

Service Project Suggestions



When he had washed their feet, put his garments back on and reclined at table again, he said to them, Do you realize what I have done for you? If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet.

I give you a new commandment: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

SERVICE – WHAT’S THE POINT?!

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, and all the nations will be assembled before him....Then the king will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. 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 one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.’” *Matt. 25:31-40*

What powerful words! We are so closely united to Christ that when we do good, we do it to HIM! By our generosity, we feed HIM, we clothe HIM, we comfort HIM! This is our mission as Christians...to love all people because they are made in God’s image and they are precious. To help you on the pathway to fulfilling this mission, we have included a service component in the Family Centered Faith Formation program.

We ask that you perform two projects each year, one that reflects the Corporal Works of Mercy and one that reflects the Spiritual Works of Mercy. When you perform your projects, please complete the service reports found at the back of your binder and return them at the end of the year. Because we believe that parents have a unique role in the formation of their children’s faith, we ask that you choose projects that your whole family can participate in and benefit from. If you involve your children in deciding which projects to perform, they will enjoy them even more!

We hope this will be a wonderful experience for your family. You are not limited to the suggestions given in this booklet. If you have new ideas for service projects, please let us know so we can pass them on to the other families.

Love One Another!



WORKS OF MERCY SUGGESTION:

Below are some suggestions for performing each of the traditional Works of Mercy.



The Corporal Works of Mercy

(from Matthew 25:35-46)

1. Feed the hungry.
2. Give drink to the thirsty
3. Clothe the naked.
4. Shelter the homeless.
5. Visit the sick
6. Visit the imprisoned.
7. Bury the dead.

The Spiritual Works of Mercy

1. Counsel the doubtful.
2. Instruct the ignorant.
3. Admonish the sinner.
4. Comfort the sorrowful.
5. Forgive injuries.
6. Bear wrongs patiently.
7. Pray for the living and dead.

Corporal Works of Mercy Ideas:

Feed the hungry.

1. Eat less, and more simply, and give the money you save to the hungry. You can either help someone you know, or give to an organization that works with the world's poor. Here's an example of what one person did: He usually ate 2 strips of bacon for breakfast every morning. During Lent he sacrificed eating the bacon; then he bought a ham for a poor family's Easter dinner with the money he saved.

2. Bake bread, cookies or other "extras" for holiday food baskets given to the poor by various groups. Help assemble and distribute those baskets. You can call Daybreak Shelter in Joliet to volunteer to make breakfast for the residents. Call 815-774-4663 ext. 3107 to volunteer.
3. Go grocery shopping for someone who finds it hard to get out. Take a person shopping who cannot do it alone.
4. Volunteer at a soup kitchen, not only cooking but also serving the meal and visiting with those who come. Watch for the sign up sheets in the narthex to volunteer to help at Daybreak Shelter or bring food. St. Francis Xavier volunteers every month beginning in September. Contact Don Newhall at 815-690-3050 or djnewhall@yahoo.com for more information.
5. Donate food monthly to Bags of Hope to feed the needy in our area. Check the bulletin for dates and food items needed.
6. Volunteer to deliver meals to the homebound. Call Meals on Wheels at 815-726-0094 and speak to Sarah Westerman.
7. Become involved in programs for the elderly, the sick and the needy--they often need either food or cash donations, but sometimes need help around their homes, or may just enjoy a visit.
8. Feed My Starving Children is an organization that prepares and packages food for the poorest of the poor. To volunteer go to www.fmsc.org and submit a request to serve. You may go with the parish or on your own as a family.
9. Expand this work of mercy to include other kinds of hungers: What about those who hunger for a little affection, a little notice, a little encouragement, for acceptance. Keep looking for opportunities and you'll be sure to find them!

Give drink to the thirsty.

Many of the suggestions for feeding the hungry also apply to this Work of Mercy.

1. Most children in third world countries die before the age of 5 because of diseases associated with the lack of clean drinking water. Support organizations such as Catholic Relief Services which enable villagers to design and construct safe and clean drinking systems. Visit the website at www.crs.org for more information.
2. Offer something to drink to someone who is working, to guests, to anyone not able to provide themselves with a drink.
3. Go out of your way to anticipate the needs of an elderly or sick person and give drink to them.
4. Expand this work of mercy to include people who are thirsty for someone to listen to or someone with whom to share wisdom or experience they have acquired. Become more aware of the shy person who is always in the background, ignored. What about people who thirst for a cheering smile or touch, an encouraging word?

Clothe the naked.

1. Live more simply by cleaning out your closet and sharing all those extra clothes with the needy. Be sure those clothes are in good shape--with no missing buttons or raveling seams.

2. Provide new baby clothes, diapers and bottles for pro-life groups who help mothers-to-be. Waterleaf Women's Center would love to pass on your donations to moms in need. Contact them at (630)701-6270.

3. Be generous to appeals for refugees and the needy in your area.

Shelter the homeless.

