

The Corporal Works of Mercy: Clothe the Naked & Shelter the Homeless

Why we wear clothes...

This morning, one of the first things you probably did was get dressed. Am I right? Getting dressed is such a common part of our day that we rarely stop and consider why we wear clothes.

Grow: Think back to when Adam and Eve had to leave the Garden of Eden. God made them clothes made of fig leaves; why did He do this? God created clothes in response to our need for protection and modesty once sin entered the world. Clothes protect us from harm from the elements, such as cold temperatures, sharp bristles from brush, insects that bite, and plants that cause a rash. Clothes act as a barrier from dirt and grime, keeping our skin clean and protecting against cuts and scrapes. And finally, clothing covers the parts of our bodies that are the most delicate, meeting our desire for privacy and honoring the virtue of modesty.

When we don't have enough...

Think about your wardrobe. Do you have more than one shirt, pair of pants, and undergarments? If you have siblings, have you shared clothing with a brother or sister of a similar size? Have you ever had fun trying on different outfits to decide which looks perfect for your day ahead?

Serve: Some of us have never worried about having clothes to get dressed in the morning, but some of us have. Some families, because of a hardship or crisis, cannot provide clothes for their growing family. (Think of how many different sizes of clothes you have needed since you were a baby!) When someone needs clothes and cannot buy them at the store, there are wonderful outreach centers that provide clothes to those experiencing this hardship at no cost. These centers rely on donations from those who have extra to share. **When we donate clothes, we not only clothe another person but also affirm their God-given dignity by helping to provide privacy and protection.** Helping to clothe another is a corporal work of mercy! Where can you donate clothes in your local community?



A shelter for body and soul...

Just as we need clothing for privacy and protection, we also need shelter like a house or an apartment. Think about the beginning of the Gospel when Joseph and a very pregnant Mary were looking for shelter. What happened? They searched and searched, but no one had room for them! They needed a place of privacy and protection for Mary to safely give birth to Jesus. They could only find a stable, shabby shelter amongst the animals to welcome Jesus into the world.

Pray: Like the Holy Family, some families today do not have a home and struggle to find shelter. Think about how this may feel. Sometimes, families must stay in a community shelter until they have a home to call their own. As a young person, the most powerful way you can perform the corporal work of mercy of sheltering the homeless is through prayer. Pray every family finds the shelter they need to stay safe and a place to call home.

Our need for the protection and safety of shelter includes our spiritual life! Psalm 91 reminds us that God will shelter you with his pinions, and under his wings you may take refuge; his faithfulness is a protecting shield. In prayer, praise God for being a sacred shelter for your soul!

