



181 Practical Ways to Live the Year of Mercy

Week 1 - August 15

1. Today is the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In today's Gospel, Mary recites the Magnificat, in which she declares that God "remembers His promise of Mercy". As we begin the school year, let us make a promise to live as agents of mercy in our school community.
 2. All people want to be valued and accepted for who they are. Identify those in your community who might feel undervalued or underappreciated and affirm them.
 3. One of the ways that we experience God's mercy is through our failures. What is your school's community's approach to student failures? Are there ways to take a more merciful approach when a student commits a mistake?
 4. A great way to show mercy is to curb bullying and gossip on campus. All individuals long to be valued and to not be judged. What can be done in your community to curb these behaviors?
 5. One of the Catholic Church's Corporal Works of Mercy states that we must feed the hungry. There are many types of hunger (physical, spiritual, relational, etc.). Use today to identify those who hunger in your community as well as the lack from which they suffer.
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Week 2 - August 22

1. Who in your community hungers for spiritual satiation? Who has lost their faith, or who is hungry to grow deeper in their faith? What, as a community, can be done to meet these hungers?
2. In today's Gospel, Jesus warns us against hypocrisy, especially when it leads to the neglect of others. During this Year of Mercy, spend reflecting on the needs of others rather than your old private good.
3. Who in your community hungers for friendship? What can be done to make sure that all feel welcome and accepted?
4. One of the most difficult positions one finds her/himself in is the transition into a new community. How can you community help new students or employees satisfy their hunger for belonging?
5. Identify students who tend to spend time alone, whether in the halls or at lunch. Find key students to reach out to those students to help them become more integrated into your community.

Week 3 - August 29

1. Jesus said, "Why do you notice the splinter in your brother's eye, but do not see the wooden beam in your own eye?" Have you been fair in your assessments of both yourself and others? Today, strive to "remove the wooden beam" from your own eye so that you can see the grace and goodness of others.
 2. In today's Gospel, Jesus removes an "unclean demon" from a man in Capernaum. Even though Jesus did not personally know this man, he was moved with compassion and chose to transform the man's suffering into peace. Like Jesus, we are called to show mercy so that our words and actions might transform the pain and suffering of those in our community.
 3. Identify those in your community or life who are lonely and make a point to reach out to them. A simple conversation or phone call can be transformative.
 4. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is a great way to experience the transformative mercy of God. Carve out some time to receive the Sacrament. If you cannot make time to receive the Sacrament, make time to pray for God's forgiveness.
 5. We can show mercy by simply being present to others and offering them our company and compassion. Who in your community hungers for your presence?
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Week 4 - September 5

1. Who in your community hungers for a listening ear? Identify those who need to share their struggles with another and be that listening ear.
 2. Who in your community might suffer from physical hunger? Are there students who might skip lunch because of their family's financial situation? What can be done to help this community member?
 3. In today's Gospel, Jesus delivers the Beatitudes. Through this sermon, He promises food for the hungry, laughter for those who weep, and peace to those who are suffering. How can we make the Beatitudes present in our school community? Who do we know to be suffering, hungry, or consumed by sadness? How can we be present to them?
 4. What community outreach programs can either be established or revisited during this Year of Mercy? How can your community serve as an image of Christ to your immediate community?
 5. Who hungers for reconciliation? In your life, what relationships need mended? Take steps towards mercy to heal division.
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Week 5 - September 12

1. Today, let the Serenity Prayer be your mantra. Allow yourself to be open to the Spirit so that you can experience peace and bring peace to others.
2. In today's Gospel, Jesus meets a woman who is mourning the loss of her son. In an act of mercy, Jesus comforts the woman by bringing her son back to life. In our lives, we encounter many

people who are suffering some form of loss. Who is suffering in your community? How can you, like Jesus, bring new life to their time of despair?

