

Pastor Notes

In the Monastic Breviary in the prayer for Midday, the following passage from Sacred Scripture is read from Tuesday through Saturday: *“Help bear one another’s burdens, and in that way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”* In the monastic community, this office is prayed when we take a break in the middle of the day, just before we eat lunch. The passage from Paul’s letter to the Galatians is meant to remind us to be responsible for the other brothers in the community; to give them the help they need whenever the situation arises. Prayer in the monastic community is always meant to spur us on to good works. St. Frances of Rome, the patroness of Benedictine Oblates, brought this idea home when she often said, *“One must leave God at the altar sometimes to find Him in the domestic chores.”*

How important is it to cultivate the presence of God in our daily lives. While this is often done in a contemplative manner, there is a practical, active side to this as well. We fulfill this dimension by ‘making room’ for our brothers and sisters, as St. Paul writes to us. In other words, performing works of charity for others, especially when we expect nothing in return.

There are the Corporal Works of Mercy, where we perform tangible works of charity such as bringing meals to those who are ill or picking up their medicine, it may also mean shoveling their walk from the snow and ice.

But there are the Spiritual Works of Mercy where we reach the need of our brothers and sisters that are intangible. One example may be to lend an ear to someone who needs our love and attention. By ‘counseling the doubtful’ and ‘comforting the afflicted’ we go a long way toward lifting someone out of the pit of depression or the mire of confusion. We may not have answers, and that’s OK. What’s important is that we took the time to hear them. Often when we listen we are given insights that will help them see a way to work out their problems. When we stay with them and listen, we are then in a better position to help them. This week, try to perform one of these Works of mercy. Help bear one another’s burdens, and you will fulfill the Law of Christ—Love God and each other.