

CHURCH

56 Ways to Be Merciful During the Jubilee Year of Mercy

Practicing mercy in our lives actually does take practice

ALETEIA

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The Pharisees saw this and said to his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” He heard this and said, “Those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do. Go and learn the meaning of the words, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ I did not come to call the righteous but sinners.”

—*Matthew 9:11–13*

God, who is merciful, desires our mercy. Here are 56 ways to keep to mercy during the Jubilee Year. Try randomly selecting one each week and putting it into practice. (We gave you some extras; mix them up!)

- 1) Resist sarcasm; it is the antithesis of mercy: “*Set, O Lord, a guard over my mouth; keep watch, O Lord, at the door of my lips!*” (*Psalm 141:3*).
- 2) Pare down possessions: share your things with the needy.
- 3) Call someone who you know is lonely, even if you understand *why* they’re lonely. *Especially* if you do.
- 4) Write a letter of forgiveness to someone. If you cannot send it, sprinkle it with holy water, ask Christ Jesus to have mercy on you both and then burn or bury it.
- 5) Learn to say this prayer: “Dear Lord, bless [annoying person’s name] and have mercy on me!”
- 6) Plan a mini pilgrimage to a local shrine; make an effort along the way to live the corporal work of mercy of “welcoming the stranger” as Christ.
- 7) Do something kind and helpful for someone who you don’t get along with, or who has wronged you.
- 8) Be mindful of your behavior online. Is that post designed to improve your image ... and leave others feeling bad? Are you hammering people in order to serve your anger and humiliate others?
- 9) Have masses said for the living: friends and family members, even strangers you read/hear about, who are having a hard time.
- 10) Be generous enough to allow someone to help you; people need to feel needed.

- 11)** If you didn't mean to be a pain in the neck to someone, admit you were and ask the person to forgive you.
- 12)** Take a tip from **Cardinal Timothy Dolan** and carry around \$5 Starbucks and McDonald's gift cards for the homeless.
- 13)** Take time in prayer to contemplate the good qualities of someone who is difficult for you. Do the same for each member of your family.
- 14)** Send a card, flowers, gift or note to someone on the six-month anniversary of his or her loved one's death. By then, most people have stopped recognizing their grief.
- 15)** Offer to babysit for a busy mom to go out and have a couple of hours to herself.
- 16)** Make a meal (or buy a gift certificate) for a mom who's just given birth or adopted a child, or for someone who's just gone through a loss.
- 17)** Hold. Your. Tongue.
- 18)** Offer to run an errand (groceries, dry cleaning pick-up, dog-walking) for a busy parent or homebound person.
- 19)** If you can't sit down beside a homeless person to talk for a while today, at least send a donation to a ministry that does do this (such as **Christ in the City**).
- 20)** If you're sharing a treat, take the smaller portion.
- 21)** Memorize the 14 corporal and spiritual works of mercy and show your children what they mean.
- 22)** Instead of losing patience with someone online (or in person), try to hear that person's fear. Ask God for what Solomon asked for: "an understanding heart."
- 23)** Offer to drive an elderly person to Mass.
- 24)** Recall a time you were not given the benefit of the doubt, and extend one to someone else.
- 25)** Put down the phone and really listen to someone else. *With* eye contact.
- 26)** Have alternative drinks, other than water, for times when those who have been struggling with alcohol come to visit.
- 27)** Take advantage of sales to buy small toothpastes, soaps, shampoos, socks and feminine products/toiletries; donate them to parish outreaches or make gift bags and have them ready to hand out where needed.
- 28)** Create a short end-of-day ritual to ask for (and extend) forgiveness with those you live with. "*Do not let the sun set on your anger*" (Eph. 4:26).
- 29)** Make a list of your "enemies." Then, every day, say a prayer for them.
- 30)** Make a point to smile, greet or make conversation with someone who is not in your everyday circle.

- 31)** Give away something of yours (that you really like) to someone you know would enjoy it.
- 32)** Pray a Divine Mercy Chaplet as you are traveling to or from work.
- 33)** When mercy for others is difficult, pray Cardinal Merry del Val's **Litany of Humility**.
- 34)** Make a gratitude journal for your spouse and jot down little things he or she does that you're grateful for. Bite your tongue and go write in it (or at least read it) the next time you want to criticize in a moment of frustration.
- 35)** Learn to make an Ignatian "**Examen**" every night. Remembering God's mercy each night helps us be merciful.
- 36)** Respond to provocation with the respect you wish a person would show you.
- 37)** Learn **the Jesus Prayer** and use it.
- 38)** Take a few minutes during the week to stop at a church and sit before the Tabernacle simply to be with Christ, the Merciful. If you cannot do that, **meditate upon the crucifix**.
- 39)** Pray a novena for the good of someone you dislike.
- 40)** Dig out your most attractive stationery and handwrite an actual letter to someone as a means of demonstrating his or her importance to you.
- 41)** Offer to read to someone who is feeling ill or is just feeling blue.
- 42)** Ask the Holy Spirit **to groan for you** when you cannot bring yourself to pray for someone who has done you an injury.
- 43)** Lead with a kind comment with friends as well as strangers.
- 44)** When conversations devolve into "**the dark joy**" of gossip, help change the subject.
- 45)** Can you play the piano, or any instrument? Can you recite poetry? Give free "concerts" to the forgotten people in nursing homes and assisted-living centers.
- 46)** Visit the graves of your ancestors, or visit a local cemetery and walk around, praying a rosary for all the souls buried there.
- 47)** Go on retreat. It's a way to be merciful to yourself and the people around you, who know you *need* to go on retreat. If you cannot do that, at least try to make a day, or evening, of recollection.
- 48)** Admit your jealousy to yourself and your confessor.
- 49)** Offer to pray with someone, even someone you encounter on the street or public transport who looks like they could use it.
- 50)** Keep holy cards, short prayers or blessed medals handy and give them out to people you meet as you are inspired as a blessing to others.
- 51)** Offer hospitality in your home to someone or a group of people you would normally never invite over.

52) With a few other people at your church, plan a party and invite all those from “the highways and byways” to come.

53) If someone you know seems to lack faith, share some of yours — tell him or her how Christ has changed your life.

54) Pay the parking or toll fee for the person behind you.

55) Give the much-maligned Pope Benedict XVI a fair reading sometime. You’ll be surprised.

56) Pray every day for the souls in purgatory. Pray for your dead.

And here is one last idea: Read John Paul II’s “[Dives in misericordia](#)” bit-by-bit throughout the year.