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The Works of Mercy

La Salle University Art Museum

Brother Daniel Burke FSC

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**THE WORKS
OF MERCY**

CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY

FEED THE HUNGRY

GIVE DRINK TO THE THIRSTY

CLOTHE THE NAKED

VISIT THE IMPRISONED

SHELTER THE HOMELESS

VISIT THE SICK

BURY THE DEAD

The Works of Mercy



THE WORKS OF MERCY

LA SALLE UNIVERSITY ART MUSEUM
FALL, 1997

Frontispiece: Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669)
The Return of the Prodigal Son 1636
Etching

The Great Commandment

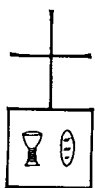
When Christ is asked what, among all the requirements of the Law, is most important for a good life, he does not hesitate: it is to love God above all else and the neighbor as oneself. But one of his questioners asks the Lord to be more specific: who is a neighbor? Jesus replies, with the story of the Good Samaritan, that the neighbor is anyone in distress—and he who helps him becomes his neighbor.

LK 10: 25-37

In a real sense, Christ is the universal neighbor, the incarnate compassion of God. His ministry on earth is a series of deeds making this Great Commandment specific, explicit, and physical. He reveals his love in miraculous cures of the sick or feeding the hungry; he explains and celebrates it in a parable like the Prodigal Son—and his prodigally loving father; he dramatizes it in his forceful picture of the Last Judgment with its reiterated dialogue:

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, and all the nations will be assembled before him. And he will separate them one from another, as a

MT 25:31-46



shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the king will say to those on his right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked, and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me." Then the righteous will answer him and say, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?" And the king will say to them in reply, "Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me." Then he will say to those on his left, "Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, a stranger and you gave me no welcome, naked and you gave me no clothing, ill and in prison,

and you did not care for me.” They will answer and say, “Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or ill or in prison, and not minister to your needs?” He will answer them, “Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.” And these will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.

The Corporal Works

From the beginning, Christians have understood that the six deeds specified here did not exhaust the possibilities of compassionate concern, but were basic examples of what could be done. They felt free (perhaps, during a time of persecution or plague) to add a seventh—to bury the dead—to what became a traditional list of “the corporal works of mercy.” Nor did they forget that neighborly charity had to be fired by love of God, by both the one who gives and the one who receives. For in the course of ordinary human give and take, as Karl Rahner remarks, “Who can give without showing himself proud in the very act of giving? Who can receive without losing his dignity in the very act of receiving, without having his resentment kindled?”

*Theological
Investigations*
VII, 270.

Changing circumstances over the centuries have also made it clear that the means and methods of charity have to be adapted, that personal attention to individuals must also at times be extended to larger groups, so that basic social rights are protected as well as individual needs met. And always there has been the challenge of the selfless love in which we meet the Lord who sustains the effort: “Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.”

The Spiritual Works of Mercy

Christ reminds his Tempter in the desert that “one does not live by bread alone.” Mind, “heart,” the soul itself have their own joys, needs, and distresses beyond their interactions with the body. In “casting out devils,” then, comforting the sorrowful, patiently teaching the unlearned and inexperienced, or admonishing the sinner, Christ addresses these needs, too. He notes with irony—and is echoed down the centuries from St. Augustine to Mother Teresa—that the rich can be among the poorest in a society spiritually, and so also among the needy.

MT 4:4

There are in the gospels, however, no

“canonical” listing of works of mercy addressing these needs. In the early Middle Ages, however, commentators on the Bible begin to “spiritualize” the corporal works, applying them to the life of mind and will. Thus, Bede the Venerable:

In truth according to a higher understanding they [the corporal works] show the perfection of charity, by which the one hungering and thirsting for justice is refreshed with the bread of the word and the drink of divine wisdom; and by which the one straying from the way of the truth is led by penitence into the hospitality of Mother Church; and by which the one who is sick in faith is tended to, and by which the one placed in the prison of difficulties, tribulations and sorrow is uplifted by the help of consolation.

Sherman Gray,
*Least of my
Brethren*, 123

By the 13th century, commentators like Bonaventure and Aquinas were offering their readers a comparable list of basic spiritual works—and their students, mnemonic formulas to help retain them.

Vestio, Poro,
Cibo, Redimo,
Tego, Colligo,
Condo

Consule,
Castiga,
Solare,
Redime, Doce,
Fer, Ora

Adaptations continue to be an interesting feature of the works. With the establishment of

hospitals, one is not simply to *visit* the sick, but to *nurse, care* for them; one doesn't simply *visit* the prisoner but tries to *free* him. In the latter instance, what was probably in mind were the many crusaders and other Christians enslaved during wars with the Moslems, but available for rescue with an adequate ransom.

While any critical need would hopefully be addressed as it arose, the tendency to further specialize and institutionalize aid is evident, beginning with the deacons appointed by the Apostles and growing apace with hospitals, orphanages, schools, prison aid societies, legal defense groups, Houses of Hospitality, refuges for abused women—in an endless and changing parade over the centuries. But a counter-tendency to conglomerate has also occurred, in our day especially. Consider in another area, for example, the case of the simple book-store. In the last few years, it is not unusual for one to become additionally a cafe, a stage for readings and lectures, a concert space, an art gallery, and, occasionally, a temporary day-care center with children's story hours.

