

# Corporal Work of Mercy

## Shelter the Homeless



Bl. Pier Giorgio Frassati  
1901 - 1925  
Feast Day – July 4

### *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*

*“For I was a stranger and you welcomed me.”  
— Matthew 25:35*

Pope Francis on homelessness – “Joseph had to face some difficult situations in his life. One of them was the time when Mary was about to give birth, to have Jesus. The Bible tells us that, “while they were [in Bethlehem], the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn” (Lk 2:6-7).

The Bible is very clear about this: there was no room for them. I can imagine Joseph, with his wife about to have a child, with no shelter, no home, no place to stay. The Son of God came into this world as a homeless person. The Son of God knew what it was to start life without a roof over his head. We can imagine what Joseph must have been thinking. How is it that the Son of God has no home? Why are we homeless, why don't we have housing? These are questions which many of you may ask daily. Like Saint Joseph, you may ask: Why are we homeless, without a place to live? These are questions which all of us might well ask. Why do these, our brothers and sisters, have no place to live? Why are these brothers and sisters of ours homeless?” (Speech given Sept. 24<sup>th</sup>, USA)

As believers, we find our reason and direction for action in the life of Jesus and the teaching of his Church. We are reminded by the gospel that the first human problem Jesus faced on earth was a lack of shelter. There was "no room in the inn" for the Holy Family in Bethlehem. Today, we see in the faces of homeless men, women, and children, the face of Christ. We know that in reaching out to them, standing with them in defending their rights, in working with them and their families for decent housing, we serve the Lord.

“If you have God as the center of all your action, then you will reach the goal” – Bl. Pier Giorgio

# Shelter the Homeless

## Bl. Pier Giorgio Frassati

### Fast Facts:

Born	• April 6, 1901 in Turin, Italy
Feast Day	• July 4
Beatified	• May 20, 1990 by Pope John Paul II
Quote	• <i>Verso l'alto!</i> ("Toward the Heights!")



### His Life:

- On Holy Saturday, April 6, 1901 Pier Giorgio Michelangelo Frassati is born in Turin, Italy.
- 1902 His sister Luciana is born on August 18.
- 1910 he makes his First Holy Confession on June 20<sup>th</sup> at the Church of Corpus Domini.
- 1911 he makes his First Holy Communion on June 19<sup>th</sup> at the Chapel of Sister Helpers of the Souls in Purgatory.
- 1913 Pier Giorgio is sent to a private school run by the Jesuit Fathers and his father is appointed Senator of the Kingdom (of Italy).
- 1914 He enrolls in the "Apostleship of Prayer" and the "Company of the Most Blessed Sacrament."
- On June 10<sup>th</sup>, 1915 Pier Giorgio receives the Sacrament of Confirmation at his home parish of Our Lady of Grace.
- Pier Giorgio receives his high school certificate and enrolls in the Faculty of Industrial Mechanical Engineering at the Royal Polytechnic of Turin. He also joins the St. Vincent de Paul Society.
- In 1919 he enrolls in the Italian Catholic Students Federation and Catholic Action.
- He enrolls in the "University Students' Nocturnal Adoration Group in 1920.

- 1921 He attends the first "Pax Romana" Congress in Ravenna and attends the Young Catholic Workers Congress in Rome.
- 1922 He joins the "Milites Mariae" Circle of the Young Catholic Workers and becomes a Dominican Tertiary.
- 1925 Pier Giorgio Frassati is suddenly stricken with poliomyelitis and dies on July 4<sup>th</sup>.
- 1981 His mortal remains are exhumed and found to be perfectly intact and incorrupt.
- Pope John Paul II flies to Pollone to pray at his tomb in 1989.
- 1990, May 20<sup>th</sup> Pier Giorgio Frassati, the "Man of the Eight Beatitudes" is beatified by Pope John Paul II in St. Peter's Square in Rome, in the

○ Chronology of his life (frassatiusa.org)

### *How is Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati a model for living out the Corporal Work of Mercy – Shelter the Homeless?*

As Luciana (his sister) points out, "Catholic Social teaching could never remain simply a theory with Pier Giorgio." He set his faith concretely into action through spirited activism during the Fascist period in World War I. He lived his faith through constant, humble, mostly hidden service to the poorest of Turin. Pier Giorgio gave what he had to help the poor. His work with St. Vincent de Paul Society helped many to be sheltered. The poor and suffering were his masters and he was their servant. His charity did not simply involve giving himself to others, but giving completely of himself, fed by the reception of daily Communion and frequent adoration.

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## *Practices to Foster growth in Sheltering the Homeless*

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- **Read a passage of Scripture that give examples of *Sheltering the Homeless*. Re-read the passage and pick a word or phrase that stood out for you.**
  - Leviticus 25: 35-36
  - Matthew 25:35
  - Isaiah 58: 6-8
- **Read the Rule of St. Benedict as it pertains to the practice of hospitality.**
  - “Let all guests who arrive be received like Christ, for He is going to say, ‘I came as a guest, and you received me’” (53.1)
  - “In the salutation of all guests, whether arriving or departing, let all humility be shown. Let the head be bowed or the whole body prostrated on the ground in adoration of Christ, who indeed is received in their persons” (53.6)
- **Catechetical Texts that speak to *Sheltering the Homeless*:**
  - Pope John Paul II said, "A house is much more than a roof over one's head." It is "a place where a person creates and lives out his or her life." The right to housing is a consistent theme in our teaching and is found in the Church's *Charter of the Rights of the Family*. We believe society has the responsibility to protect these rights, and the denial of housing to so many constitutes a terrible injustice.
  - The Church, "sharing the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially those who are poor or affected in anyway," feels it has a serious obligation to join with those who are working, without self-interest and with dedication, to find concrete and urgent solutions to the housing problem and to see that the homeless receive the necessary attention and concern on the part of public authorities. --*John Paul II, Letter to Pontifical Commission Justitia et Pax (December 8, 1987)*.
  - “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)
  - “A man should regard his lawful possessions not merely as his own but also as common property in the sense that they should accrue to the benefit of not only himself but of others.” (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, 26)
- **Name some people from the Bible or saints who lived out the Corporal Work of Mercy, *To Shelter the Homeless*.**
  - (Examples: St. Benedict, St. Vincent de Paul, St. Francis Cabrini, etc.)
- **Ask the Lord how he is calling you to live out the Corporal Work of Mercy, *To Shelter the Homeless*?**

(Volunteer at a Homeless Shelter, Volunteer at a Habitat for Humanity, Send a care package with special treats to an orphanage, etc.)