

Incarnate Word Confirmation Sponsor Conversation Form C

Actions:

1. Read "Topic C: The Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy."
2. Talk with your sponsor.
 - How do you live out these things in your daily life?
 - How do you think you live these things in *your* daily life? Example of how?
 - Think about other people's daily life:
 - *Crossroads of the World*: On the IW parish website under "Confirmation," there is a "choose your own adventure" style activity which lets you see what choices and consequences might be available to someone in another country.
 - *Spent*: A similar style activity, but looking at life in Durham, North Carolina. Found at playspent.org/html
3. Write a summary of what you discussed in two paragraphs or more, and attach to this form as a separate sheet.



Confirmation Candidate's Name: _____

Please print first and last name.

Date Sponsor Meeting Occurred: ____ / ____ / ____

Sponsor's Name: _____

Sponsor's Signature: _____

**If the interview took place by phone or email, parent may sign for sponsor.*

Topic C: The Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy

Now that we've established how the person of the Holy Spirit works with us, and seen how we receive Him in the Rite, we should look at **what exactly Jesus asks to do with the gift of the Spirit.**

One clear answer is **mercy**. So what is mercy?

"Mercy: the bridge that connects God and man, opening our hearts to the hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness." – Pope Francis

You may have heard many times now that God will love you forever, no matter what, but have you really ever thought about how beautiful that is? *Think now.* **The only person or thing which can separate you from God's love is you**, and the only way you can do it is by saying you don't want God's mercy – His offer to forgive will always be there. Rejecting God's mercy is a free choice you can make. If we couldn't really choose to reject God, choosing to love Him wouldn't mean anything. That's why God gave us free will – so that we could really love Him, not love Him as if He'd programmed a robot. If you *do* want God's endless love and mercy, that mercy should overflow from you to others... and the Holy Spirit is given to you to make it happen.

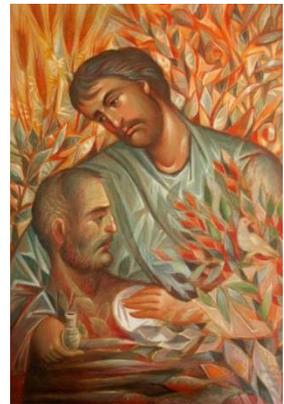
If we look at the Gospels and many of Jesus' parables, we find that mercy is everywhere. If you can read music, we could say that these Gospel stories are "in the key of mercy" – mercy shapes what our actions should look and sound like.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN (Luke 10:29-37)

But the lawyer, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion, and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; then he set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.'

Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed mercy on him." And Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."



When we read this parable, we tend to skip right to "Do I pass by, or do I help?" and sometimes we need to be reminded why it's even possible for us to help heal others.

Preaching on this parable in the early Church didn't see the priest and Levite merely as unhelpful people – instead, they represented the Law and the Prophets, aids which the Jewish people already had, but which were *unable* to heal the wounds of sin. Jesus, represented by the Samaritan, is the only one who *can* help. The wounded man himself is the one who represents us. When we are told we should imitate the Samaritan, we are imitating Jesus, and we only have the power to help others because Jesus healed us first, and because we have the Holy Spirit to make it happen in us.

THE FORGIVING MASTER (Matthew 18:23-35)

“The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. When he began the reckoning, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents; and as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, ‘Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ And out of pity for him the lord of that servant released him and forgave him the debt.



But that same servant, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat he said, ‘Pay what you owe.’ So his fellow servant fell down and besought him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ He refused and went and put him in prison till he should pay the debt. When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. Then his lord summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you besought me; and should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’ And in anger his lord delivered him to the jailers, till he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”

The main point of this parable isn't just “don't be the mean servant,” but rather to show how crazily generous the master was. The master (Jesus) forgave the servant an enormous, unpayable debt... as his way of showing us what he wants for all of us.

How does the servant reject the mercy of God here? He didn't say “no thanks” to the debt being wiped out. However, “no more debt” wasn't the real gift. The master's true gift was the example of love for those in trouble and in need. If the servant had truly accepted the master's love, he would have taken it in and passed it on. Remember often just how generous Jesus has been to you, and showing mercy should become a habit.

THE LAST JUDGMENT (Matthew 25:31-46)

“When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will place the sheep at his right hand, but the goats at the left.

Then the King will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see thee hungry and feed thee, or thirsty and give thee drink? And when did we see thee a stranger and welcome thee, or naked and clothe thee? And when did we see thee sick or in prison and visit thee?’ And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.’

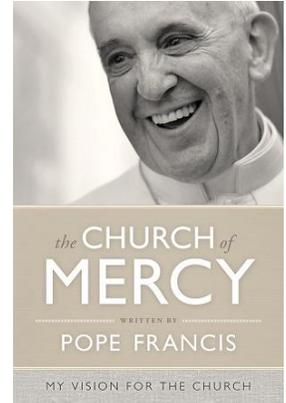
Then he will say to those at his left hand, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ Then they also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see thee hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to thee?’ Then he will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me.’ And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

One time at Mass, a priest started his homily by saying “This Gospel is so obvious, I'm not even going to preach on it.” However, even though the meaning is clear to us (be merciful), it is worth noting that *everyone* (sheep or goat) is surprised by the judgment. The message we find in the surprised reactions of both the merciful and the unmerciful people is that *we will still be judged by whether we are merciful, whether we know it or not.*

Pope Francis is big on mercy – he uses the word all the time. In fact, he declared a **Jubilee Year of Mercy** for the whole Church (December 8, 2015 to November 20, 2016) to remind us just how important a part of our faith mercy is and how we need to show it to the world.

The Church gives us some clues as to what sort of merciful things we should be doing. The **corporal works of mercy** (corpus means body, so these have to do with our body) come straight out of the passage from Matthew 25 above:

- **feed the hungry**
- **give drink to the thirsty**
- **shelter the homeless**
- **clothe the naked**
- **visit the sick**
- **visit the imprisoned**
- **bury the dead**



Mercy like this was an entirely new concept when seen in the early Church. Although the Romans practiced generosity, they did not promote mercy or pity. Since mercy implied “unearned help or relief,” it was considered contradictory to justice. Mercy was seen by Roman philosophers as a defect of character, belonging to the uneducated and the naïve.

However, Christians heard the call to practice mercy early and often, because the Christian understanding of justice comes from the parable of the Forgiving Master: Because God loves humanity, we may not please God unless we love one another. The apostle John never tires of recommending mercy in his Gospel (*1 John 4:20-21, for example*). St. Luke tells us how deacons are appointed to serve the most marginalized (*Acts 6:1-6*). St. Paul writes to St. Timothy about the selection of widows who, like the deacons, are to serve those in need (*1 Timothy 5:9-10*). Collectively and institutionally, the Church of the apostles promotes the service of mercy.

Later, the fathers of the Church officially recognized that physical needs are not the only needs that people have. You may well have friends or family who are really in need of receiving the mercy of God, but not because they are starving for food.

In 421, St. Augustine writes the *Enchiridion* (meaning “handbook”) and lists the seven corporal works of mercy, but also adds **seven new works of mercy about the neighbor’s spiritual needs**:

- **console the afflicted**
- **show the way to the lost**
- **assist those who hesitate**
- **rebuke the sinner**
- **forgive sins**
- **bear wrongs**
- **pray for the living and the dead**

The first three spiritual works deal with burdens that the neighbor suffers, just like the corporal works. However, the remaining four ask the Christian to take steps toward developing peace in a community full of many problems. In other words, by doing those works of mercy, you can let go of hurtful anger and make your community a better place, even when the person you are merciful towards doesn’t know or rejects it.

So, where can you start?