

Our Lady of Fatima & The Spiritual Works of Mercy

In 1917 there was a group of children in Portugal, Francisco (9), Jacinta (7), and Lucia (10), who saw visions of our Blessed Mother Mary! She appeared before them in a beautiful, glowing white vision that took their breath away. She was lovely and gentle but spoke to the children with urgency; she had an important message that could not wait! Mary instructed the children to pray, especially the rosary, for the conversion of sinners. (Conversion means that their hearts turn back to God.) Mary warned the children about the terrible suffering of hell, and she invited them to offer their own personal suffering for the reparation of sin. We call this appearance of Mary, Our Lady of Fatima.

Why would this be such an urgent message from Our Lady?

Grow: It is easy to see that feeding the hungry and sheltering the homeless offers bodily protection and healing. However, Our Lady wants us to understand something greater and harder to see, **that our souls need protection and healing too!** Mary wants us to understand the danger of sin for our soul and the reality of hell as a place where we choose to spend eternity if we reject God's love and truth. Her invitation to prayer, especially the Rosary, gives us the strength to practice the Spiritual Works of Mercy to express our love of God and our neighbor.

What are the Spiritual Works of Mercy?

God's command to love our neighbor extends beyond the Corporal Works of Mercy, offering those in need food, clothing, and shelter. Loving our neighbor also includes Spiritual Works of Mercy. While we practice the Corporal Works with our hands and feet, we practice the Spiritual Works with our hearts.

Serve: The Spiritual Works of Mercy are best understood through prayer. They include encouraging those who are feeling doubtful of God's love, joyfully sharing the truth of God's goodness, helping a friend understand the danger of sin, comforting the sorrowful, forgiving those who hurt you, having patience with your neighbor, and praying for one another, both living and dead.

Why does Mary care about your soul?

This is an easy question to answer--because Mary perfectly loves what God loves and wants what God wants! Mary knows that apart from Jesus, there is no salvation; therefore her prayer is that we turn from sin and rest in the arms of her Son. She will never lead us astray.

The Decade Prayer

Pray: After each decade of the rosary, you may be familiar with the prayer, *"O My Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell, and lead all souls to Heaven, especially those in most of Your mercy."* Our Lady gave this prayer to Francisco, Jacinta, and Lucia. This powerful prayer is received by God with a blessing of grace that sustains each Spiritual Work of Mercy when said faithfully.

Sr. Lucia's Warning

Lucia grew up to become a Carmelite nun and committed her life to prayer. Before her death at age 97, **Sr. Lucia told the faithful how important it was to pray for families and honor the Sacrament of Marriage.** She warned that Satan would tempt us to turn away from God's plan for love and life. Let us pray in a special way, through Mary's intercession, for good and holy marriages and faith-filled homes!

