

Agents of Mercy Retreat--Middle School

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: God's Superpower of Mercy (60 min)

Objective: Students will recognize God's super power of mercy and how it can change the lives of others.

- A. Superheroes in movies are on a mission to help people, but they have to choose to make a difference even when they are challenged.
- B. All are given the superpower of mercy and may choose to use it to help those in need.
- C. Those who step out and share mercy with others, can become Agents of Mercy.

II. Session 2: Touched by Mercy (60 min)

Objective: To give students an opportunity to be touched by God's mercy and/or reflect on an experience of mercy.

- A. Mercy is both love's response to suffering and receiving forgiveness instead of what you deserve.
- B. We encounter God's mercy through the Scripture.
- C. We encounter God's mercy through prayer and the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

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 know how to be Agents of Mercy by spreading the message of God's love and mercy through the Divine Mercy message.

- 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. A writing surface for each student.
 - D. Prayer table with the following:
 1. Red & blue cloth to drape the table (optional)
 2. Image of Divine Mercy
 3. Candle
 4. Bible
 5. Crucifix
 - E. A space for adoration (if desired), reconciliation (if desired) and 1:1 prayer.
- II. Small Group**
 - A. Meeting space for each small group of six to eight members.
- 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.
 - C. If offering the Sacrament of Reconciliation, priests to hear the individual confessions of each student within the 40 minute time frame. We recommend 1 priest per 10 penitents.
 - D. If offering Adoration, a presider.

Supply List

Session 1: God's Superpower of Mercy

- Projector and laptop cued to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u8tzswROt70> and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4_n6dClfkFg
- Same, Same Out of the Game Instruction Sheet

Session 2: Touched by Mercy

- Bible with Luke 19:1-10 marked
- Copy of Mercy Guided Meditation Middle School
- Instructions for Reconciliation (not provided by SPIRITUS)
- Check with presider on what will be needed for Adoration

Session 3: Living the Superpower of Mercy

- Projector and laptop cued to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zMNEWPXfcg0>
- 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 student. (Included in separate attachment.)
- Leaders prepared to act out scenarios.

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Session 1: God's Superpower of Mercy (60 min.)

Agents of Mercy Retreat

Objective: Students will recognize God's super power of mercy and how it can change the lives of others.

I. (3 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 relationship with you. We ask that you be with us during our day together. 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. Say: We have an important reason for being here today. We are actually here to recruit you for a very important mission. We want you to
 - 1. Understand the superpower of mercy
 - 2. Be touched by God's mercy
 - 3. Learn to share it with others as an agent of mercy.
 - 4. By the end of the day, you'll be ready to start the mission.

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

III. (10 min) Large Group Discussion

- A. Ask: What do Superheroes do? (Save the world, help people, do good, etc.)
- B. Ask: Have you ever been on a mission to help others? (ex. gone on a mission trip, collected for a food drive, etc.)
- C. Say: Superheros are on a common mission to help people. Their task is to defend, care for and protect the people from evil. They have great powers to help them do it.
- D. Say: Even with these powers, our heroes still had to **choose** to continue their mission even in the midst of difficulty. **We face the same choice: Do we step out and pursue helping others or not?**
- E. Say: In our daily life we have opportunities to show love and be heroes for others. Ordinary people like us do brave and heroic things everyday.
- F. Media Clip
 - 1. Say: We are going to look at a video. In this video I want you to notice the actions people take to help others.
 - 2. Show video (5:40) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u8tzswROt70>
 - 3. Say: The video we just saw showed regular people who took risks and went out of their way to help others in need.
 - 4. Ask the following:
 - a) What actions did you notice in the video?
 - b) What sparked the kindness/love?
 - c) How is being heroic and loving contagious?
 - 5. Say: Each person was extending **mercy** to those they helped.
- G. Say: Mercy is love that is shared to help others in need. God gives us His superpower of Mercy to see and help those who are in need around us.

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- IV. (7 min) Witness**--Share an event from your own life that illustrates the objective of this session.
- A. IDENTIFY WITH:** students who have not really understood what mercy is or seen mercy lived out.
 - B. SHARE:** how you became aware of mercy by describing a time when someone helped you when you were in need. How did the act of mercy help you? What difference did it make to you? How did you experience God's love in those acts of mercy? (Refer to 1 John 4:16 "God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.") Did you then **choose** to share acts of mercy with others?
 - C. ENCOURAGE:** students to identify times in their lives where they experienced acts of kindness or love. Encourage them to see God's mercy at work in that situation and to be a hero for others.
- V. (20 min) Small Group Discussion**
- A. What from the witness stood out to you?
 - B. When have you seen or experienced ordinary heroism and/or acts of mercy in your life?
 - C. How did you experience God's love in those acts of mercy?
 - D. What would the world look like if everyone chose to use God's superpower of mercy?
- VI. (9 min) Essential Message**
- A. Say: Say: We talked about super heroes and real life heroes.
 - B. Ask: Did you know that our Church celebrates real life heroes who have chosen to be an Agent of Mercy?
 - C. Say: Each day of the year is dedicated to a saint. The saints serve as an great example of heroism!
 - D. Share: 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.
 - E. Say: Say: God wants all of us to be like him, that is, to choose to see the need of others around us, choose to step out and share our superpower of mercy helping others in need out of love. If we do this, we can be an agent of mercy, too.
- VII. (1 min) Spontaneous Prayer**
- A. Thank God for giving us models of mercy like Saint John Paul II.
 - B. Thank God for helping us see how we can live out God's superpower by sharing mercy others.

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Session 2: Touched by Mercy (60 min.)