3. Beyond showing mercy to others, we are called to be merciful to ourselves. In what ways can you be merciful to yourself?
 4. Today, practice humility and be open to those around you. Allow others around you to share their talents and help you when you are in need.
 5. How often do you affirm the positive efforts of those around you? How often do you give yourself credit for your positive efforts? Be merciful to others and yourself through affirmation.
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Week 6 - September 19

1. In today's Gospel, Jesus states that "no one who lights a lamp conceals it with a vessel or sets it under a bed." Rather, we are called to place the lamp on a lampstand so that the light might be seen by all who are present. We have all been given gifts that we can use to spread mercy and love. How can you let your light shine to bring mercy to your community?
 2. Keep a copy of the Beatitudes in on your desk, in your bag, or in your binder and pray them throughout the day.
 3. In today's Gospel, Jesus quotes Hosea 6:6 stating, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice". Jesus proclaims that we follow Him when we practice mercy and are merciful to others. Make the decision to be merciful today!
 4. We experience God in community, but, often times, communal bonds break down and forgiveness is needed. Do you have a difficult relationship that must be forgiven? Share God's everlasting mercy with her/him.
 5. Remember to hold your tongue and be merciful to others even when they are in an angry state of mind.
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Week 7 - September 26

1. In today's Gospel, Jesus sits next to a child and states, "'Whoever receives this child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.'" Jesus was able to find the good in all people and He invited his followers to do the same. Today, like Jesus, let us show mercy to all, regardless of age, gender, creed, etc.
2. Mother Teresa serves as a great model for mercy. She was relentless in her ability to put the needs of others before her own and in her ability to welcome the stranger into her life. Who in your life longs for your friendship? What gifts do you have to share with this person?
3. One of the Catholic Church's Corporal Works of Mercy states that we must work to shelter the homeless. What service projects or outreach programs can your community take part in to help the homeless in your community?
4. There are millions of displaced individuals in our world. How can your school community bring awareness to your students and families about the need to care for those who lack the basic human necessity of shelter?

5. Communal prayer can be a great way to strengthen communal bonds and allow mercy to flourish. In what ways can you incorporate prayer into your daily routine? In what ways can you incorporate more communal prayer on your campus?
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Week 8 - October 3

1. In today's Gospel, Jesus delivers the parable of the Good Samaritan. In this story, the Samaritan shows mercy and compassion to someone who, by society's standards, should have been considered an enemy. Let us live with the love of the Good Samaritan and show compassion to all, even if they may be difficult to approach.
 2. Don't let your worries or anxieties prevent you from seeing the beauty that the world has to offer!
 3. When faced with important decisions, ask yourself, "What would Jesus do?"
 4. Thank God for all of the positives that you have been given. Don't focus on the negatives!
 5. The Gospels are filled with countless stories of God's mercy. Lectio Divina is a great tool that can be used help a community place itself with the Gospel story. Organize a Lectio Divina group within your community, or begin your next meeting with a Gospel reading and reflection.
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Week 9 - October 10

1. One of the Catholic Church's Corporal Works of Mercy states that we must clothe the naked. What service projects or outreach programs can your community take part in to help the homeless in your community?
 2. In today's Gospel, Jesus has harsh words for the Pharisees, proclaiming, "Woah to you, Pharisees! Although you cleanse the outside of the cup and the dish, inside you are filled with plunder and evil." In this statement, Jesus states that our actions must match our intentions. Today, spend time in prayer contemplating your intentions and strive to purify them with intentions of mercy.
 3. Pope Francis has proclaimed that, "Mercy is the Lord's most powerful message!" Today, focus on how you can hear that message in your daily schedule.
 4. We can show mercy in many ways. One way is to encourage our lawmakers and world leaders to promote policies that provide dignity for the poorest members of society.
 5. One way to show mercy is to spend time with the elderly of our community. Organize a community trip or event where students visit a senior citizen's community and share their talents with the elderly.
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Week 10 - October 17

