

Corporal Work of Mercy

Give Drink to the Thirsty



St. Peter Claver
1581 - 1654
Feast Day – September 9

Catechism of the Catholic Church

“The works of mercy are charitable actions by which we come to the aide of our neighbor in his spiritual and bodily necessities. The Corporal works of mercy consist especially in feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, and burying the dead.” - (2447)

Sacred Scripture

*“I was ... thirsty, and you gave Me drink,
— Matthew 25:35.”*

To Give Drink to the Thirsty is an ethical imperative for the universal Church, as she responds to the teachings of her Founder, the Lord Jesus, concerning solidarity and the sharing of goods. The right to food and drink has an important place within the pursuit of other rights, beginning with the fundamental right to life. It is therefore necessary to cultivate a public conscience that considers food and water as universal rights of all human beings, without distinction or discrimination (Pope Benedict XVI, encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, 27).

Nearly 1-billion people lack access to a supply of safe water. More than 3.4 million people a year die from water-related diseases. Every 21 seconds a child in the world dies of such diseases. Nearly one-fifth of all childhood deaths are caused by diarrhea, which kills more young children than AIDS, TB, and malaria combined. (Source: water.org.)

How is St. Peter Claver a model for living out the Corporal Work of Mercy – To Give Drink to the Thirsty?

St. Peter Claver would board the slave ships as they entered the ports a Cartagena, ministering to the 10,000 – 12,000 slaves that would come through on an annual basis. He would offer whatever refreshments he could afford; food, water, medicine, lemons, etc. Peter cared for the sick and dying, and with the help of interpreters and pictures he would instruct the slaves before administering the Sacraments. Over his more than 30 years of ministry he was able to baptize an estimated 300,000 souls. Even after their conversions, Peter would remain diligent in following-up on those slaves once leaving the port, continuing to give encouragement to live the Christian life and preaching to their masters to treat them humanely.

Peter, slave of the slaves forever.

Give Drink to the Thirsty

St. Peter Claver

Fast Facts:

Born	• June 26, 1581 in Catalonia, Spain
Feast Day	• September 9
Canonized	• January 15, 1888 by Pope Leo XIII
Patron Saint	• Slaves, Columbia, Missionary work among black slaves



His Life:

- June 26, 1581 Peter Claver was born in a devoutly Catholic and prosperous family in Catalonia, Spain.
- He was born 70 years after King Ferdinand of Spain set colonial slavery into motion, an event which would shape his life.
- He studied at the University of Barcelona where he was noted for his intelligence and piety.
- It was here that Claver came to the realization that, “I must dedicate myself to the service of God until death, on the understanding that I am like a slave.”
- After completing his studies, he entered the Society of Jesus in Tarragona at the age of 20.
- He was sent to study Philosophy at Palma, while there he came to know the Porter of the college, St. Alphonsus Rodriguez.
- It was under the direction of Rodriguez that Claver derived much spiritual profit and knowledge of his future career.
- Claver volunteered for the Spanish colonies and was sent to the New Kingdom of Granda where he arrived in 1610.
- Claver was required to wait six years to be ordained as a priest in order to finish

his theological studies, it was during those years that he became deeply disturbed by the harsh treatment and living conditions of the black slaves who were bought from Africa.

- Peter was ordained a priest in Cartagena in 1615 and from that moment on devoted himself to the care of Negro slaves.
- Cartagena was a slave trading hub, 10,000 slaves came through the port yearly. Claver preferred to head for the port as soon as a slave ship entered.
- Boarding the ships, he entered the filthy and diseased holds to treat and minister to badly treated and horrified slaves.
- During his 40 years of ministry it is estimated that he personally catechized and baptized 300,000 slaves.
- His mission extended beyond caring for slaves, he preached in the city square, to sailors and traders and conducted country missions.
- Through years of unrelenting toil and his dedication to the service of God the slaves’ situation slowly improved, in time he became a moral force, known as the Apostle of Cartagena.
- Peter Claver died on September 8, 1654 at the age of 72.
- He was canonized in 1888 by Pope Leo XIII along with his holy Jesuit Porter, Alphonsus Rodriguez

Practices to Foster growth in To Give Drink to the Thirsty

- **Read a passage of Scripture that give examples of *To Give Drink to the Thirsty*. Re-read the passage and pick a word or phrase that stood out for you.**
 - Isaiah 55:1
 - Matthew 25:35
 - John 6:35
 - John 7: 37-39
 - Revelation 21:6; 22:17
- **Memorize the *Our Father* and pray this prayer each morning.**
 - Our Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy Will be done, on earth, as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.
- **Catechetical Texts that speak to *Give Drink to the Thirsty*:**
 - “Christians are at the service of their brothers and sisters in every aspect of their work and their lives. Love put into practice appeals to all Christians in their daily work, and in their personal initiatives. The commitment of Christians, like their humanitarian and charitable work, stems from the same call to mission. Christians will seek to link their work, whatever it is, to the One who speaks directly to our hearts, through the mouths of all the poor.” (World Hunger - A Challenge For All: Development in Solidarity)
 - At the very heart of social justice lies the principle of the universal and common destination of the goods of the earth. Pope John Paul II has expressed it in the following words: "God gave the earth to the whole human race for the sustenance of all its members, without excluding or favoring anyone." (John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus*, 36)
 - "Social Justice can be obtained only in respecting the transcendent dignity of man. The person represents the ultimate end of society, which is ordered to him: What is at stake is the dignity of the human person, whose defense and promotion have been entrusted to us by the Creator, and to whom the men and women at every moment of history are strictly and responsibly in debt." (CCC – 1929)
 - “From the crib to the cross, Jesus shares his life with the poor; he knows hunger, thirst and want. Even more: he identifies himself with the poor of all kinds and transforms the active love towards them into a condition in order to reach his Kingdom.” (CCC – 544)
 - Visit the USCCB website to learn more on their initiative to Give Drink to the Thirsty:
 - [For I was Hungry and You Gave Me Food](#)
- **Name some people from the Bible or saints who lived out the Corporal Work of Mercy, *To Give Drink to the Thirsty*.**
 - (Examples: St. Benedict, St. Elizabeth of Hungary, Saint Brigid, etc.)
- **Ask the Lord how he is calling you to live out the Corporal Work of Mercy, *To Give Drink to the Thirsty*.**