

Service Programs

At Notre Dame we are introducing a two part service program. The Works of Mercy Program will oversee service hours connected to the Religion classroom and grades. The Volunteer Program will oversee hours going towards the House System. Hours can be turned in for both programs at the same time but criteria for each program is different.

Works of Mercy Program

In the Chapter 25 of the Gospel of Matthew, Our Lord tells us that when He comes in glory to judge men, He will assess them based on how they have treated Him. When the righteous ask when they ever fed or clothed Him, He replies “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me” (Mt 25:40). In so doing, He makes it clear to each and every one of us that we must serve those in need.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church further emphasizes the need to assist the poor, expressing a “preferential love” for “those who are oppressed by poverty” (CCC 2448). This love includes not just material poverty, “but also to the many forms of cultural and religious poverty” (CCC 2444).

We have thus taken as our inspiration for our high school Christian service program the model of the Works of Mercy:

The Corporal Works of Mercy

- **To feed the hungry**
- **To give drink to the thirsty**
- **To clothe the naked**
- **To shelter the homeless**
- **To visit the sick**
- **To ransom the captive (to visit the imprisoned)**
- **To bury the dead**

The Spiritual Works of Mercy

- **To instruct the ignorant**
- To counsel the doubtful
- To admonish sinners
- To bear wrongs patiently
- To forgive offences willingly
- To comfort the afflicted
- To pray for the living and the dead

The goal of our program is to assist our high school students in becoming mature Christians through learning to live a life of service to others according to these Works of Mercy.

All Notre Dame High School students are required to perform **10 hours connected to the Works of Mercy per year** with an approved organization or individual. The work must benefit the poor in some capacity—those who are poor materially, physically, emotionally or spiritually. All work/projects must be pre-approved by the Chaplain/Service Coordinator. A variety of different types of service is strongly encouraged—students should be willing to get outside their comfort zones.

Work for the next school year may begin as early as June 1 of each year (including June 1 after the 8th Grade year) and half must be completed before the end of first semester with the second half being required by the end of second semester. Students must turn in signed service forms to document the hours spent. Forms must be signed by the individual responsible for supervising a student's work.

In addition to the hours each students must turn in a paper and a project (one per semester). Freshmen and Sophomores must submit a 1-2 page Reflection Paper; Juniors and Seniors must submit a 3-4 page Reflection Paper. This paper should be double-spaced in 12-point font and address the following:

1. Why did you choose this organization or individual to serve?
2. Describe the service and how it affected those served.
3. How do you see this act of service connected to the Works of Mercy?
4. How did this service affect you?

For the project, guidelines will be developed by their religion teacher.

As mentioned above, agencies or programs must be pre-approved non-profit organizations, convalescent or nursing homes, or approved individuals. In addition, organizations must not be in opposition to the teachings of the Catholic Church, as determined by the school. Work must be performed on the student's time, i.e., students will not be excused from school to perform service except in extraordinary situations and with the explicit approval of the Chaplain. Students may not receive any compensation for the service, nor may the service be for a family member. Fundraising or participation in a walk-a-thon or similar activity, even for an approved organization, do not count toward service hours. Travel time does not count toward service hours.

Service Examples

- Serve meals at a shelter or temporary residence
 - Deliver meals to poor or shut-ins
 - Hand out food at a food pantry
 - Build/repair a house with Habitat for Humanity
 - Visit residents/patients at nursing homes or hospitals
 - Volunteer at hospitals
 - Take a mission trip to an underprivileged area
 - Teach religious education at a parish
 - Teach at a summer Vacation Bible School, Faith Camp, or SEARCH (max of five hours)
 - Tutor underprivileged children
 - Volunteer at schools for the underprivileged/disabled helping the children
 - Volunteer with Special Olympics as a hugger, cheerer, etc.
 - Volunteer as a camp counselor for disabled/underprivileged children
 - Volunteer at a Crisis Pregnancy Center
 - Attend the annual March for Life (a total of two hours may be counted)
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- Parish activities (cleaning, maintenance, etc.) (max of five hours)
 - Pack meals for the poor
 - Shelve items at a food pantry
 - Work for Catholic Charities
 - Help at fundraisers for charity
 - Volunteer at the headquarters of a charity organization
 - Serve/set-up/clean-up activities that benefit the poor
 - Sort/organize gifts for the poor
 - Cooking at a homeless shelter/soup kitchen

Unacceptable Activities

The following are unacceptable for consideration as service either because they are not works of mercy, do not serve the poor, or are not easily verifiable:

- Babysitting
- Sports (coaching, tournament help, etc); exceptions: working with organizations such as Special Olympics, Boys/Girls Club, Knights of Columbus, tournaments for which all the proceeds are for charity
- Things done for relatives (parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc.)
- Private or communal prayer/devotions
- Work for political campaigns or rallies
- Work at for profit companies or offices
- Anything pertaining to work with animals that is not a therapy program
- Camps that are not specifically held for the disadvantaged
- Donating money to a cause or charity
- Working bake sales

Volunteer Program

We recognize that there are many valuable ways of serving the school, church, and community outside of the works of mercy and we want to be able to draw attention to these hours. Hours turned in outside of the “Works of Mercy Program” will not count towards the hours necessary for religion grades but will go towards the House System. These hours will be turned into the faculty moderator for the house. Hours that count towards the volunteer program must meet the following criteria: organizations must not be in opposition to the teachings of the Catholic Church, as determined by the school. Work must be performed on the student’s time, i.e., students will not be excused from school to perform service except in extraordinary situations and with the explicit approval of the Chaplain and heads of houses (such as field day or blood drive). Students may not receive any compensation for the service, nor may the service be for a family member.

Unacceptable Activities

The following are unacceptable for consideration:

- Things done for relatives (parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc.)
- Private or communal prayer/devotions
- Work for political campaigns or rallies
- Work at for profit companies or offices
- Donating money to a cause or charity
- Working bake sales

Chaplain along with the heads of houses have final say on what counts and does not for the Volunteer hours program.

House points:

One hour of service equals two house points.