Agents of Mercy Retreat

Objective: Students will be offered an experience of being touched by God's mercy.

I. (2 min) Introduction:

- A. Say: In the first session we talked about God's superpower of mercy and how we can choose to use this power to help those in need.
- B. Say: Let's clearly define mercy so that we can have a better understanding of how it works in our lives and how we can share it with others.
 - 1. Mercy is when love responds to those in need or those suffering. In the video, we saw a man offer a hot dog to another man who was hungry. Another example might be when someone eats lunch with a person at school who is always alone. (Offer an example from your own community and setting.)
 - 2. Mercy is also receiving forgiveness instead of getting what you deserve.
- C. Say: Giving mercy is a divine action - we mirror God's love when we show mercy.

II. (10 min) Experience of Mercy (Guided Meditation)

- A. Say: If we want to give mercy to others, we first must be able to recognize how we have been touched by God's mercy in our own lives.
- B. Ask: First, let's look at mercy in Scripture. Can you think of any stories where Jesus showed mercy to people.
 - 1. Healing the paralytic on the Sabbath
 - 2. Going to the home of a tax collector, etc.
- C. Read Luke 19:1-20 Encourage the young people to listen carefully to the details. After you read the story
- D. Lead a discussion using the following questions:
 - 1. What did Zacchaeus do for a living? (tax collector)
 - 2. What was his physical stature like? (short)
 - 3. How did he get to see Jesus? (climbed a tree)
 - 4. What did Jesus say to Zacchaeus? (Jesus will stay at his house.)
 - 5. Why were people upset with Jesus? (Zacchaeus was a sinner. He charged more for taxes than was right and kept the money for himself.
 - 6. What gift did Jesus bring to Zacchaeus? (Forgiveness--Zacchaeus repented.)
- E. Say: Now, we are going to imagine ourselves in the story so you can reflect on how you have been touched by God's mercy. Perhaps you are not sure that you have received mercy, this experience will help you understand it a little more.
- F. Say: We ask that you be open to the experience and allow God to show you his mercy.
- G. Lead the students through a guided meditation (see Mercy Guided Meditation for Middle School page).

III. (7 min) Witness--Share an event from your own life that illustrates the objective of this session.

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- A. **IDENTIFY WITH:** students who are not aware of being touched by God's deep & endless mercy and forgiveness.
 - B. **SHARE:** an example of how you have been touched by God's mercy. Share an example of being forgiven that changed your life. You can refer to the sinful woman as you unfold your own story of being forgiven by God. Share how God's forgiveness changed your life and how it motivated you to tell others about God's great gift of mercy. Relate the importance of the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the power for God's mercy and forgiveness to change your life.
 - C. **ENCOURAGE:** students to reflect on the events/sins in their own lives, those things that are keeping them in bondage. Suggest that they give those things to God, seeking out His mercy and forgiveness.
- IV. **(40 min) One on One prayer and/or Reconciliation with priests.**
- A. Adoration during this time is really meaningful and sets a reverent tone.
 - B. Disperse students around the room.
 - C. Pray individually with each student about the fruits of their meditation or anything else that they would like to share with God.
 - D. Offer the opportunity for students to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- V. **(2 min) Essential Message**
- A. Say: Mercy is one of God's primary messages because He wants us to know and experience His endless mercy and forgiveness in our lives.
 - B. Say: God wants us to be **Agents of Mercy** -people who have experienced His mercy and can share it with others, bringing them to encounter God's love.
- VI. **(1 min) Spontaneous Prayer**
- A. Thank God for his mercy.
 - B. Thank him for the opportunity to spend time in prayer.
 - C. Ask him to continue to pour his mercy upon on today's retreat and always.

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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? (We are called to be Agents of Mercy)
- 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 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

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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 sheet (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.
- 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

- A. Thank God for the Works of Mercy.
- B. Ask God for his grace to respond to his call to care enough about others by living out the works of mercy.

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

Agents of Mercy Retreat--High School

Objective: Students will know how to be Agents of Mercy by spreading the message of God's love and mercy through the Divine Mercy message.

I. (2 min) Introduction

- A. Ask: What did we learn in the first session today? (God's superpower is mercy.)
- B. Say: In the second session, we considered how we have been touched by God's mercy.
- C. Ask: What did we do in the last session? (We looked at how we can care for others by living out the Works for Mercy.)
- D. Say: It's not enough to just participate in works of mercy, we need to tell others about it too!

II. (10 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. (5 min) Introduce the Divine Mercy Card

- A. Quickly explain each section.
- B. Say: Each of you will receive two Divine Mercy Cards in your small group. One card is for you to keep, and the other is for you to give away to someone who needs to hear the Divine Mercy message.
- C. Say: In case you are wondering how to share the message of mercy with others, we are going to demonstrate for you.

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. In the scenario make sure that the person sharing the message of mercy offers the hurting person a Divine Mercy Card. You may adapt scenarios to your setting.

- A. At school, a girl has been bullied via social media.

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- B. Your grandmother is upset because your grandfather had to go into a nursing home.
- C. Your friend's parents are getting a divorce.

V. (15 min) Small Group Discussion

- A. Hand out two Divine Mercy cards to each student and answer any questions they have.
- B. Ask the following:
 - 1. What did you learn about mercy today?
 - 2. What are some ways you can share mercy with others?
 - 3. Name one person with whom you will share the message of mercy and give your second Divine Mercy card.

VI. (2 min) Essential Message

- A. Say: Jesus appeared to Saint Faustina to relate His message of Mercy to the world.
- B. Say: 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. Say: Jesus wants everyone to believe and trust in God's love and mercy, so share the message!

VII. (20 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)