



There is a deeply serious truth—and at the same time full of hope—in the traditional teaching of the Church: **we will be judged by love made into action**. Not by abstract ideas, not by vague intentions, but by what we did—or failed to do—with the concrete neighbor whom God placed in our path.

This is not a pious opinion. It is the very heart of the Gospel, expressed powerfully in the Final Judgment narrated in the Gospel of Matthew (Mt 25:31–46), where Jesus Christ identifies Himself with the hungry, the thirsty, the sick, and the imprisoned. There the definitive criterion is revealed:

“Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.”

This passage does not merely inspire: **it defines the concrete content of the Judgment.**

What are the works of mercy?

The Church’s catechetical tradition answers clearly:

The works of mercy are those actions by which we relieve the corporal and spiritual needs of our neighbor.

This is not simply about “being a good person.” It is about **making God’s mercy visible** in everyday life. The word “mercy” comes from the Latin *miseri-cor-dare*: *to give one’s heart to the miserable*, to the one in need.

And here is something essential:

- **There is no true Christian life without works of mercy.**
 - **There is no holiness without concrete charity.**
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The twofold face of mercy: body and soul

The Church, with her millennia of wisdom, distinguishes **two kinds of works of mercy**:

- Corporal (for physical needs)
- Spiritual (for the needs of the soul)

Both are inseparable. Reducing faith to material aid alone impoverishes it; ignoring physical suffering in the name of the spiritual dehumanizes it.

I. The corporal works of mercy

There are seven, and they remain profoundly relevant, even if they seem ancient:

1. Feed the hungry

In a world where real hunger still exists—and also a hunger for dignity—this work remains urgent. It is not limited to giving alms: it implies **sharing, renouncing, becoming involved**.

2. Give drink to the thirsty

Water, a symbol of life, is also a symbol of justice. Today this work even touches on social issues: access to resources, poverty, inequality.

3. Clothe the naked

It is not only about covering the body, but about **restoring dignity**. Many times “nakedness” is also social: marginalization, exclusion.

4. Shelter the homeless (or welcome the stranger)

In times of massive migration, refugees, and displacement, this work is more relevant than ever. Here the Christian faces a concrete challenge: **does he see in the foreigner a problem or a brother?**



5. Visit the sick

One of the most profoundly Christian works. We cannot always heal, but **we can always accompany**. The loneliness of the sick is often worse than the illness itself.

6. Visit the imprisoned

An uncomfortable and often forgotten work. It forces us to look beyond the crime and recognize the **irreducible dignity of every person**.

7. Bury the dead

It may seem the most distant, but it reveals an essential truth: **to honor the body even after death**, affirming hope in the resurrection.

II. The spiritual works of mercy

If the corporal works attend to the body, these go to the deepest core: the soul.

1. Counsel the doubtful

It is not merely about giving opinions, but about **helping to discern according to truth and goodness**.

2. Instruct the ignorant

A key work in times of confusion. To teach is not to impose, but to **enlighten with charity and truth**.

3. Admonish the sinner

Probably the most difficult today. We live in a culture that rejects correction. Yet **to correct with love is an act of mercy**, not of judgment.



4. Comfort the sorrowful

A word, a presence, a shared silence... Consolation is one of the purest forms of Christian love.

5. Forgive offenses

Everything is at stake here. Christianity cannot be understood without forgiveness. It is not weakness; it is **participation in God's mercy**.

6. Bear wrongs patiently

Living together reveals our miseries. This work requires humility and daily charity.

7. Pray for the living and the dead

Prayer is also a work of mercy. To intercede is to love deeply, even when we cannot act directly.

The Judgment: it will not be theoretical, but concrete

Traditional teaching is clear:

☐ **We will be held accountable for these works.**

Not in the abstract, but concretely:

- Whom did you help?
- Whom did you ignore?
- Whom did you forgive?
- Whom did you reject?

Christianity is not a beautiful idea; it is a life lived in charity.

As taught by Saint Thomas Aquinas, mercy is the greatest virtue in relation to our neighbor, because it directly reflects the love of God.



An urgent call for today

We live in a paradoxical age:

- Much sensitivity... but little action.
- Much discourse... but little sacrifice.
- Much opinion... but little real mercy.

The works of mercy are not optional. They are **the thermometer of our faith**.

It is not about doing great things, but about doing **small things with great love**, as Saint Teresa of Calcutta reminded us.

A practical guide: how to begin today

There is no need to wait for ideal conditions. You can start now:

- Call someone who is sick or elderly.
- Listen to someone who is suffering.
- Forgive an unresolved offense.
- Give something concrete to someone in need.
- Pray for someone who cannot do so.

Mercy begins in small things... but has eternal consequences.

Conclusion: Christianity is lived out in concrete love

In the end, everything comes down to this:

☐ **Have we loved as Christ loved?**

The works of mercy are not a moralistic checklist. They are the **portrait of Christ lived out**



in us.

Because on the day of Judgment, we will not be asked how much we knew...
but **how much we loved.**

And that love will have a name, a face, and concrete works.