



Spiritual Works of Mercy | To bear wrongs patiently

SONG: Make Me A Channel of Your Peace – Jon Cohen

Verse 1:

Make me a channel of your peace,
Where there is hatred, let me bring Your love,
Where there is injury, Your pardon Lord,
And where there's doubt, true faith in You

Chorus:

Oh Master, grant that I may never seek,
So much to be consoled as to console,
To be understood, as to understand,
To be loved, as to love with all my soul

Verse 2:

Make me a channel of your peace,
Where there's despair in life let me bring hope,
Where there is darkness - only light,
And where there's sadness, ever joy

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 5:43-48

Love your Enemies

PRAYER:

Lord Jesus Christ,

Grant us the gift of understanding. Help us to understand the feelings of others, the desires of others, the goals of others. At the same time, help us to understand ourselves in our actions and reactions. Widen our vision beyond our own small world to embrace with knowledge and love the worlds of others.

Help us, Lord, to always see you at work in our own life and in the lives of others. Bless us with insight, acceptance and love that is tempered by you who are all things to all people. Help us to understand, Lord.

Amen.

Prayer Station:

In this prayer, we are going to ask the participants to people describe the “neighbours” that may be a little more challenging to love. On a whiteboard, we will have written:

_____ neighbour
_____ neighbour
_____ neighbour

Once they have filled in the blanks, the facilitator will write “love my” in the beginning part of the statement to make a sentence.

In Matthew 5:43-48, Jesus calls us to love our neighbours, even the ones that are hard to love.



GROUP ACTIVITY: Scenarios

Objective

- To foster attitudes that bear wrongs patiently
- To relate scripture to life experience
- To turn to Jesus in times of challenge in order to bear wrongs patiently

Materials

- Jar or something to put paper in
- Pen
- Square cards or paper

Dynamics

- Each participant will write on a piece of paper or card a time someone has wronged them. The names of the people won't be written on the piece of paper, however, each situation will be discussed.
- When participants are done writing they will place the pieces of paper in the jar
- Someone to shake the jar so that no one will get their own wrong
- Each participants to grab a wrong from the jar and pair up with someone with their statements of wrongs
- In pairs discuss:
 - How might this person have come to commit this wrong?
 - How might someone react to this wrong negatively?
 - As humans we use our emotions as motive to do anything and some of the dangerous emotions that fuel reactions are impatience and anger.
 - How can we widen the time gap between emotion and reaction?
 - What thought process could you adapt in times of challenge when people wrong you?

Reflection/Debrief

- Whatever emotion we have fuels the reaction we choose.
- When people wrong us we often jump to conclusions with a reaction from our own life experience rather than patiently thinking before our reaction.
- If we can adapt a thought process that thinks through the situation instead of immediately reacting to our first emotion we can train ourselves mentally to become patient in times of challenge.

GROUP ACTIVITY: Endurance

Objective

- To encourage the participants to reflect a Spiritual Work of Mercy: To bear wrongs patiently.
- To demonstrate how a Corporal Work of Mercy links in with the Spiritual Work of Mercy.

Materials

- Bucket (x2 per team, 1 large, one normal), Water

Dynamics

- Get the participants to form a circle with a good amount of space between each participant.
- Fill one bucket of water up to the top, leave other bucket empty on the ground in the middle of the circle
- Give the first person the filled bucket of water
- That person has to walk with his/her arms outstretched and give the bucket to the second person.
- After 30 seconds are completed the person holding the bucket needs to put it down, take the cup from the centre bucket and empty a cup full of water into the second bucket.
- The game continues once all the water from the bucket is empty or once 15 minutes is up
- In your groups discuss:
 - What were the challenges that each team member faced?
 - Did you find it hard to hold the bucket out for the first round?
 - Would it have been easier if one strong member of the team would hold the bucket the entire time?
 - Did this activity challenge your patience/strength? Both?
 - Do you think if you practice this activity more often, you will be able to hold the bucket out longer?