1. In today's Gospel, Jesus shares a parable of a rich man who hoards all of his riches for himself. In the parable, God says to the rich man, "You fool, this night your life will be demanded of you; and the things you have prepared, to whom will they belong?" Jesus then states, "Thus it will be for the one who stores up treasure for himself but is not rich in what matters to God." We know from the Gospel that what matters to God is our love and mercy. Today, let us use the treasures that we have been given to help build the Kingdom.
 2. One of the Catholic Church's Corporal Works of Mercy state that we are called to bury the dead. Death is a part of life, and within the community we are called to support those who are suffering the loss of a loved one. What systems are in place within your community that support those who are suffering loss?
 3. What procedures or policies does your community have that provide bereavement services for those who have suffered the loss of a loved one?
 4. Does your community offer memorial services or liturgies for those who have died? Are the names of those who have died in your extended community (family members, etc.) mentioned during school Mass?
 5. Give alms to the poor.
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Week 11 - October 24

1. In today's Gospel, Jesus heals a woman who was crippled by a spirit. Who do you know that is being tormented by internal or external pain? How can you offer your time and talents to those who are suffering?
 2. Take inventory of your possessions and make the commitment to live on less.
 3. Make it a habit to keep \$5 in your purse or wallet that is designated to give to someone who is in need.
 4. Remember that we all stumble and that forgiveness is limitless. Cut people (and yourself!) some slack.
 5. In today's Gospel, Jesus went up to a mountain to pray. Even Jesus realized the importance and the need for prayer. Today, skip a meal and use that time for silent prayer.
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Week 12 - October 31

1. In the spirit of letting go, it is good to let go of old hurts. Are you suffering from an old wound? Let today be the day that you let go and allow the wound to heal.
2. One of the Catholic Church's Corporal Works of Mercy state that we are to bring the Good News to the imprisoned. What opportunities does your community have to visit to those who have been imprisoned?
3. On this Feast of All Souls, spend time with a colleague or friend who is suffering the loss of a loved one. Show mercy to those who are in need of your love and support.

4. In life we can be imprisoned in many different ways and by many different things. Who are those within your community that are imprisoned by sadness or loneliness? Make a point to seek them out and bring joy to their suffering.
 5. Think of one of your most challenging students. Give them a word of encouragement today.
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Week 13 - November 7

1. In today's Gospel, Jesus speaks of having faith the size of a mustard seed. Though small, the mustard seed grows and spreads. Like the mustard seed, our small acts of mercy grow and spread, helping to build God's Kingdom. Today, remember to be merciful to all who walk through your door.
 2. Let someone help you. We don't have to do things alone!
 3. Seek to change yourself before trying to change others.
 4. Ask someone how they are and really make time to listen to their answer.
 5. Think of someone in your family or an old friend with whom you haven't spoken in a while. Give them a call just to see how they are doing.
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Week 14 - November 14

1. In today's Gospel, Jesus shows mercy to the blind man. Just as Jesus gave sight to the blind, we, too, must do our best to bring healing and understanding to those who might be blinded by pain, hatred, or suffering.
 2. As you begin your day, remind yourself that you are God's beloved, and that you have been selected to be his "light bearer". Let your light shine!
 3. Make a gratitude journal and write down one thing each day for which you are grateful.
 4. Have a food kit in your car of some non-perishable foods. So next time when you're at red light use that opportunity to pass out some food.
 5. Donate baby formula to pregnancy help center.
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Week 15 - November 21

1. Pass out water bottles for homeless on streets with a note attached with a bible verse or a simple "you're loved."
2. Stop trying to win arguments. Instead of proving your correctness, take time to listen to the thoughts and concerns of the other.
3. Lead a bible study with your friends and afterwards all go out for coffee.
4. On this Thanksgiving day, remember to spend time in prayer thanking God for all that you have been in your life. All that we have is a gift, so let us remember that we are called to show mercy by sharing our gifts with the whole human family.
5. Live simply. Donate things that you don't need to a homeless shelter or other organization so someone who does need them can have them!

