



Minute of Mercy

COUNSEL THE DOUBTFUL

This week we examine one of Spiritual Works of Mercy, Counsel the Doubtful. So who are the doubtful? What is it that they doubt? And what does it mean to counsel the doubtful? The doubtful can be anyone who has experienced difficulties and challenges, grave sin that is difficult to overcome, or simply feelings of being overwhelmed by life's trials. This doubt can lead to discouragement and if left unattended, despair. In his book You Did It To Me, Fr. Michael Gaitley calls this the "3d's", doubt, discouragement and despair; all forms of spiritual nakedness. Satan often uses this path as a deceiver and father of lies, first by planting seeds of doubt until one becomes discouraged. Without counsel by a devout and trustful friend or spiritual director and a solid prayer life, feelings of discouragement can continue and eventually turn into despair, feeling like there's no return to hope. In fact, according to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, despair is a sin against hope. It states, "Despair is contrary to God's goodness, to His justice-for the Lord is faithful to His promise-and to His mercy". [2091-2092]

Often it is not the existence of God that many doubt but rather His love and mercy. For those steeped in grave sin and feeling like there is no way out, they feel as though God could not possibly love them much less forgive them. We must help in our counsel to remind them what our Lord said in Mark 2:17, "Healthy people have no need of a physician, but the sick do. I did not come to call the righteous but the sinner." We also see Jesus reminding and emphasizing this when He told St. Faustina, "The greater the sinner, the greater the right he has to My mercy." [Diary 723]

If we feel the one in doubt would not be receptive to our counsel, there is a wonderful solution Fr. Michael Gaitley suggests: hand a wallet size card of the Divine Mercy to that person. As Fr. Michael states the preverbal, "a picture is worth a thousand words". We can pass this on to someone without any commentary and let the picture and The Holy Spirit to do all the work as we have done our part without burdening them more than they already feel. As St. Francis of Assisi said, "Always evangelize and sometimes you must use words". Finally, as always, let us keep the doubters of faith in our prayers and ask the Lord to grant them the grace of trust in Him. We must continue in these prayers to see our brothers and sisters through their trials and know by our love towards them that our sweet Savior, Jesus also infinitely loves them.

Mercy in Action

This week's Mercy in Action is for all of St. Peter Parish to fast and pray for our family members who have left the church. Extend a warm invitation to them to return to the Church.