

***Mercy in the City: How to Feed the Hungry, Give Drink to the Thirsty, Visit the Imprisoned, and Keep Your Day Job* by Kerry Weber**

Discussion Guide

The Corporal Works of Mercy:

Feed the hungry

Give drink to the thirsty

Clothe the naked

Harbor the harborless-shelter the homeless

Visit the sick

Ransom the captive-visit the imprisoned

Bury the dead

1. Kerry Weber used the Lenten period as the time that she would dedicate to carrying out the Corporal Works of Mercy. She did that along with giving up her usual sweets, alcohol, and caffeine. How do you think that experiment worked? Can you think of other possibilities within our Catholic belief framework that might work as well?
2. Lent is a period of self-examination. Fr. Collins, the leader of the RCIA class, suggests that Lent is a time to not only avoid evil, but also to do good. Weber also suggests we should balance the things we want to do with the things we should do and create as much overlap as possible. How did the author's goal of living the Corporal Works of Mercy accomplish this challenge?
3. In order to live the Corporal Works of Mercy, there needs to be some understanding of the word mercy. James Keenan, S.J. describes mercy as "the willingness to enter into the chaos of another." How does that description fit into finding ways to live the Corporal Works of Mercy?
4. When attending Mass halfway through the Lenten season, part of the sermon includes this sentence: Show mercy to others in the same way, with the same generosity, with the same promptness, as you want others to show mercy to you. How does that statement change the way Weber looks at her plan?
5. As the Lenten season rushes by, the author realizes she may not have time to complete everything she set out to do. She realizes that the best way to approach this is really to do what you can right where you are. "But maybe that is the mystery of Lent: it takes us through Christ's suffering with him, so that we too might begin our Father's work."
6. Weber had some interesting insights while taking part in the Stations of the Cross. During the first station, Jesus asks Peter "could you not stay awake with me one hour?" How many times do we find ourselves clock watching or becoming restless instead of living in the moment?
7. Discuss the many creative ways that Weber found to live the Corporal Works of Mercy. Do you have any ideas to add to that list of possibilities?
8. There were many observations that she made about water. One of those was the water requirements for people as compared to the water usage. Another was that she sometimes treats God as a divine faucet, expecting him to pour out grace on demand, but ignoring Him when she is not spiritually thirsty. How often are we busy trying to quench our thirst with things that are less refreshing or live giving? What are some examples of this?
9. Talking to her contact at San Quentin, Weber learned people in prison desire forgiveness, and self-forgiveness is the hardest part. He also told her that confession is profoundly healing for the prisoners. We hear much in the news about the prison population. Did these observations surprise you?

10. Visiting the sick was one of the tougher challenges. The author posed this thought: maybe the point is not to seek out the sick but to recognize when people are not well, both physically and spiritually. What are some ways that you have helped “visit the sick”?
11. Bury the dead presented another challenge. The author certainly had some creative ideas on how to approach this Work of Mercy. How did she finally resolve this? In what ways can people help in this most difficult of situations?
12. Does this book help you to creatively approach the upcoming Lenten season? It may certainly help us to think of ways to feed the hungry soul!