1. Welcome visitors to your home with true hospitality. Invite people who are unable to return your hospitality.

2. Help with after-school programs for children whose parents work and who cannot go home until late.

3. Welcome newcomers to your neighborhood, church, workplace, or group to which you belong.

4. Get involved with Habitat for Humanity, which builds affordable homes for those who otherwise couldn't afford them. If children are too young to help, could you raise money and donate it to this group?

5. Help with a Homeless Shelter.

6. Get involved with groups who provide safe housing and help for unwed mothers, school programs which help young moms finish their education, groups which counsel pregnant women about adoption as a better choice than abortion.

7. Work politically, financially and practically to help the homeless get off the streets and into acceptable shelter.

8. Offer help to refugees who have been forced from their homes (either helping them in this country or helping organizations which care for them in refugee centers).
9. Become an advocate for the elderly who are no longer able to live in their own homes. Remember some are taken advantage of by their kin, or are made to feel uncomfortable in the relative's home in which they are forced to live.
10. Respond quickly with clothing, cooking utensils, furniture or other needs when someone loses their home due to fire or flood or other disaster.
11. Expand this work to include opening your heart to share others' troubles and supporting them in their time of need.

Visit the sick.

1. Notice when someone seems ill or when they do not show up as usual for any activity or gathering. Check on them and offer help. See if a person or family needs meals brought in or errands run.
2. Visit people in the hospital, sick at home, or the homebound or residents in institutions such as the VA Hospital or a mental institution. A short visit and a prayer are a great gift.
3. Volunteer in a nursing home. Many residents would greatly appreciate a visit, some help reading letters or the paper, someone to listen to their stories. Many crave visits from small children and animals, which are so uplifting for people deprived of their lively company.
4. Call, send a card; send flowers to someone who is sick.

5. Expand this Work to include much more than bodily sicknesses. What might you do to help those who are mentally ill, or depressed and in need of cheering?

Visit the imprisoned.

1. Investigate opportunities to help those in jail or prison near you. Many programs appreciate the donation of books or magazines for the inmates to read and study.

2. Go to www.cjtinc.org to learn ways to help with the Aunt Mary's Storybook project where books and tapes are donated to mothers who are in prison. The mother's voice is recorded as she reads age-appropriate storybooks to her children. The books and tapes are then sent to her children so they will feel their mother's presence, even while she is far away from them.

3. Can you help in other ways to assist families of prisoners? Many really depended on the wages of the person in prison. Are they able to apply for and obtain public assistance on their own or do they need someone to help them negotiate the system? What about when they are allowed to visit their loved one in prison--do they have transportation, childcare?

4. Remember those who are imprisoned in nursing homes or in their own homes, such as the handicapped, the elderly, the sick, the young mother. Make a visit, play games with the residents, polish the ladies' nails, offer to run errands or take them somewhere, or even occasionally phone them and "check in".

5. Expand this work to include anyone denied the freedom of being fully alive: by prejudice or unreasonable expectations or lies or.....

Bury the dead.

1. Visit a cemetery. You might clean off the grave markers and read the name of the person who is buried there. Then pray for that person by name.

2. Think how you might help someone who is suffering the loss of a loved one. Out-of-town family members may need to be picked up at the airport; young children may need to be watched during the preparations and funeral; food may be needed.

3. Visit the bereaved. Make sure widows or widowers are able to handle the details of practical life that the deceased used to handle.

4. Expand this Work to include burying grudges, old injuries or resentments that prevent healthy relationships with the living.

Spiritual Works of Mercy Ideas:

Counsel the doubtful.

1. Examine recent conversations and interactions. Has anyone asked questions about values or "Is there more to life than this?" Pray for the ability to hear those tentative faith searchings and respond to them.

2. Listen to someone who is having doubts about their faith and share your own certainty of faith. Or, connect them to a parish staff member or other person who can help them.
3. Become a better listener to friends, family members, co-workers. Be someone who shares others' worries, fears, joys, accomplishments.
4. Pray for professional counselors that they may help people in a truly positive way.
5. Give thanks and pray for those who have counseled you, and those to whom you give counsel.

Instruct the Uninformed.

1. Call to mind any situations in which you act as a mentor or teacher, when you share knowledge or skills. Is this in the home, as a parent or older sibling? Or in a work situation? A volunteer activity? Remember, you often teach more by example than you do by words. Do you incorporate Christian values and morals in your teaching? Pray for the ability to teach so that others may become better human beings.
2. Make a presentation that teaches some aspect of the faith. When your family attends the Family Centered Faith Formation sessions, volunteer to offer your thoughts and insights so all will benefit.
3. Parents, volunteer to be a Catechist. You will show your child in a very real way the importance of your faith! Get input from your child as you prepare to teach a class.

Admonish the sinner.

1. Give good example to show an alternative to sinful actions.
2. Be able to articulate how you make decisions about what is good and what is evil, and how you handle moral dilemmas.
3. Speak out for what is right, identify what is wrong, but always separate the sinner from the sin. Remember that God hates the sin, but loves the sinner!
4. Seize opportunities to bring a Christian viewpoint into discussions of moral issues such as abortion and euthanasia.
5. Pray for sinners.
6. Go to confession. Before we can help others overcome sin, we have to take a good look at our own failings.

