



ONE

IT IS AN ACT OF LOVE TO:

Instruct the Ignorant and Counsel the Doubtful

Gather

OPENING PRAYER

*D*ear God, Help us to look to the Holy Spirit to guide us as we strive to love as Jesus loved. Help us to acknowledge our own needs for knowledge, guidance, and encouragement as we work to share your message of service and hope with each other. When we see others searching, uncertain, and doubtful bless us with the humility, patience, and compassion we need to help them. Amen.

Scripture Reflection

Later he appeared to the eleven themselves as they were sitting at the table; and he upbraided them for their lack of faith and stubbornness, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen.* And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation. The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; but the one who does not

believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: by using my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes in their hands, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover.”

So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and proclaimed the good news everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that accompanied it.

--Mark 16:14-20

I myself feel confident about you, my brothers and sisters, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able to instruct one another.

--Romans 15:14

- Share a moment when you witnessed the good news being proclaimed with confidence.
- When have you proclaimed the good news with confidence?

SOCIAL INQUIRY

The Spiritual Works of Mercy are acts of compassion by which we respond to the spiritual needs of our families and our neighbors. By instructing the ignorant and counseling the doubtful we reach out to touch others' minds and hearts. As Christians, we are to proclaim the good news,

offering one another the peace and freedom we have been given by advising out of sincere concern, as Jesus did.

It may seem that such work is best left to someone else, such as a trained catechist, a priest, or a professional counselor. However, we are all called to instruct the ignorant and counsel the doubtful in Jesus' name (Romans 15:14). If we leave this entirely to others, the needs of many people will not be met. We all experience ignorance of some sort. Yet, our Christian faith challenges us to come out of the shadows of ignorance, to seek the truth, and to share that truth with others.

Christians are to be a light to the world, sharing our knowledge and our understanding of right and wrong, or morality, especially with those who have not been given access to the truth. We live in an age marked by secularism and moral relativism. News stories abound about sexual scandals, corporate corruption, greed, political abuses, family disintegration, and social apathy. In such a world, Christians are called to instruct and lead first and foremost by example. As St. Francis of Assisi is noted for saying: "Preach the Gospel at all times and when necessary use words." Followers of Jesus have a duty to denounce and reject injustice, sin, and social evil as we proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ in word and action.

This duty can be carried out only by learning and sharing the core tenets, practices, and devotions of our faith. For many of us, when we were baptized our parents received a candle lit from the paschal candle blessed during the Easter vigil. This candle

represents the light of faith that must be passed on in the domestic church, the family. Pope John Paul II in his encyclical, “Familiaris Consortio,”(On the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World), highlights the fundamental role of parents as mentors and nurturers of faith:

“Christian marriage and the Christian family build up the Church: for in the family the human person is not only brought into being and progressively introduced by means of education into the human community, but by means of the rebirth of baptism and education in the faith the child is also introduced into God's family, which is the Church.”

As Christians, we have a responsibility to grow in the knowledge of our faith’s teaching, and to share this knowledge in our homes, our churches, and our communities.

Observe

1. How did you learn about your faith as a child?
How are you learning as an adult?
2. How have you been the recipient of the counsel of another? How have you counseled someone else?
3. List the personal qualities, preparation, and resources needed to instruct and counsel others.
4. In what ways does CFM respond to the call to instruct the ignorant and counsel the doubtful?

Judge

1. What are Christian parents obligated to teach

their children? To what degree can this obligation be passed on to other people and organizations?

2. How can and do Christians change the world by instructing and counseling others?
3. When offering advice to another how do you know when counsel from a priest or professional should be sought?
4. How could your church community or CFM group better support families in educating children about their faith?

Act

1. Share your faith with your children and grandchildren, passing along prayers and religious traditions from your childhood.
2. As a group, sponsor an opportunity for others to learn more about Scripture, church doctrine, or Christian tradition. Or, as individuals or couples volunteer to teach religious education classes, participate in RCIA, or help with marriage preparation.
3. Fill in any self-perceived gaps in knowledge or capability that keep you from reaching out to others. For example, participate in a Bible study, work on your active listening skills, and set aside time for prayer.
4. Invite other families to join CFM.

CLOSING PRAYER

God, in a world beset with ignorance, questioning, and confusion. Our Christian tradition offers ways for us to be confident disciples, loving as Jesus loved in our everyday lives. Thank you for the opportunities we have to be mercy-workers in your service, sharing the hopeful message of your everlasting, all-encompassing love with each other. Amen.

