibling who is feeling sad.</p> <p>-Send a care package to a friend who is having a hard time.</p> <p>-Call and check in on someone who may need it.</p> <p>-Spend time with someone doing their favorite thing, even if it's not yours.</p>



14	<p>-Forgiveness can be hard. -When we hurt and refuse to forgive someone, it ends up harming us and our relationship with God.</p> <p>-Because God forgives us, we are also called to forgive.</p>	<p>-If you are struggling to forgive someone, try and remember all the times you made mistakes.</p> <p>-Remember God's great and forgiving love. Think about His forgiveness in the sacrament of Reconciliation.</p> <p>-Pray and ask God to help you with what you are struggling to be able to forgive.</p>
15	<p>-We have all been wronged at some point by others. How do you want to react?</p> <p>-In Matthew 5:43-48, Jesus reminds us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute you.</p>	<p>-Say a prayer the next time you've been wronged, and ask God to give you the grace to respond how he would want you to.</p> <p>-Go to Adoration to receive Jesus' patience, love, and mercy.</p>