Comfort the sorrowful.

Many of the suggestions offered under "Bury the Dead" apply here as well.

1. Take time to listen to someone who is grieving or heavily burdened by life. Have compassion ("suffer with") the person.
2. Remember the bereaved long after the funeral, at holidays both large and small (the first Valentine's Day after loss of a spouse, the first All Soul's Day after loss of a family member, etc.)
3. Go to www.stopbullying.gov to explore ways to stop bullies from torturing others in school. This site shows short cartoon strips that have been created by children to get the message out. Perhaps your family

can come up with a new way to present the concept. Take a stand to comfort victims of bullying!

4. Collect and donate items to the military troops. Go to www.operationgratitude.com to learn how to make and donate paracord survival bracelets or do a number of other projects.

5. Make blankets for Joliet Area Community Hospice, to comfort those who are dying. Call [815-740-4104](tel:815-740-4104) for more information.

6. Visit and spend time with the elderly. Lakewood Nursing home has Bingo every Saturday and the residents really enjoy visits from the kids. Contact Jamie Damian – [815-436-3400](tel:815-436-3400) x219. Or, to participate in a variety of other activities with senior citizens contact Patti Eulitz at American House Cedarlake – [815-254-3564](tel:815-254-3564) x252, or Tony Paepinto at Heritage Woods Assisted Living – [815-267-3800](tel:815-267-3800), or Linda McCluskey at The Timbers of Shorewood – [815-609-0669](tel:815-609-0669).

7. “Ready Set Ride” is an amazing facility that serves as a therapeutic horse riding farm serving over 100 disabled children. Visit their website at www.readysetride.org or email them at volunteer@readysetride.org or call [815-439-3659](tel:815-439-3659).

(Note: Volunteers must be at least 14 years of age.)

8. Bugs Pals is a wonderful organization run by Carrie and Dan Siemek in honor of their daughter Natalie. “Our daughter Natalie was born with a rare heart defect, Hypoplastic Right Heart Syndrome. In her 15 months, Natalie showed us what family is really about. Still today she is in our daily conversations and in the front of our thoughts. Our mission is to keep Natalie's legacy alive and ensure she is never forgotten. Thank you so much for helping.” They currently run two separate book and toy drives for Advocate Children’s hospital in Oak Lawn-typically in August and March. Please contact Dan Siemek for more information at dsiemek@comcast.net

9. “Well Wishes Projects are designed to provide individuals or families with little extras for birthdays, holidays and sometimes just because.” Please contact Dawn Kemp at well.wishes.project@gmail.com for more information.

Forgive injuries.

1. Pray for God’s help in forgiving injuries done to you. Pray for the person who has hurt you, not only that they’ll change, but that God will bless them.
2. Help others forgive the injuries you inflict on them--ask for forgiveness. Adopt a regular custom of examining your conscience so that you become more aware of the damage you do to others and develop ways to avoid those actions.
3. It is very important to forgive and to start over. What grudges do you hold from old injuries? What relationships need some loving work to revive the caring that used to be so mutual?

Bear wrongs patiently.

1. Examine your conscience often to be sure an over-inflated sense of your own importance doesn’t cause you to consider the usual bumps of life to be intentional wrongs directed at you.
2. Consider your situation in life and your responsibilities in family, work, church, volunteer efforts, social interactions--where can you more patiently bear authentic wrongs and give good example in patient coexistence to others?

3. Prayerfully offer the wrongs you suffer to our Lord, joined to his Passion, offered for the redemption of the world.

4. Pray for the wisdom and courage to confront authentic wrongs when that is possible.

Pray for the living and the dead.

1. Take time early in the day to write the names of five living persons who need your prayers in a special way. As you write their names, visualize them, hear their voices, and petition God for what they most need. Take time late in the day to write the names of five deceased persons who come to mind. Recall some event from their life that has made them significant to you.

Ask God to hold them in an eternal, loving embrace (*from Praying with Dorothy Day by James Allaire and Rosemary Broughton*)

You can also spend an hour at Adoration at St. Francis Xavier praying for these people. Adoration times: Tuesdays from 5-8 pm and Thursdays after the 9:15 am Mass until 10:45 am.

2. Remember to include in your prayers not only family members and friends, but also business associates, people with whom we have difficulty, groups of people (such as refugees, victims of natural disasters, etc.), and of course, those who have asked you to pray for them.

3. When you go to a wake, take one of the personalized holy cards and place it in your Bible. At special times, perhaps during Advent or Lent, take out the cards and pray for these deceased relatives and friends.

4. Save your Christmas cards and take out one at a time during the year to pray for the people who sent you greetings.
5. Pray for an end to abortion at the Aurora Planned Parenthood. All ages can come and pray for the parents as well as the children affected by abortion. For more information contact Penny Giunta at 815-609-8077 or e-mail her at penny@st-francis-xavier.com.
6. Take time to pray the Rosary as a family, or even a decade of the rosary, at least once a week.