Reflection/Debrief

- In a way, the water represents the wrongs that are done against us. We all know how to be patient and generous to those who do the same to us, but what about those who do not treat us the same way? When we encounter people who do wrong against us, our initial reaction is not to be patient with them and sometimes we take on the “eye for an eye” mentality.
- As water was drawn out of the bucket, it got lighter. The first round required a lot of strength and patience to get through. Your strength and patience was being tested. In the same way the more we bear wrongs patiently, the more we offer our burdens and troubles to God the lighter it gets.
- The water in the bigger bucket represents the water that you give to the thirsty (corporal work of mercy). When we endure, the capacity to give water to those who thirst increases. The more you endure (nourish yourself), the more you have to give out.

GROUP ACTIVITY: Through The Father's Eyes

Activity:

Fill a bag with 10-15 random items depending on the number of people (any items from your house or community will do). Ask the participants to come and pick an item out of the bag. Do not let them peek in the bag.

Round 1 (Practice Round):

- After everyone has selected an item, give them a few minutes to think about how they can use the item that they have picked up for another purpose, other than its intended purpose. (eg. "A bucket can also be used as a hat.")

Round 2:

- Everyone will pick up a different item from the one they picked up before. After everyone has selected an item, give them a few minutes to think about 'how God is like the object' then allow them to volunteer to tell their idea to the bigger group. (eg. One of the participants picked the sink strainer and said that God filters out the dirty stuff and makes sure you have only what you need. One participant picked out the magnifying glasses and said, "God helps us to see things we cannot see with our own eyes.")

Discussion Questions (depending on the numbers, this can be done in pairs or in a group):

- How did you find the activity? Easy? Hard? Why?
- Did you see God in the item as soon as you picked it up? Why? Why not?
- Do you think it's possible to do this activity if we don't know who God is?
- Where have you seen God this week?
- How do we get to know God?
- How does this activity relate to our theme?

Debrief:

- Just as we see God in these items, we can also see God in situations, people, etc.
- God is always present however, sometimes, we fail to see or feel the presence of God due to the worldly distractions.
- What we hold in our hearts are mirrored by our actions.
- Jesus calls us to be merciful, just as the Father is merciful. In choosing to follow Christ and make a conscious effort to look for Him in everyone, we can live out a life that is merciful.
- Matthew 25:31-46 (The Sheep and the Goats reflection)



TOOL: Examen Prayer and Journaling

To nurture patience, especially in difficult moments, sometimes we need to take a step back and gain a more positive perspective on situations. Journaling and the Daily Examen (a spiritual practice attributed to St. Ignitions of Loyola) is a great way to reflect on the day, and to cultivate gratitude and an awareness of God's presence in our lives.

At the end of the day, find a quiet spot and enter into prayer. Take your journal and use the following prompts (the two G's and two R's) to review your day, from when you woke up, to where you are now. Take your time and don't rush. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you.

G - God's presence

Where did I see God working in my day? What traits of God did I see (eg. His generosity, mercy, providence), and how? When was it hard to see Him, and can I see Him now in those situations?

G - Gratitude

What am I grateful for today? What makes me feel thankful? What are the gifts that God gave me today? Can I be thankful for the tougher situations I went through?

R - Reconciliation

When did I fail to see God drawing me to love? What am I sorry for? Who am I called to forgive?

R - Response

In light of the events of the day, how can I love more? What are actions that I can take from now on to be a better follower of Christ?

