

Agents of Mercy Retreat--Elementary

By SPIRITUS Ministries

Retreat Goal: Students will consider the Works of Mercy and the Divine Mercy message in order to become Agents of Mercy who know that God is merciful, extend mercy to others and bring God's message of love to all they know.

I. Session 1: Who is Your Hero? (60 min.)

Objective: Students will be able to identify that there are real heroes in their lives using their power to help others.

- A. Superheroes in movies are imaginary heroes who choose to use their power to help those in need because they have good hearts.
- B. If we look, we will see many people around us who have the same characteristics of superheroes.

II. Session 2: The Superpower of Mercy (60 min.)

Objective: Students will be able to define mercy and identify several moments where Jesus shows mercy to others.

- A. Mercy is love's response to suffering.
- B. In Scripture, Jesus acts mercifully to those who are suffering.

III. Session 3: Living the Superpower of Mercy (60 min.)

Objective: Students will be able to list several works of mercy and describe ways they can practice them.

- A. Jesus calls us to use the superpower of mercy.
- B. Jesus gives us concrete ways to be merciful which we can practice in our own lives.

IV. Session 4: Becoming Agents of Mercy (60 min.)

Objective: Students will become Agents of Mercy who can explain the Divine Mercy message to others.

- A. St. Faustina received the Divine Mercy image in a vision.
- B. As Agents of Mercy, we ask for God's mercy, are merciful to others and completely trust in Jesus.
- C. We are sent to live the Works of Mercy and spread the message of Divine Mercy to all we encounter.

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Set-Up

I. Large Group

- A. Space large enough for entire group to meet together.
- B. Access to laptop and projector for video clips.
- C. Whiteboard and dry erase markers.
- D. Scoreboard listing each small group for tallying points. (We use an additional whiteboard or blank chart paper.)
- E. A writing surface and crayons for each student if choosing to offer crayons during Session 3.
- F. Prayer table with the following:
 1. Red & blue cloth to drape the table (optional)
 2. Image of Divine Mercy
 3. Candle
 4. Bible

II. Small Group

- A. Meeting space for each small group of six to eight members.
- B. One Bible for each group.

III. Leadership

- A. One adult/teen leader per small group of six to eight members.
- B. Four presenters for each of the four sessions. Presenters may double as small group leaders.

Supply List

Session 1: Who is Your Hero?

- Projector and laptop cued to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u8tzswROt70>.
- Whiteboard with dry erase markers.
- Same, Same Out of the Game Instruction Sheet

Session 2: The Superpower of Mercy

- Whiteboard with dry erase markers.
- Bible for each small group with story of mercy marked.
- 3 judges for mercy skits.
- Scoreboard.

Session 3: Living the Superpower of Mercy

- Projector and laptop cued to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zMNEWPXfcq0>
- Corporal Works of Mercy Coloring Page for each student. (Included in separate attachment.)
- Spiritual Works of Mercy Coloring Page for each student. (Included in separate attachment.)
- Works of Mercy Slideshow (included in separate attachment).
- 1 whiteboard & dry erase marker for each small group.
- Scoreboard.

Session 4: Becoming Agents of Mercy

- Projector and laptop.
- Divine Mercy Slideshow (included in separate attachment).
- Two Agents of Mercy Cards for each students. (Included in separate attachment.)
- Leaders prepared to act out scenarios.

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Session 1: Who Is Your Hero? (60 min.)

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Objective: Students will be able to identify that there are real heroes in their lives using their power to help others.

I. (5 min) Prayer & Introduction:

- A. Prayer: Lord, we thank you for this day and all the blessings we have. We thank you for our time on retreat and the opportunity for us to grow in our friendship with you. We ask that you be with us during this time. Open our hearts to your deep love for us so that we may share it with others. Teach us Lord, to be Agents of Mercy. Amen.
- B. God's Superpower
 - 1. Ask: Which superheroes do you like and why? (Allow for 4-5 responses).
 - 2. Say: Wouldn't it be amazing to be a superhero? I bet you didn't know that God makes all of us superhero with our very own superpower. Today, we are going to explore our superpower and learn how to use it!