Week 16 - November 28

1. As we begin the season of Advent, let us reflect on today's Gospel which features Jesus healing the centurion's servant. Though Jesus was Jewish and the centurion was a member of the empire that oppressed the Jews, Jesus still chose compassion and mercy and healed the man's servant. During this Advent season, let us show mercy and compassion to all, especially those who might be difficult or might appear to be in opposition to us.
 2. Every time you drive by a cemetery, say this prayer: Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord. And let the perpetual light shine upon them. And may the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.
 3. During this Advent season, we are called to prepare room in our hearts for Christ. How can we encounter Christ in others? How can you prepare a space in your heart for your colleagues?
 4. Accompany a friend who is struggling with believing to join a parish group for service or faith formation, share a book you found useful in dealing with your friend's faith concern, and worship at Sunday Mass.
 5. Make a home cooked meal for a friend who is facing a difficult time.
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Week 17 - December 5

1. On this Monday of the second week of Advent, we encounter Jesus forgiving the sins of those he encountered. To whom do we owe forgiveness? Today, let go of old pain so that you might prepare a space for Christ in your heart.
 2. Let go of grudges.
 3. Make it a point to practice empathy. Put yourself in someone else's shoes. Even if you cannot relate to their situation, recall a time when you may have felt similar emotions from a situation.
 4. Today is the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of Mary. Mary serves as the exemplar of what a faith life should look like. She was able to put aside her wants and needs so that he might be totally open and vulnerable to the will of God. Today, let us strive for the faith of Mary and let God's will of mercy and love guide our lives.
 5. Saying "I'm sorry" can be difficult. Ask God for the courage to say it to someone you have wronged.
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Week 18 - December 12

1. During this third week of Advent, set aside time so that you can be present to someone who might need your love, mercy, and support. Contact an old friend who you haven't spoken to in a while, visit a colleague who has been burdened by work or personal issues, or simply spend time with your family without the distractions of life's noise.
2. Frustrated with someone? Step away from the situation, take a few deep breaths, pray the Our Father, asking God for patience.
3. Request a Mass intention for a friend or family member who is going through a tough time.

4. Keep your own book of prayer intentions, writing down the names of those who you are keeping in your prayers.
 5. Ask a friend or family member if there is anything you can pray for them about.
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Week 19 - January 2 (New Years)

1. Begin your 2017 with a vow of mercy. Select one resolution that brings mercy to your life and community and stick to it!
 2. Try not to purchase more food than you are able to eat. If you notice that you end up throwing groceries away each week, purchasing less groceries would eliminate waste and allow you to donate the savings to those in need.
 3. Make an effort not to waste water. Remembering to turn off the water faucet when you are brushing your teeth or washing dishes can help, especially in regions suffering from drought.
 4. Don't continue to buy new bottles of water. Instead, bring your own bottle and keep refilling it!
 5. Donate flip flops, suitcases, or backpacks to foster care children who are often moved from one home to another barefoot and with all their personal items in a garbage bag.
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Week 20 - January 9

1. Donate blood.
 2. Today, build a relationship with someone who is unpopular or difficult to love.
 3. When conflict arises, ask yourself, "Will I use my energy for resolution or retaliation?"
 4. Donate old books to the prison.
 5. Sometimes, our expectations of others may be burdensome or overbearing. Today, ask yourself if you expect more out of people than they are able to give.
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Week 21 - January 16 (Martin Luther King, Jr. Day)

1. Practice patience, especially when it comes to other's quirks.
 2. Instead of being the last one to show up for a meeting, be the first and offer to help.
 3. If you feel jealous over something someone else has, instead pray in thanksgiving for the blessings which have been bestowed upon them.
 4. Work to make your first reaction to situations a positive one.
 5. Do your best at everything you do, because whoever is receiving the fruits of your labor deserves the best.
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Week 22 - January 23

1. Be a peacemaker in the office when you hear the watercooler talk.
 2. Bring a smile into the room wherever you go.
 3. One way to spread mercy is to bring hope to the hopeless and to hopeless situations. Today, be a beacon of unwavering hope.
 4. Don't let someone sit alone.
 5. St. Faustina designated an Hour of Mercy at either 3:00 a.m. or 3:00 p.m. Choose an hour that works best for you and designate time to be alone in prayer.
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Week 23 - January 30