Hypertrophy,
Complex
enlargement

Among the institutionalized works, instruction has, perhaps, experienced the most notable of such

hypertrophies. In the last forty or fifty years, American colleges and universities under religious auspices have followed a general trend to provide a wide range of new services and programs to students who do, in fact, bring additional interests, problems, and obligations. The challenge, it would seem, is how teaching and learning (and the earnest search for truth which they require) can retain their primacy in such a welter of functions, how volunteer service can be properly related to the basic functions, and how both can maintain the religious motivation that makes them works of mercy.

The Exhibition

For the present exhibition about the works of mercy, we have drawn only on material from our own collection. Some of the prints are specifically about one or the other of the works; others are more generally related to them, as in scenes simply of the needy or distressed. Series of prints or paintings about all the works of mercy were, in fact, not often produced by artists, especially of the spiritual works. We have, however, at least two sets of the corporal works, the first by the Flemish artist, Martin de Vos (c. 1531-1603), the second by the French artist Sébastien Bourdon (1616-71), whose painting of *The Flight Into Egypt* is also in the collection. The

Bourdon prints are copies he made from a series of paintings which are now at the Ringling Museum, Sarasota.

In most of the depictions, the emphasis is on the pathetic condition of the needy or the victimized rather than on the solicitude of the caregiver. This is especially true with French artists of the 19th century, still inspired by democratic ideals of the Revolution and rising socialist movements of their own period. With artists like Forain or Steinlen, the work is clearly a matter of conscience. Their compassion and outrage resulted in a steady stream of illustrations in journals and newspapers as well as in painting—and they had echoes in the early work of 20th century giants like Picasso and Van Gogh.

The present selection of prints attempts to illustrate all fourteen of the traditional works. Our hope is that some will suggest the transcendent moment of compassion, peace, and even joy which is at the heart of the true work of mercy.

Brother Daniel Burke

Readings

) Hugh F. Blunt, *The Quality of Mercy*
) (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1945).

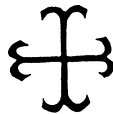
Sidney Callahan, *With All Our Heart and Mind:
The Spiritual Works of Mercy in a Psychological Age*
(New York: Crossroad, 1988).

Gordon Graham, *The Idea of Christian Charity*
(Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990).

Sherman W. Gray, *The Least of My Brethren:
Matthew 25, 31-46, A History of Interpretation*
(Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988).

Karl Rahner, SJ, "The Works of Mercy and Their
Reward" *Theological Investigations*, Vol. VII,
(New York: Herder and Herder, 1971).

Michel Riquet, SJ, *Christian Charity in Action*
(New York: Hawthorn Books, 1961).



Special Exhibition Gallery

Corporal Works of Mercy

1. Fritz Eichenberg (1901-1990), American
"You did it to me"
Christ of the Breadlines (1955)
Reproduction of original wood engraving for
The Catholic Worker
2. William Strang (1853-1921), English
Clothe the naked
Mealtime (1883)
Etching
3. William Strang (1859-1921), English
Feed the hungry
The Soup Kitchen (1889)
Etching and drypoint
4. Sébastien Bourdon (1616-1671), French
Give drink to the thirsty
Potare Silientes
From the engraved *Corporal Works of Mercy*
series

5. Edgar Chahine (1874-1947), French

Shelter the
homeless

Au Chateau Rouge

Drypoint

Purchased with funds provided by the
Art Angels.

6. Albert Besnard (1849-1934), French

Visit the sick

La Mère Malade (1889)

Etching and drypoint

Given by Western Savings Bank, Philadelphia.

7. Martin de Vos (1532-1603), Flemish

Visit those in
prison

In Carcere Eram et Venisti ad Me

Engraving

8. Käthe Kollwitz (1867-1945), German

Bury the dead

The End (1898)

Etching (restrike)

Spiritual Works of Mercy

Instruct the ignorant 9. Fritz Eichenberg (1901-1990), American

John Baptist de La Salle

Wood engraving

(DISPLAY CASE AT ENTRANCE)

Admonish the sinner 10. Antonio Gionima (1697-1732), Italian

Women Taken in Adultery

Pen and ink with touches of red chalk

Forgive all injuries 11. James Jacques Tissot (1836-1902), French

The Return

From the parable of *The Prodigal Son Series*,
1881

Counsel the doubtful 12. Leonard Baskin (b. 1922—), American

Tobias and the Angel

Wood engraving

Pray for the living and the dead 13. Irving Amen (Contemporary), American

Descent from a Southern Cross

Woodcut

14. Georges Rouault (1871-1958), French

"The just, like sandalwood, perfume the axe that strikes them" plate 46 from the *Miserere* Series,
(Paris, Editions de L'Etoile Filente, 1948)
Mixed intaglio

Bear
wrongs
patiently

Purchased: The Marjorie M. and Irwin Nat
Pincus Fund for Prints and Drawings.