II. (10 min) Icebreaker: Same, Same, Out of the Game (see activity sheet)

III. (10 min) Teaching

- A. Say: Let's think about superheros for a moment. While they certainly have special powers they also have good hearts. They act heroically. They do the right thing even when it is difficult.
- B. Ask: What are some of the characteristics of superheroes that show they have a good heart?
- C. List these characteristics on a whiteboard under the title "Superheroes are:". Ex: kind, brave, selfless, determined, strong, confident, caring, etc.
- D. Say: Superheroes like we see in recent movies are brave, kind, selfless (pull from list above), but they have one problem. Do you know what that is? They are not real!!! However, there are heroes all around us who have these same characteristics.
- E. Erase "Super" from the title on the whiteboard. If we pay attention, we will see them.
- F. Say: Let's take a look at some real heroes. I am going to show you a video clip. In this clip, I want you to notice who is being a hero and how
- G. Show Lifevest "Kindness Boomerang" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u8tzswROt70>
 - 1. Ask: Who was a hero in the video we just saw? Why?
 - 2. Say: The images show regular people who took risks and went out of their way to help others. They each chose to be heroes.
 - 3. Ask: How is being heroic contagious?
- H. Say: We see heroes every day, but maybe we don't always notice.

II. (5 min) Witness--Share an event from your own life which illustrates the goal of this session.

- A. **IDENTIFY WITH:** Students who may or may not notice the heroes in their lives.
- B. **SHARE:** a specific time when you noticed a hero in action. Who was the hero? What was he/she doing that was heroic? How did you know he/she was a hero? Your example should be from your own life and not from a Bible story or saint story.
- C. **ENCOURAGE:** students to pay attention and notice the heroes in their lives.

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III. (20 min) Small Group

- A. Take time for introductions if the group members are new to you or each other.
- B. What did you like about this session so far?
- C. Why do you think people like superheroes?
- D. Have you noticed a hero in your life? Who is it and why is he/she a hero?

IV. (9 min) Essential Message

- A. Say: There are heroes all around us, but we have to pay attention and notice them.
- B. Ask: Did you know that our Church celebrates these heroes?
- C. Say: Each day of the year is dedicated to a saint. The saints serve as an great example of heroism! Choose a saint that lived heroically in a simple way (St. Nicholas secretly distributing coins, St. Therese of Lisieux showing kindness to her sisters even when they were mean, Elizabeth of Hungary who offered bread to the poor, etc.) Emphasize that they were just living their lives noticing opportunities to help others. They did not know at the time they would become saints.
- D. Say: Like the heroes we saw in the video clip, like the heroes you shared about in your small group, and like the saints, we are called to be heroes too! We are going to learn more about how to be a hero ourselves on the rest of this retreat.

V. (1 min) Spontaneous Prayer

- A. Example: "God, thank you for helping us see the heroes in our lives. Guide us as we learn more about how we can be heroes on this retreat.

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Session 2: The Superpower of Mercy (60 min.)

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Objective: Students will be able to define mercy and make connections between their own experience of mercy and the action of Jesus.

I. (2 min) Introduction

- A. Say: In the first session we talked about how there are heroes in action all around us.
- B. Say: Many of these heroes are calling on a specific superpower given to them by God.
- C. Ask: What are some of God's superpowers? (healing, forgiving, loving, etc.) God is all powerful and all loving and one of his superpowers is mercy.