1. Be honest in big and small things.
 2. Be thankful for the opportunity to work.
 3. Recall Jesus' interaction with the woman accused of adultery. How did he respond to her and those who were making the accusations? What wisdom can we draw from this?
 4. Share emails or texts of an inspiring Bible verse or saint quote.
 5. Thank your principal or your pastor.
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Week 24 - February 6

1. Attend reconciliation. Invite someone else to go with you and then go out for dessert to celebrate God's mercy!
 2. Give up your seat for someone else.
 3. Serve yourself last at lunch or dinner.
 4. Before you begin your day, pray five decades of the Rosary alone or with a small group.
 5. Spend time with today's Gospel. What is Jesus saying to you?
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Week 25 - February 13

1. Leave someone an encouraging note, and don't sign it.
 2. Pick up trash you see lying around campus.
 3. Whenever you feel anxious, simply pray, "Jesus, I trust in you."
 4. Try to see God in everyone you meet.
 5. Pay it forward: today, take one positive step towards spreading kindness and love
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Week 26 - February 20

1. Apologize to those who you have hurt.
 2. Read scripture showing God's mercy and reflect on how it applies to your life.
 3. Accept God's mercy in your own life. Attend Reconciliation and believe that you have been forgiven. Then forgive yourself and break free of the chains of guilt which can bind us.
 4. Stand alongside those who need mercy, even when it's uncomfortable.
 5. Try to stop a habit that you know annoys or hurts others.
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Week 27 - February 27

1. Avoid saying, "I told you so" when you are right.
 2. Offer help when you see someone in need. Don't wait for them to ask or assume someone else will help.
 3. Begin your day by asking yourself, "What can I do for others?"
 4. Don't bring up old failings and remind someone of what they did over and over again.
 5. Read conversion stories of the saints. Many of them fell A LOT before finally walking with God.
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Week 28 - March 6

1. Be kind to those who offend you.
 2. Go on pilgrimage, even if it's to a local place. Go seeking God and see how He speaks to you there.
 3. Be affectionate. Hold a hand. Give a hug. It goes a long way.
 4. Show empathy when someone is sharing a story of hurt. Don't try to compete by sharing your seemingly worse story.
 5. See to the proper nutrition of your families. When possible, cook dinner and sit together.
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Week 29 - March 13

1. Educate yourself about world hunger.
 2. One of Jesus' foundational messages was forgiveness. To whom do you owe a second chance?
 3. Practice hospitality by putting the needs of those in your community before your own.
 4. Help neighbors care for their home or do home repairs. Mow their lawn or offer a hand.
 5. Advocate for public policies and legislation that provide housing for low-income people.
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Week 30 - March 20

1. Consider becoming a foster parent, or support foster parents.
 2. Participate in programs that provide towels and linens for hospitals in distressed areas or homeless shelters.
 3. Volunteer to drive patients to medical appointments and treatment facilities.
 4. Be a minister to the sick at your parish.
 5. Assist those who are full-time caregivers for family members. Bring them a meal or offer to spend time with their loved one so they can get away for a few hours.
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Week 31 - March 27

1. Pray for the families of inmates.
 2. Support efforts that seek abolishment of the death penalty.
 3. Be faithful about attending wakes/visitation.
 4. Remember to stand in solidarity with all of God's people. Stand up for those who are without a voice.
 5. Participate in a bereavement ministry at your parish.
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Week 32 - April 3

1. Spend time with widows and widowers.
 2. When others are feeling weak, be their strength and support them. If you are feeling weak, do not hesitate from prayer.
 3. Commit yourself to learning about the Catholic faith and share your understanding of the faith with others and with those who welcome it.
 4. Take time to "tutor" those who are just beginning tasks.
 5. Read a spiritual book and encourage others to do the same. Start a book club.
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Week 33 - April 10

