



## WORKS OF MERCY – Guidelines for Group Leaders

### I'LL TAKE CARE OF YOU! “I was sick and you comforted me”

#### PREPARE FOR THE MEETING

##### Sickness, disability, old age in our society

- Jesus' words point us toward those who are **confronted with the experience of pain**. They are perceived or seen as weak and unable to carry out their day in a normal way: they are sick, but also the elderly, disabled etc.
- Our world sometimes **forgets the special value of time spent at the bedside of the sick**, because people are on the go, always in a hurry to get things done, to be productive, forgetting the dimension of gratuitousness, of caring and taking on the other's burden.
- In many cases there is much suffering on the part of those who consider themselves weak or disabled. On the contrary, **every person needs recognition and support** for living their life as fully as possible. Everyone has abilities, life experiences and skills. So it is necessary not just to help those in need, but to **create a relationship of sharing and reciprocity**.

##### What gestures and attitudes should be promoted in teens?

- Staying close to those who suffer is an opportunity: **it increases our awareness of the value of every human being, in every moment of life**. Everyone has inner abilities and skills and is a gift for the entire community. It is precisely the sick, the weak and the disabled who can often give us important life lessons. This means **promoting the culture of encounter**, discovering that we are gifts to one another and initiating a giving and receiving among one another.
- **Experiencing pain in the context of community** helps the sufferer to overcome times of discouragement and sadness, and increases the family spirit in the community. It is an important experience that can help teens deal positively with suffering and pain.
- To be able **to stand at the side of those who suffer** we must postpone our own needs and desires to **enter into complete harmony with the other**. This process requires a certain maturity, which adolescents are still developing. Life events which are usually considered negative, like suffering and illness – whether our own or participating in the suffering of others - can become useful opportunities for helping teens to mature.

##### Some useful texts for exploring the topic:

- *Chiara Lubich* da: Like a rainbow - Nature and physical life, Rome 2000, pp. 74 - 77 ([attachment sick A1](#), or [doc version](#))

#### BEFORE THE MEETING

Whom can we involve from the community? How?

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#### POSSIBLE STEPS TO REACH TOGETHER (SPECIFIC GOALS)

- Being able to recognize the hardships and understand the suffering of people who are sick or disabled
- Recognizing the gift and the uniqueness of each person
- Promoting a reciprocal relationship with those who are suffering or have a physical or mental impediment

#### MATERIAL SUITABLE FOR TEENS:

- [PPT A heart in action](#) – corporal works, Slides 49 to 57 (for those who are sick ...)
- PPT **Hearts in Action Live**: Experiences of teens on "I was sick and you visited me" (episode 5 of the heart in live action) ([episode 5 of Hearts in Action Live](#))
- Experience di Cecilia - Italy ([attachment sick R2](#) or [doc versione](#))
- *Chiara Lubich, Her relationship with Virgo in her illness*, a response at the Gen3 Congress, Castelgandolfo, January 6, 1999 ([attachment sick R3](#) or [docx versione](#))
- The parable of the Good Samaritan - Luke 10, 25-37

#### Proposed activities to help develop the meeting:

- **The Simple Interview | 21 March 2015** The eighteen year-old director of the video tells of the everyday life, gifts and the limitations of his brother, a special boy suffering from Down syndrome. With English subtitles (5:31) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0v8twxPsszY>
- **Putting yourself in the shoes of the others** is an activity in which we try to learn about the disability or the difficulties of people who are sick or elderly through simulation and getting involved in experiences ([attachment sick R4](#))
- **Cuerdas**, Spanish short film about the bond of friendship that began in an orphanage between two children, one of them disabled. Original language: Spanish (6:40) with English subtitles [http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x2jif90q\\_strns\\_webcam](http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x2jif90q_strns_webcam) On the web are also versions with subtitles in other languages, such as Italian ([attachment sick R5](#))

#### EVALUATION

- Was team spirit and mutual exchange strengthened in this meeting? Did it increase the climate of trust and mutual love? Did we experience the presence of Jesus among us?
- Are we more aware that the attention and care of the sick and suffering is an important task? Are we aware that Jesus considers done to him any help we give to others?
- Did we put these words into practice in daily life and possibly with a specific action?
- Did we involve the community?

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Look for the material on the [site for group leaders](#).