II. (5 min) Teaching: God Wants Mercy

- A. Ask: "When I say "mercy" what do you think of?" Write answers on a whiteboard.
- B. Mercy is: 1) not getting what you deserve, 2) helping someone who is hurt or in pain, 3) giving something good to someone who doesn't deserve it, 4) forgiving someone.
- C. **Definition: Mercy is love's response to suffering.**

III. (45 min) Mercy Challenge

- A. Ask: How do we know that our moments of mercy, are God's superpower in action? (Jesus tells us in the Bible).
- B. Say: Jesus offers many examples of mercy in Scripture. We are going to do an activity that will teach us more about them.
- C. 10 min: Each small group is assigned a mercy story from Scripture.
 - 1. Select a leader to read through story dramatically.
 - 2. Together decide how mercy is shown in the story.
 - 3. Create a skit to reenact the story.
 - 4. Select a spokesperson.
- D. Gather all teams back into a large group and start the challenge.
 - 1. Each team will reenact their story.
 - 2. Together, they will read their story to the large group and explain how God's mercy is seen in it.
 - 3. Judges (adult leaders) will determine which team did the best job explaining the mercy of God through their parable and may give up to 10 points to each team.
- E. Process
 - 1. Say: In these different Bible stories, we saw how Jesus lived out his superpower of mercy.
 - 2. Say: Not only does Jesus offer his superpower of mercy in scripture, but he also offers it to us. He does this through the mercy we receive from others.

IV. (5 min) Witness:

- A. **IDENTIFY WITH:** with students who have not thought about how much mercy they have received and/or do not see how God is active in these moments of mercy.

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- B. **SHARE:** a time when you experienced mercy. What happened? Who showed you mercy? Why were you in need of mercy? How does this experience help you see God's superpower of mercy in action?
- C. **ENCOURAGE:** students to connect their own experiences of mercy with God's mercy.

V. (2 min) Essential Message

- A. Say: Mercy is God's superpower. We learn about mercy from Jesus in the Bible.
- B. Say: We experience God's superpower of mercy when others are merciful toward us.
- C. Say: God does not only want us to experience mercy, but to be *Agents of Mercy*. We will hear more about how to be *Agents of Mercy* in the next session.

VI. (1 min) End with Spontaneous Prayer

Mercy Challenge Stories

These parables were told by Jesus to explain God's mercy toward us. They speak of God's mercy to sinners and imply that it was active in Jesus' ministry.

1. **Luke 7: 36-50** – The Two Debtors and their Creditor
2. **Luke 10: 25-37** – The Good Samaritan
3. **Luke 15: 3-7** - The Parable of the Lost Sheep
4. **Luke 15: 8-10** - The Lost Coin
5. **Luke 15: 11-32** - The Prodigal Son
6. **Luke 16: 19-31** – The Rich Man and Lazarus

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Session 3: Living the Superpower of Mercy (60 min.)

Objective: Students will be able to list several works of mercy and describe ways they can practice them.

I. (2 min) Introduction

- A. Ask: What did you discover in the first session? (There are heroes all around us.)
- B. Ask: What is God's superpower? (Mercy) How does Jesus practice mercy? (Forgives, heals, etc.)
- C. Say: Jesus is not the only one who uses the superpower of mercy. We can use this superpower too. In fact, we are suppose to use it. That is what this session is all about. Let's take a look at a video which shows this superpower in action.

II. (10 min) Video Clip: *Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy* by The Hispanic Ministry Resource Center of the Claretians (HMRC) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zMNEWPXfcq0>

- A. Show the clip.
- B. Say: The video helped point out some of the Works of Mercy.
- C. Ask: What ones did you notice? Which works of mercy did you find hard to understand?
- D. Ask: Do you know where the Works of Mercy come from? (Matthew 25: 13-45)
- E. Summarize the passage in your own words or read a portion.
- F. Help students see ways they can live these works in their own lives ***by witnessing how you lived out two or three in your life.***

Corporal Works of Mercy

Feed The Hungry
Give Drink to the Thirsty
Clothe The Naked
Shelter The Homeless
Visit The Sick
Visit the Imprisoned
Bury The Dead

Spiritual Works of Mercy

Counsel The Doubtful
Instruct The Ignorant
Admonish Sinners
Comfort The Afflicted
Forgive Willingly
Bear Wrongs Patiently
Pray For The Living & The Dead

III. (45 min) Mercy Alive Challenge: Each small group will work together to decide how they can best live out each Work of Mercy.