15. Fritz Eichenberg (1901-1990), American

Homage to Dorothy Day, 1984
Wood engraving (Artist proof)
Purchased with funds provided by The Art
Angels

Comfort the
sorrowful

And the Victimized

16. Theophile A. Steinlen (1859-1923), French

"Les Soliloques Du Pauvre" by Jehan Rictus
from
Paris la Nuit, 1903
Lithograph
Purchased with funds provided by
Mrs. Lessing Rosenwald

17. Theophile A. Steinlen (1859-1923), French

Workers Leaving the Factory, 1903

Lithograph

Purchased with funds provided by

The Art Angels

18. Br. Richard Buccina, FSC (Contemporary),
American



Coal Mine Layoff

Woodcut

19. Edgar Chahine (1874-1947), French

Portail de Saint-Germain L'Auxerrois, Paris

Etching

20. Auguste Bruet (1872-1941), French

The Market

Etching and drypoint

SUSAN DUNLEAVY COLLECTION OF BIBLICAL
LITERATURE

CASE I
CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY

1. Jan Luyken (1649-1712), Dutch

The Last Judgment

Etching

"You did it
to me"

2. "Quickly bring the first robe and put it on him..."

Figure del Vecchio et Nuovo Testamento

(Venice: N. Bevilacqua, 1574)

Clothe the
naked

With accompanying verse by Simeoni and anony mous
woodcut illustrations

3. "The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus"

The Parables from the Gospel

(London: Ballantyne Press, 1903)

Feed the
hungry

Wood engraving illustrations by Charles Ricketts

4. "Marriage at Cana"

*The Great Exemplar of Sanctity and HolyLife...described
in the history of...Jesus Christ* by Jer: Taylor

Give drink
to the
thirsty

(London: Printed by R. Norton, 1607)

Engraving by Will Faithorne

5. "Christ Healing the Blind"
The Four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John
(Mt. Vernon, N.Y: Peter Pauper Press, 1950)

Visit the sick

Wood engraved illustrations by Hans Alexander
Mueller

CASE II
CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY

6. Arthur W. Heintzelman (1891-1965), American
Le Vigneran 1933

Give drink to
the thirsty

Etching
Purchased with funds donated by
Albert J. Crawford, Esq.

7. "Raising to Life and Healing"
The Gospels in Arabic and Latin
Rome: In Typographia Medicea, 1591

Visit the sick

Woodcut illustrations attributed to Antonio Tempesta
(1555-1630), Italian

8. "Multiplication of the Loaves"
Histoire du Vieux et du Nouveau Testament
by M. Basagne
(Amsterdam: Chez Pierre Mortier Libraire, 1706)

Feed the
hungry

Engraved illustrations by Romeyn de Hooghe
(1645-1708), Dutch

9. "The Parable of the Good Samaritan"

Rembrandt and the Bible

(Utrecht, Netherlands, Magna Books, 1990)

Visit the
sick

Reproduction of pen and brush drawing by Rembrandt

CASE III
SPIRITUAL WORKS OF MERCY

10. Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669), Dutch

The Return of the Prodigal Son 1636

Forgive all
injuries

Etching (A late, thus light and worn impression)

Purchased with funds provided by the Art Angels

11. The Risen Christ before Mary Magdalene"

The Life of Christ in Woodcuts

(Murray Hill, New York: Farrar & Rinehard, Inc.,
1930)

Comfort the
sorrowful

Woodcut illustrations by James Reid

12. *The Sermon on the Mount*

(New York: The Golden Cross Press, 1935)

Instruct the
ignorant

Designed and hand illuminated by Valenti Angelo

13. "Crucifixion"

Evangelia and Epistolen

(Strasbourg: Grueninger, 1513)

"Greater
love hath
no man"

Woodcut illustration by an anonymous artist

CASE IV
SPIRITUAL WORKS OF MERCY

14. William Strang (1859-1921), English

"The Preacher"

Admonish
the sinner

Etching

15. "Christ Purges the Temple"

The Life of Christ...

(New York: Pellegrini and Cudahy, 1951)

Admonish
the sinner

Wood engraved illustrations by Bruno Bramanti

16. "Mary Magdalene Anoints Christ's Feet"

The Gospels in Arabic and Latin

(Rome: In Typographia Medicea, 1591)

Forgive all
injuries

Woodcut illustrations attributed to
Antonio Tempesta (1555-1630), Italian

17. *Twelve Parables...*

(London: MacMillian and Co., 1870)

Instruct the
ignorant

Illustrated with chromo lithographs after sketches

by H.R. McHenry

18. Widow of Naim”

Figures de la Bible

(Amsterdam: Nicolaus Vischer (Nd.)

Tri-lingual text (Latin, German, Dutch), with
additional captions in English.

Comfort the
sorrowful

Illustrated with engravings by Matthaeus Merian
(1593-1650)

Caroline Wistar

SPIRITUAL WORKS OF MERCY

ADMONISH THE SINNER

INSTRUCT THE IGNORANT

COUNSEL THE DOUBTFUL

COMFORT THE SORROWFUL

BEAR WRONGS PATIENTLY

FORGIVE ALL INJURIES

PRAY FOR THE LIVING AND DEAD