

How may I serve – Volunteering in the Community

Headline: Jesus has made it crystal clear that to gain his favor we are to help those in need, be it physical needs or spiritual needs. We need to look past our own needs and reach out to those who are marginalized.

Objective: Service is more than volunteering; it is a response to Christ's commandment to love one another. Whether feeding the hungry, visiting the lonely, mentoring youth, supporting families in crisis, or simply offering kindness to a neighbor, every act of service becomes an opportunity to share God's love.

Song Suggestion: The Servant Song

Bible and Catechism Readings

Matt 25:35-40

For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me. Then the righteous will answer him and say, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?" And the King will say to them in reply, "Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for the least brothers of mine, you did for me."

James 2:14-17

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, and one of you says to them "Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well" but you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it? So also faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

Catechism 1932

The duty of making oneself a neighbor to others and actively serving them becomes even more urgent when it involves the disadvantaged, in whatever area this may be. "As you did to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me"

Catechism 2443

God blesses those who come to the aid of the poor and rebukes those who turn away from the them

Saint: Pedro Arupe, SJ. (1914-1991). The quote "men for others" is often attributed to St Ignatius, but it was in fact, Father Arupe who coined the quote. He was the Superior General of the Jesuits from 1965 to 1983. Prior to that he was living in Japan when the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. He and 8 other Jesuits were within the blast radius and miraculously all 8 survived and went on to tend to the hundreds of victims of the bombing. He dedicated his life to serving others and fighting for social justice for the poor and marginalized. In 2018, the process of beatification of Fr Arupe was begun by Rome.

Vignette: – William, by all accounts was a good man. He worked diligently to provide for his family, tried to be a good husband and role model for his three children, and spent time as his schedule allowed to be involved in his kid's activities. He retired at age 65 and after going on a retreat was encouraged to attend Fathers team. As he got comfortable with the fellow fathers, he noticed that several fathers seemed very active volunteering their time to serve in various ministries—the prison ministry, food pantry, Habitat for humanity, etc... He also observed that those same men had certain joy about them as they described the various activities they participated in. Thus William decided he would venture out of his comfort zone and try some ministry which served others. William enjoyed doing physical activities, particularly those related to building. He settled on Habitat for Humanity and soon found himself deeply engaged with that organization. He observed the happiness of the future home owners as he worked side by side with them and realized his efforts were really having a positive impact on their family. Additionally, he met many like minded men who felt called to help others. The volunteerism became contagious and William found himself extending himself to other opportunities. Once he changed his focus from worrying about himself and his problems to how he can serve others, he became much more content and at peace. The biggest bonus is that he is following the command of Jesus to help those in need.

Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion:

1. What are your talents—artistic, mentoring, construction, business acumen, etc... What charity could benefit from your talents?
2. What is holding you back from volunteering your time and talents to a worthy cause?
3. If you are uncomfortable to reach out on your own, is there a friend or family member that has a similar interest and that you could partner with and encourage one another to follow through?
4. Do you know someone who volunteers frequently? If so, share what you observe about this person?
5. If you do volunteer, do you experience a contentment knowing that you helped others and that you are fulfilling Christ's directive to help those in need?

Resources:

"Improving your Serve", Charles R Swindoll

Action Plan:

1. Set a realistic goal for the amount of time you can commit to volunteering. Start with a small achievable goal and experience the feeling of knowing you helped others.
2. Set a date that you must complete a volunteer activity by, don't procrastinate

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