

FROM THE PASTOR

My dear brothers and sisters,

The next **Spiritual Works of Mercy** at which we will look is the work of **consoling the sorrowful**. We don't need to look far to find the sorrowful – we are surrounded by much sorrow and sadness: sadness from death, from sickness, from loss, from misunderstanding, from broken relationships, from insecurity, from unemployment, from family problems, and the list goes on and on. There are so many sorrows that oppress us, and we are seeking consolation that comes from love.

Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta (soon to be canonized, and so called “Saint Teresa of Calcutta”!), who was an incredible witness of mercy to the world, recognized that a great cause of sadness and sorrow is experiencing a lack of love. She said:

There is a terrible hunger for love. We all experience that in our lives – the pain, the loneliness. We must have the courage to recognize it. The poor you may have right in your own family. Find them. Love them.

Notice how she points to the deep pain caused by the hunger for love. I would say we *all* know the sorrow caused by this pain. Notice, also, how Mother Teresa equates this sorrow – this hunger for love – with poverty. This poverty is so pervasive in modern, western society, and it takes deliberate acts of love to eliminate this poverty. This poverty cannot be alleviated by programs, but only by the love that reaches from one heart to another. This love can give dignity to those whose sorrow has marginalized them. I hope each of us has experienced the consolation that comes from a heart that truly loves us. We are also called to be that person, to reach out to another.

The word **mercy** comes from the Latin “*miser cordia*” which means a heart that is willing to share in or recognize someone else's misery. Sometimes people come to me and ask me to help them “say the right words” to help someone else. The truth is that there are no universal “right words.” **Love and mercy** are the *language of consolation*. Many times that consolation has come *without a word being said*. Sitting with people who have lost a spouse and letting them speak their pain can be a healing moment. I have heard too many times, “Father, I can't speak about this with my children, they don't want to hear it anymore. As soon as I start to speak about my pain, they change the subject.” A listening heart can mean so much, and bring deep consolation.

Consoling the sorrowful doesn't take a degree or special training... just love. A gentle smile, a listening ear, a hug; any of these can bring consolation to those in need. This week, let's take the opportunity to reach out in love to someone who is sorrowful. May our gentle, loving presence be Christ's light in their darkness.