

## Formation Ideas for Care Ministry Volunteers:

### ***The Congregation of Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary***

The Congregation of Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, residing in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, is the primary religious order worldwide tasked with spreading the message of Divine Mercy (<https://www.marian.org/>). Their publishing company [Marian Press](#) owns the publishing rights to *St. Faustina's Diary*, amongst other wonderful resources for spreading the Divine Mercy message (including the image).

They also have a [healthcare apostolate](#) for any healthcare professionals in your parish who may wish to be formed in the care of Divine Mercy, including type 1 approved continuing education units (CEUs) required for license renewal for most healthcare professionals such as nurses, physicians, and other allied health workers.

Other wonderful resources for Catholic Healthcare Professionals wishing to spread the message of Divine Mercy in their workplaces can also be found on their site, including [Nursing with the Hands of Jesus](#), which is a life-affirming healthcare manual for Catholic healthcare professionals, written by a longtime affiliated registered nurse with this special order. [At the Bedside of the Sick and Dying](#) can also be used as a formative guide for those called to minister to the dying. These two handbooks paired with the *Diary of St. Faustina* can be wonderful formation resources for your volunteers... along with any of the many other books they offer on their site.

### ***Hearts Afire Program***

The [All Hearts Afire](#) program, authored by Father Michael Gaitley, MIC, was introduced to Holy Trinity Parish in Gainesville, VA around 2012 by parishioner Terri Flay ([tflaynz@gmail.com](mailto:tflaynz@gmail.com)).

The formation for the Marian Missionary of Divine Mercy segment of the *Hearts Afire* program involves completion of the following three studies: (referred to as Stage 1 and 2 on their above website link)

- 33 Days to Morning Glory
- Consoling the Heart of Jesus
- The One Thing is Three

Holy Trinity Parish hosts the retreat courses throughout the year using study and facilitator guides along with videos. The *Hearts Afire* program can be either a parish wide program hosted at the parish itself (like at Holy Trinity), or offered as a smaller book club to form your ministry volunteers. It's a great program for all stages

for life, as we are all continuously called to cultivate within the Divine Mercy Heart of Jesus through Mary.

### ***Book Club Examples***

[\*The Art of Dying\*](#) by Br. Columba Thomas OP MD

[\*The Song at the Scaffold\*](#) by Gertrud Von Le Fort

[\*Salvifici Doloris\*](#) by Saint John Paul the Great

### ***Deeper Dive into The Heart of Marian Missionaries of Divine Mercy***

So....in short, a suggested pathway for your care volunteer formation may include both direction from the priests in your parish on suggested book study formation AND the *Hearts Afire* program.

To be called a Marian Missionary of Divine Mercy, there ought to be formation of the heart of the missionary into the Hearts of Jesus through Mary, which is provided by the *Hearts Afire* program. This will allow for a more authentically Christ-centered accompaniment of care support for the care recipient. We must remember as caregivers, that Jesus is the true 'cure-giver'.

The *Hearts Afire* program is a marriage of "True Devotion to Mary" and "Divine Mercy". True devotion to Our Lady and Divine Mercy is a bilateral reality, which is a reciprocal love relationship between Jesus in us and Jesus in the other. We are not merely passive observers but active participants, and this is where we find our truest joy.

Our Blessed Mother, in conjunction with her Spouse, the Holy Spirit, incarnates this Love of God in us, which in turn, enables us to love as Christ loves, one little 'yes' at a time.

At Holy Trinity Parish, the Marian Missionaries of Divine Mercy group was formed in 2016 after a group of parishioners completed the *Hearts Afire* retreat program by Father Michael Gaitley mentioned above. Some of these original Marian Missionaries are still visiting the original homebound people today, so this may be a good ministry for someone looking for long-term friendships/accompaniment.

How this ministry proceeds:

The Marian Missionaries of Divine Mercy group obtains a list of the homebound in our parish from the head of the Eucharist Ministers of the Homebound ministry.