Corporal works of Mercy | Give drink to the thirsty

Focusing on environmental issues



- Encourage young people to think about how they will respond to Laudato Si: will they make a pledge to make simple every-day actions to care for our common home: turning off lights, reducing water waste, recycling, using public transport, living more simply (reducing the amount of stuff we buy and throw away).
- Beautify or clean up our land and water-ways:
 - Plant a tree,
 - Water and care for plants in the gardens of parishioners or people in your community
 - Pick up rubbish from a local park or beach in your area
 - Advocate for an environmental need in your community by writing a letter to your local MP or visiting either your local MP or Council



Check what our New Zealand Bishops have to say:

Statement on matters of the environment:

<http://www.catholic.org.nz/nzcbc/fx-view-article.cfm?ctype=BSART&loadref=83&id=62>

Key Church Teaching:

Laudato Si' – Letter from the Holy Father Francis on care for our common home:

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

Laudato Si' Animation produced by CAFOD:

<http://www.cafod.org.uk/Media/Files/Resources/Primary/resource-pages/Laudato-Si-animation>

Give drink to the thirsty | Creative Prayer Ideas

Thirst for God

Create a nice informal prayer space with cushions, soft lighting etc. Place some bibles, sheets with scripture quotes etc on the floor. Provide participants with journals (or nice paper) and pens and/or creative resources like tin foil, clay etc.

Invite participants to respond to their **thirst for God** by taking time to read and reflect on scripture and then to respond to what God is speaking into their life through that scripture either in writing or in a creative way.



As a leader think about what members of your group are thirsting for. Create a sheet like the picture above and invite each person to take what they need.



Take a few minutes to think about people you know who are thirsty ...

- Those living in poverty
- People who don't have access to clean drinking water
- Those imprisoned unjustly
- Those under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- Those terminally ill
- Refugees who have fled their homeland
- People with no hope for a better future
- (and the many others that you may have in your minds/hearts)...

In your mind construct a prayer for the people who are thirsting that you want to pray for. Say the prayer aloud and then pour water into a glass for the people you have prayed for.



Prayer Pail

Spend some time in quiet reflection about what individuals and groups of people are "thirsty" in our world (see list of ideas in the frame to the right).

Write names of these individuals and groups on to sticks and put them in the prayer pail. Use this as an ongoing prayer during a retreat or over a series of youth meetings. Each time you use them (eg before each meal) invite each participant to pick a stick or two and pray for those people.



Year of Mercy

Bear Wrongs Patiently

Labyrinths

The fourth spiritual work of mercy is one that is simple in theory, but difficult in practice: “to bear wrongs patiently.” We all know how to be charitable and patient to those who are pleasant. However, our initial reaction may not be patience when someone cuts in line in front of us!

Labyrinths are an ancient design used for prayer and meditation. Labyrinths came into use as a pilgrimage-in-place for when it was difficult to travel to holy places. Pilgrims could engage in the same kind of prayer journey without leaving their home land. The Labyrinth offers a way to journey in faith, to find stillness and rest. They can be a time when we reflect on and let go of the wrongs that we are carrying.

Instructions

Take some time to clear your mind, to relax before you walk. Weather permitting, you may wish to remove your shoes. Move at your own pace. Be open to inner promptings to pause, to slow down and to pass others. Do what feels natural. Maintain silence throughout your walk, for your benefit and for the sake of others.

You might like to contemplate a phrase, song or piece of scripture as you walk (a nice scripture for this activity is John 14:1: Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God).

As you enter the Labyrinth, you begin the first of three stages of your walk. This is a time for releasing, letting go of the wrongs you are bearing that keep you distracted or stressed. As you reach the centre, you are open to a deeper awareness. Stay in the Centre as long as you like, do what feels natural. You might like to sit or stand, meditate or sing. This is a place for clarity and insight. Receive what is there for you. As you prepare to leave the Labyrinth, take time for gratitude and for integrating this experience into your life. This part of the walk is the path of joining God, bringing back to the world a renewed vision, a refreshed spirit.

REFLECTION: Spend some time writing and reflecting on this activity experience. Use the following questions to help guide your reflection:

- What were you most aware of on the ‘outside’ as you walked?
- What were you most aware of on the ‘inside’ as you walked?
- What awareness did you have that you would like to take with you?