

REPORT OF APOSTOLIC LIFE COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

The blueprint for Apostolic Life activities is the Corporal Works of Mercy, viz., Feed the Hungry, Give Drink to the Thirsty, Shelter the Homeless, Visit the Sick and the Prisoners, Bury the Dead, and give Alms to the Poor. Scripture gives us specific instructions as to how we can implement the Corporal Works of Mercy in our lives. I will cite two scriptures for our edification.

Acts (Chpt. 4: Vs.32-35) “The group of believers was of one mind and heart. No one said that any of his belongings was his own, but they all shared with one another everything they had. With great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and God poured rich blessings on them all. There was no one in the group who was in need. Those who owned fields or houses would sell them, bring the money received from the sale, and turn it over to the apostles, and the money was distributed to each one according to his needs.”

Acts (Chapt. 2: Vs. 43-47) “Many miracles and wonders were being done through the apostles, and everyone was filled with awe. All the believers continued together in close fellowship and shared their belongings with one another. They would sell their property and possessions, and distribute the money among all, according to what each one needed. Day after day they met as a group in the temple, and they had their meals together in their homes, eating with glad and humble hearts, praising God, and enjoying the good will of all the people. And every day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved.”

I am starting my presentation with those two scriptures, because I think they present the foundation for our relationship with fellow humans. The ministry of the apostles demonstrates for us how we are to interact with others as we work to carry out the responsibilities of apostolic life.

Examples of Corporal Works of Mercy

In some capacity, all of the Sodalities and Sodalists are engaged in Corporal Works of Mercy every day. As a group, the Sodality Union, with contributions from member Sodalities, feed the hungry. Each year the Sodalities collect an abundance of food that is given to the Catholic Charities’ food pantry located at St. Francis Xavier Church in Southeast Washington. You might remember that several years ago the Sodality Union collected food and toys for the food pantry in Southern Maryland; that donation was the motherload-toys and food.

I know that in addition to collecting food for the Sodality Union’s charitable projects, member Sodalities contribute food and clothing to Catholic Charities and either give or assist with giving food baskets at Thanksgiving and Christmas to individuals and families in need. My parish hosts Warm Nights (sheltering the homeless) and individually and as Sodality, we contribute food items for meals prepared for the residents and spend the night in the parish hall with the group.

To make donations to the various projects, funds are needed. Funds are obtained from dues and sometimes small profits result from items that are sold or programs that required an admission fee. My Sodality accumulates funds from dues (\$25.00 per year) and we have been very successful in raffling theme baskets. Prior to the pandemic, we raffled a basket each season, e.g., spring-Mother’s Day, summer-Father’s Day, fall-Thanksgiving and winter-Christmas. The Pastor of my parish is very generous

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in giving parish organizations items to sell and usually the organization is given all of the money raised. I know that some parishes sell religious articles – that is a lucrative fundraiser.

When I was Apostolic Life Chairperson, 2014-2016, I introduced the Little Dresses for Africa project which through your high level of participation has been very successful, especially during our Anniversary Year. That year, St. Joseph Church-Largo donated 800+ dresses. Many Sodalities participate in this project. The dresses were sent to several projects in Africa. Imagine how happy a little girl will be, who may have only one dress, to get another dress. I have stated before that the dresses are a safety factor, children who look cared for are less likely to be abused.

I have shared the pattern for the Little Dresses, but you are free to make a dress of your choice and also Little Boy Britches for which there is also a pattern. It would be great if each year the Apostolic Life Committee set a goal of 100 dresses or a combination of dresses and britches for each June. The address for the Little Dresses for Africa (clothing items are also sent to Haiti and Appalachia) is

Little Dresses for Africa, 21805 Woodruff Road, Rockwood, MI 48173 (734-637-9064) The patterns are on the website – www.littledressesforafrica.org.

Sodalities at many of the member parishes have few members; the Sodality at my parish has 12 members. I have made it a practice that when I hear of a need that that we cannot fulfill, I tell other parish organizations about the need and ask them to join with us to fulfill the request or identified need. I told one organization about the needs at a local shelter and that organization adopted the shelter. That organization is currently collecting school supplies for the children and toiletries for the mothers and other women at the shelter.

Another responsibility that falls under the Apostolic Life Committee is visiting the sick. With Covid-19 precautions, visits may not be allowed at nursing homes or rehabilitation facilities or private homes at this time. Cards with well wishes and telephone calls can be the method of cheering people during this period of restrictions. Now that many people are not going out to pick up groceries or medications, picking up items for the homebound would be a big help. The Red Cross is asking for blood donations, responding to that request can be a consideration in our concern for others.

Visiting the imprisoned, another Corporal Work of Mercy, I am sure would be subject to the restrictions imposed by nursing homes, hospitals, and private homes where individuals reside who have compromised immune systems. Some parishes have Prison Ministries that provide books and bibles, spiritual guidance, toiletries, etc., to the residents, support can be given to those activities as needed.

During my tenure as the Apostolic Committee Chair, we started *A Resource Booklet* that contained contact information for speakers, Marian sites, and general information regarding parish activities that Prefects would likely find useful. The information contained in the booklet was limited at that time. It would be good if the booklet is made more comprehensive, e.g., including activities that are held at parishes would be helpful to Sodalities that are searching for projects to introduce at their parishes, a more extensive listing of speakers, and fundraising activities.

Presentation at 2021 Orientation
September 4, 2021

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Included in the Corporal Works of Mercy is the requirement that the dead be buried. I have made it a practice to go to my Church, as often as I can, when there is a funeral to be present if help is needed. Many times, there is not an altar server or Deacon, especially if the deceased is not a well-known parishioner. It is a tremendous help to the priest if someone is present to assist him in preparing the church for the funeral and to answer questions from the funeral director or family members. Sympathy cards are sent to the family of Sodalists who have had a death in the family. Generally, we visit cemeteries and pray for deceased relatives and friends and all the deceased buried in the there..

I think it is good to lessen the burden on your family by planning your own funeral and sharing funeral planning information with members of the Sodality and others.

The Traveling Madonna was introduced by the Apostolic Life Committee to bring peace and tranquility to homes. The presence of the Madonna, I think would be especially calming during a period of bereavement.

The final Corporal Work of Mercy is to give alms to the poor. As you know, the Sodality Union, through your participation in the annual Cardinal Hickey Scholarship Raffle, contribute money to support students attending Catholic schools. As previously mentioned, financial support is given directly to or to various ministries that give financial and material support to people in need. Many Sodalities provide a financial contribution to the family of a deceased Sodalists. Most Sodalists, individually, give financial support to Catholic Charities, Cross International, the Holy Land through the Rice Bowl Project, pregnancy centers, the Archdiocese Annual Appeal,

and many other charities.

Finally, in addition to the instruction contained in Acts, I have always found it motivational to remember the words of John Wesley, a Methodist Cleric, who advanced these actions – **“Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can.”**

Margaret Johnson, Prefect

Holy Family Church-Mitchellville

Sodality Union, Past President