The following excerpt is from a parish ministry leader:

*We try to meet each person 'where they are'. If they were open to saying (or learning) the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, we would facilitate. Same with the Rosary*

*or other prayers. We also tried to visit the right amount of time—some people want shorter visits because of fatigue or other factors; others need more time to talk, pray, and visit. Each is unique. We also tried to ascertain at some point whether they were receiving the sacraments, including Anointing of the Sick, and referred needs to the parish priest.*

*We also visited local nursing homes. This was a very valuable approach, because we could visit with many people and pray with them. The Legion of Mary does similar work, and we often saw them at the nursing home and sometimes all prayed together with the residents...we always gave to the people we visited an image of the Divine Mercy, and we also offered the Consecration to the Divine Mercy prayer.*

*Mercy is love when encountered with suffering.*

## ***Resource Tool Kit for Divine Mercy Care Ministry***

Some parishes may like to develop a folder to place in the parishioner's home during their visit(s), with the following items as suggested:

[Catholic Diocese of Arlington and Richmond Advance Medical](#)

[Directives EWTN weekly program schedule](#)

[USCCB Advance Medical Directives: Planning For Your Future](#)

[Working Through a Hard Death](#), By Father Pacholczyk

[Powerful Prayers for the Suffering](#)

[Padre Pio Ministry Palliative Care](#)

[Midwife for Souls](#)

[Free Divine Mercy Image](#)

Other suggestions to choose from:

- Rosary (Legion of Mary in your parish may be able to provide these)
- Psalm 23 prayer card
- Blessed St. Benedict Medal (some brown scapulars already have this and crucifix attached)
- [Divine Mercy Novena and Chaplet Pamphlet](#)
- Holy Water

- Brown Scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel
- Beatitude Prayer Card

Keep it simple in the beginning, and perhaps add prayer cards, etc. as the weeks go by.

***Additional Resources for Volunteers and Family Caregivers to Learn About Catholic Teachings On End-Of-Life Care:***

[National Catholic Bioethics Center](#)

This phenomenal website also has a link where anyone can obtain free consultations regarding best practices applied to Catholic Church teachings on bioethical issues, guidance in moral decision making, or other matters to be directed to an NCBC ethicist. There is also a 24/7 hotline for emergencies. (<https://www.ncbcenter.org/about-personal-consults>)

