



# CELEBRATING THE YEAR OF MERCY

PRAYING THE CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY

## BURY THE DEAD

### Opening Prayer

Almighty ever-living God,  
you rule both the living and the dead  
and are merciful to all.  
We humbly beseech you,  
that those for whom we pour out our prayers  
may obtain pardon for their sins through your tender mercy.  
May they rejoice together, be blessed in your sight,  
and praise you without end.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God for ever and ever.

### Read Revelation 21:1-5

### Responsorial Psalm 23:1, 2-3, 4, 5, 6

**R./ The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I lack.**

In green pastures he makes me lie down;  
to still waters he leads me; he restores my soul.  
He guides me along right paths for the sake of his name.

R./

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff  
comfort me.

R./

You set a table before me in front of my enemies;  
you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

R./

Indeed, goodness and mercy will pursue me  
all the days of my life;  
I will dwell in the house of the Lord for endless days.

R./

### Intercessions

For all who have died, that they may share the lasting peace of  
Jesus, who is our resurrection and life, we pray to the Lord.

**R./ Lord, hear our prayer.**

For vision to see God's love in the world, in spite of pain and suffering,  
separation and loss, we pray to the Lord.

**R./ Lord, hear our prayer.**

That we may find comfort in our faith which tells us that death is a  
passing into new life with Christ, we pray to the Lord.

**R./ Lord, hear our prayer.**

That all of us will enjoy a happy life on this earth, a peaceful death,  
and union with the Lord in heaven, we pray to the Lord.

**R./ Lord, hear our prayer.**

Our Father...

### Closing Prayer

**Pope Francis' Prayer for the Jubilee Year of Mercy (excerpt)**

Lord Jesus Christ, you have taught us to be merciful like the Father,  
and have told us that whoever sees you sees Him.

You are the visible face of the invisible Father,  
of the God who manifests his power above all by forgiveness  
and mercy:

let the Church be your visible face in the world.

Send your Spirit and consecrate every one of us with its anointing,  
so that the Jubilee of Mercy may be a year of grace from the Lord,  
and your Church, with renewed enthusiasm,  
may bring good news to the poor,  
proclaim liberty to captives and the oppressed,  
and restore sight to the blind.

We ask this of you, Lord Jesus, with the Father and the Holy Spirit,  
one God for ever and ever. Amen.

## Reflection by Brian Corbin

Executive Vice President, Member Services, CCUSA

I remember attending the funeral of a local man, a “vagrant” to most of us townsfolk. “Frank” always loitered around the entrance of our diocesan offices, where I worked. To this day I do not know if he was Catholic. I do know that our Catholic Charities staff made sure he had a place to stay each night. He also had a local good Samaritan who helped him from time to time. My interaction with Frank consisted mostly of exchanging “good morning” and “good evening” with him each day. Then he was gone. At his funeral, only four attended: me, the priest, the parish pastoral associate, and the organist. A local mortuary company lent the hearse, provided some pallbearers, and reduced the cost of the casket.

We had always taken Frank to be a decent person who seemed a bit “lost.” Occasionally, at the end of the day as I left the office, he wanted to share with me some story about the weather or about people he had met in the streets. Sometimes I was in a hurry; I didn’t have any spare time – or so I thought. But Frank would insist on chatting, and he managed to slow me down for a few minutes. After some of these encounters, as I was driving to my next event, the story of Matthew 25 would come to mind: “when I was...” I wondered if my encounters with Frank went beyond him. Maybe someone was reminding me that “whatever you did for him, you did for Me.” Who knows? But on the day of Frank’s funeral, the pastor proclaimed powerfully this very Gospel passage, validating for me the thoughts I had.

Over the years, my memories of Frank prompted me to discover ways that our local Catholic Charities could be more intentional about our ministry to “bury the dead.” Like other charitable institutions, we received calls from public health authorities and other agencies to subsidize the burial costs of persons with limited or no financial resources. Over time the requests increased, and so did our anxiety as we searched for the means to meet them. One day I shared my concern with a wealthy donor, and I told him about Frank too. As we chatted, he reminisced about his days as an altar boy. Since he attended the local parish school that sat right next to the church, he was asked frequently to serve at funeral Masses which had small congregations. He wondered how many funerals for other men and women were like Frank’s.

The next day the donor called me back. He said that he and his wife wanted to establish a burial fund for people who could not afford the expense. He added that a large check, beyond his normal donation, would be coming my way to help establish the fund. His children followed the example of their father and made their own generous contributions. The man even got some of his friends to donate burial plots in local cemeteries so that Catholic Charities had them available when needed.

Attending funerals for family members, friends and community members can seem like an unpleasant duty. But then I remember Frank’s funeral, and I remember that burying the dead is really about honoring the encounter I had with that person and how that person led me to an encounter with Jesus too. Burying the dead is the ultimate work of mercy that we can do for our brothers and sisters as we commend them to eternal life.

## SPIRITUAL WORK OF MERCY

“Pray for the Living and the Dead” may seem like an obvious spiritual work of mercy, but does it translate into practice? Prayer for others is the foundation of the relationship we have with them. We pray for the living and the dead because we are members of the same body. We pray for wholeness in Christ. The practice must be sincere and intentional for the relationship to deepen.

## QUOTE OF MERCY

*By Christ’s rising from the grave, to them who are in the grave, hope is given of rising again through Him...*

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, III, q. 51,1



*Working to Reduce Poverty in America.*

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