1. Respond to cynicism, skepticism, and doubt with hope.
 2. Be articulate about your own hopes.
 3. During her work day, St. Faustina would make time to visit the Blessed Sacrament. Take time out of your day to be present to the Lord.
 4. Today, refuse to identify with negative, antagonistic, or fearful thoughts.
 5. Ask people about their hopes and support them in trying to attain them.
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Week 34 - April 24

1. Offer words of encouragement to those who seem discouraged.
 2. Give people the benefit of the doubt.
 3. Be kind to those who offend you.
 4. Attend daily Mass and try to bring someone who is in need of God's love. If the individual cannot attend with you, pray for her/him during the liturgy.
 5. Recite the "Prayer to be More Merciful to Others" by St. Maria Faustina
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Week 35 - May 1

1. Pope Francis has warned us about the dangers of being a "throwaway culture". What changes and cutbacks can you make in your life to be more fruitful of our gifts and our environment?
 2. Be the one who makes others feel special.
 3. Three great characteristics to embody are fairness, patience, and kindness. Let these characteristics be your guide today.
 4. In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis calls for us to care for all of God's creation. What act of mercy can you show the environment today?
 5. In the parable of the Prodigal Son, the father shows an incredible amount of mercy to his lost son. Like the father, make the point to greet those you encounter today with open arms and mercy.
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Week 36 - May 8

1. In the parable of the Prodigal Son, the son must admit his faults before asking his father for forgiveness. In what ways can we be honest with ourselves about our faults or missteps. Like the son in the parable, forgiveness and mercy is always waiting for us!
 2. As you begin your day, contemplate on what brings you joy. Share that joy with others.
 3. Instead of focusing on the negative behaviors of others, try to seek signs of their inherent goodness.
 4. If you are in a position of power or influence, use your gifts to inspire, affirm, and serve those around.
 5. Today, make a point to truly listen to those around you. What are they saying? Why has God placed you in their lives?
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Week 37 - May 15

1. When faced with adversity, do not turn away. Peacefully and compassionately, work to transform the situation into one that promotes growth.
 2. As the school year comes to an end, have conversations with students and staff about transitions. Are they nervous or excited for the upcoming year?
 3. Go to the grocery store and buy items that are BOGO, then donate the “free” items you collected to a food pantry.
 4. Get soaps or shampoos and donate them to Catholic Charities Refugee Resettlement Program.
 5. May is the month of Mary. Pray a rosary and offer each bead as a prayer for a person in need.
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Week 38 - May 22

1. Email your coworkers and ask if they have any prayer intentions you can lift up for them.
 2. Invite a faculty member to your classroom or office to chat, and listen to what is happening in their lives.
 3. Read a story on the CRS (Catholic Relief Services) website and pray for that individual. Tell the story to students and ask for their prayers too.
 4. Pray for a soul in purgatory.
 5. Put an anonymous note of encouragement or a scripture verse in the desk of a student you know is struggling. (Or a coworker!)
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Week 39 - May 29

1. Offer a special prayer for parents who have lost children. If you have children, hug them tightly!
 2. As the school year comes to a close, reflect on anyone who has wronged you in the past year and forgive them. Let go of any grudges you may be carrying so you can end the year in peace.
 3. Read a psalm and offer it for someone who is suffering from some of the same feelings.
 4. Tell someone how you have seen God in them this school year.
 5. Consider one act of service you can offer during the summer months and sign up for it!
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Week 40 - June 5

1. Think about the last school year and ask if you have hurt anyone else. Humble yourself and apologize to them, asking for their forgiveness.
 2. Go through your classroom and pack up any unused materials. Instead of throwing them away, donate them to the Mission Office for our schools in the Dominican Republic. Ask your students to do the same.
 3. Write a note of thanks to your principal, pastor, or another person who has shown God's mercy to your school community this year.
 4. Although this Year of Mercy is over, consider ways in which you will continue to grow in mercy in the upcoming year. Set goals and write them down.
 5. Offer a prayer of praise and thanksgiving for the many times you were shown mercy over the last year. Reflect on those and offer thanks to God.
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