- A. **Supplies:** Works of Mercy Coloring Pages (one per person), small whiteboards (1 per group), dry-erase markers (1 per group), works of mercy slideshow (separate attachment)
- B. **Instructions**
 - 1. Divide into small groups but remain in the room.
 - 2. For each round, use the Mercy slideshow to briefly explain a work of mercy. Select the works that students found difficult to understand in Point II.B.
 - 3. Teams have 1 minute to discuss and write on their whiteboard how they will live out that Work of Mercy.
 - 4. When the time is up, teams take turns sharing their ideas with the large group and receive a score for their idea.
 - 5. The white board should be passed to a different person each round.

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- C. **Scoring:** Teams accumulate points based on their answer.
 - 1. Use whiteboard or large paper pad to keep a visual tally of team points.
 - 2. 1 point is given when each of these criteria are met:
 - a) Understanding of the Work of Mercy.
 - b) Practicality of being able to accomplish it.

IV. (2 min) Essential Message

- A. Say: Jesus gives us concrete ways to live out God's superpower of mercy called the Works of Mercy.
- B. Say: When we extend mercy to others, God works through us to make the lives of others better, and we become heroes like the people we heard about in our first session today.
- C. Say: Practicing works of mercy spreads God's love to others and helps us to grow in our friendship with him.

V. (1 min) Spontaneous Prayer

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Session 4: Becoming Agents of Mercy (60 min.)

Objective: Students will be able to be Agents of Mercy who can explain the Divine Mercy message to another.

I. (2 min) Introduction

- A. Say: In our first session, we saw that there are heroes all around us.
- B. Say: Then we learned that God has a superpower called _____. (Let students supply the answer--mercy).
- C. Say: In this last session we discovered that we also have the superpower of mercy and live it out by practicing the Works of Mercy.
- D. Say: In our final session today, we are going to become Agents of Mercy!

II. (8 min) Teaching: The Divine Mercy Message

- A. Share the story of St. Faustina and the Divine Mercy message using the information included at the end of this session and the Divine Mercy Slideshow.
- B. At the image of the ocean:
 - 1. Ask: What happens when you throw a rock into the ocean?
 - 2. Say: Imagine God's mercy is like an ocean and your sins are the rock. If you throw the rock (meaning your sins) into the ocean, the ocean swallows it up, and you will not find it again. God's mercy swallows up our sins in the same way.
- C. Say: Understanding the message of Divine Mercy is as simple as A-B-C:
 - 1. Ask for Mercy
 - 2. Be merciful to others
 - 3. Completely trust in Jesus
- D. Say: God's mercy is for everyone - we share it through actions (Works of Mercy) and words.

III. (7 min) Introduce the Divine Mercy Card and quickly explain each section.

IV. (6 min) Demonstrate how to share Divine Mercy Message: 2 or 3 leaders show how a student their age can be an Agent of Mercy by acting out one or more of the following scenarios using the ABC's.

- A. At recess, a girl is upset because her friends aren't talking to her, and she doesn't know why.
- B. You know your grandmother is sad because your grandfather had to go into a nursing home.
- C. Your friend's parents are getting a divorce.

V. (20 min) Agents of Mercy Small Groups

- A. Hand out two Divine Mercy cards to each student and answer any questions they have.
- B. Say: When we act as Agents of Mercy we use our superpower to spread God's love. It is so important that we share this message of mercy with others.
- C. Discuss the following:
 - 1. What do you remember hearing about the message of Divine Mercy?
 - 2. Who in your life needs to hear the message of Divine Mercy? (We all do, but let them surface some answers.)
 - 3. Think of one person you will talk to about Divine Mercy.
 - a) Who will you give your card to?
 - b) When will you see them next?
 - c) Where will you give them the card and share the message?
 - 4. Have them practice by sharing the message with each other.

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VI. (2 min) Essential Message

- A. Jesus appeared to Saint Faustina to relate His message of Mercy to the world.
- B. We become Agents of Mercy when we live and share the Divine Mercy message by asking for God's mercy, being merciful to others and completely trusting in Jesus.
- C. Jesus wants everyone to believe and trust in God's love and mercy, so share the message!