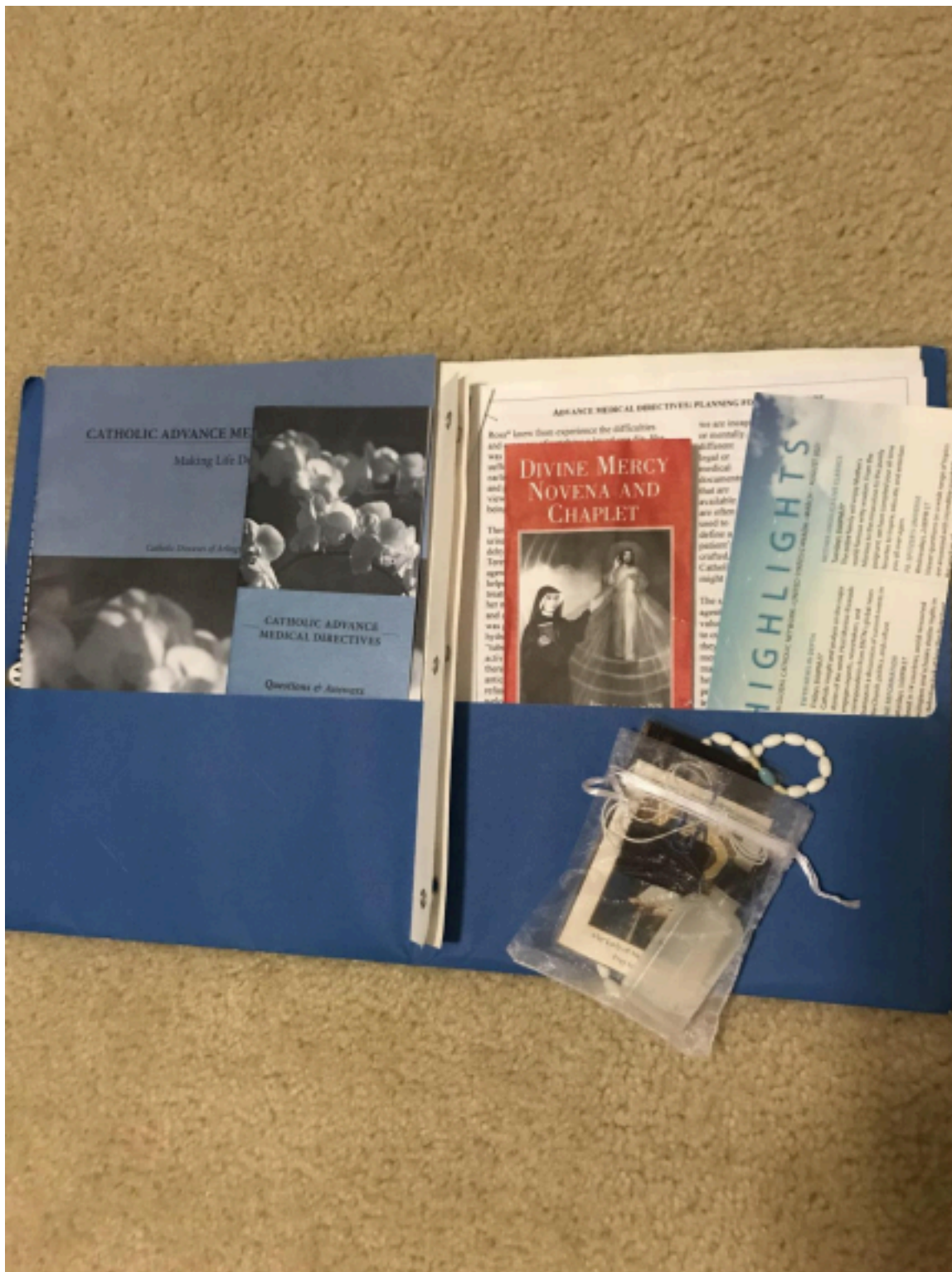
[Sisters of Life](#)

[Redemptive Suffering in the Life of the Church](#) by Diana L. Ruzicka

Each parish will have a unique look to this ministry. Remember to collaborate closely with your pastors as well as existing ministries which may also be serving the elderly, such as a ministry already providing meals (if needed) in the parish as well as the Legion of Mary for additional visits (if desired from the homebound parishioner).

Collaborating between one or two additional parishes in your area, especially with Catholic healthcare workers, can also provide many additional insights and resources. For instance, this pilot program is a combined effort between St. John's in Warrenton, Holy Trinity in Gainesville, and All Saints in Manassas with Catholic nurses at the front line, a few who are even Legion of Mary members.

May God richly bless you and your efforts in this important ministry to His children on their journey back home to Him.



Name \_\_\_\_\_



*A Prayer for Difficult Moments*

Eternal God, in whom mercy is endless and the treasury of compassion inexhaustible, look kindly upon us and increase Your mercy in us, that in difficult moments we might not despair nor become dependent, but with great confidence submit ourselves to Your holy will, which is Love and Mercy itself. [Amen.] (Diary of St. Faustina, 998)

*The Chaplet of Divine Mercy*

*(for recitation in ordinary mercy hours)*

Begin with:

Our Father... Hail Mary... The Cross.

On the first Our Father begin:

Eternal Father, I offer You the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Your dearly beloved Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, in atonement for our sins and those of the whole world.

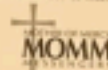
On the ten Hail Mary begin:

For the sake of His sorrowful Passion, have mercy on us and on the whole world.

Conclude with:

Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us and on the whole world. (Three times.)

By saying the chaplet you are bringing  
humanity closer to Me. (Diary, 929)



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