VII. (15 min) Closing--The Divine Mercy Chaplet

- A. Jesus gave St. Faustina a special prayer in which we ask for God's mercy.
- B. Explain words of chaplet using information sheet at the end of this handout.
- C. Pray the chaplet.

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Divine Mercy Message

The message of The Divine Mercy is simple. It is that God loves us – all of us. And, he wants us to recognize that His mercy is greater than our sins, so that we will call upon Him with trust, receive His mercy, and let it flow through us to others. Thus, all will come to share His joy.

This message and devotion to Jesus as The Divine Mercy is based on the writings of Saint Faustina Kowalska, an uneducated Polish nun who, in obedience to her spiritual director, wrote a diary of about 600 pages recording the revelations she received about God's mercy. Even before her death in 1938, the devotion to The Divine Mercy had begun to spread.

The Divine Mercy message is one we can call to mind simply by remembering ABC:

A - Ask for His Mercy. God wants us to approach Him in prayer constantly, repenting of our sins and asking Him to pour His mercy out upon us and upon the whole world.

B - Be merciful. God wants us to receive His mercy and let it flow through us to others. He wants us to extend love and forgiveness to others just as He does to us.

C - Completely trust in Jesus. God wants us to know that the graces of His mercy are dependent upon our trust. The more we trust in Jesus, the more we will receive.

From the diary of a young Polish nun, a special devotion began spreading throughout the world in the 1930s. The message is nothing new, but is a reminder of what the Church has always taught through scripture and tradition: that God is merciful and forgiving and that we, too, must show mercy and forgiveness. But in the Divine Mercy devotion, the message takes on a powerful new focus, calling people to a deeper understanding that God's love is unlimited and available to everyone — especially the greatest sinners.

We also have to show mercy to our neighbors. Putting mercy into action is not an option of the Divine Mercy Devotion; it's a requirement! Our Lord strongly speaks about this to Saint Faustina: **I demand from you deeds of mercy which are to arise out of love for me. You are to show mercy to your neighbors always and everywhere. You must not shrink from this or try to excuse yourself from it (Diary, 742).**

We "radiate" God's mercy to others by our actions, our words, and our prayers. "In these three degrees," Jesus tells Sister Faustina, "is contained the fullness of mercy" (Diary 742).

Divine Mercy Message taken from <http://www.thedivinemercy.org>. Diary, Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska, Divine Mercy in My Soul (c) 1987 Congregation of Marians of the Immaculate Conception, Stockbridge, MA 01263. All rights reserved.

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The Divine Mercy Chaplet

Opening Prayer - recognizes that at the moment of Jesus' death, the whole world was gifted with the possibility of new life and mercy through Him. Jesus is the "Fount of Life" and gives us mercy from God. This mercy is so great that we cannot even understand it (unfathomable). We ask that Jesus would wrap the whole world in himself and his mercy.

"O Blood and Water which gushed forth from the heart of Jesus" (refer to image and the rays)

"as a fountain of mercy for us" (a fountain is a never-ending source - mercy is always flowing)

"I trust in You" (Jesus asks us to always trust in him) It's the 'C' of our A-B-C *completely trust*

"Eternal Father, I offer you the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity" (we are offering Jesus' body and blood in union with the same offering at every Mass, "Soul and Divinity" refer to Jesus being both God and man)

"in atonement for our sins and those of the whole world." (in reparation/repayment of our sins)

There is nothing we can offer God to make up for our sins except to offer Jesus. When we say the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, we are saying that we trust in Jesus and offer him and his suffering to the Father.

"For the sake of His sorrowful Passion" (because Jesus suffered and died for us)

"Have mercy on us and on the whole world" (we ask God to see Jesus' suffering as a payment for all our sins, we are begging for mercy not only for us but for everyone - especially for the greatest sinners)

"Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One" (We address the Trinity 3 times with titles of respect)

"Jesus, I trust in you." (said 3 times to remind us to place our total trust in Jesus)

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Resources

Blog: Look to Him and Be Radiant

<http://looktohimandberadiant.blogspot.com/2015/07/corporal-works-of-mercy-teaching-tools.html>