

Callie Howard

Cardinal Newman

Oxford Scholar

Service Above Self

What defines a meaningful life? Success, wealth, happiness, or the impact we have on others. Often true fulfillment doesn't come from the amount of money you make, or the things you buy, but from how we serve those around us. Service above self is not just a phrase, it is a way of life that many people embrace in which it calls them to act, give, and uplift those in need. Cardinal Newman has taught me values of faith, love, community, and service. Through my four years at Newman I have shaped my morals and beliefs on what I believe makes a truly meaningful life, helping those around me. I've learned that true happiness doesn't come from the money you make or the amount of stuff you have, but from using your gifts to uplift those around you.

Putting yourself before others in a world that prioritizes individual success over anything else can be very difficult. However, the environment I have grown up in has prompted me to serve and act in a way to help those around me. My inspiration to serve has always come from my family, more specifically, my mother, Christy Foedisch. She has always made serving others a priority in her life. She has devoted her life to helping others, from working in the special needs class at Montgomery High School, to now working for Students Rising Above, a non-profit that helps high school students get to college despite many difficult conditions. Her dedication to helping others has influenced me to use my life to serve, and act on the things I care about.

Not only does my personal inspiration invoke a sense of service in my life, so does my innate sense of obligation to contribute to the well-being of others. This sense of responsibility

comes from the idea that as a member of a community, we are all connected and rely on one another's support. An example of this is the Cardinal Newman community, when one person or group of people succeed, it uplifts everyone, and when someone is struggling, it is our responsibility to offer a helping hand as support. This obligation to help others, role modeled by my family and upbringing, is not just a choice, it's a commitment to making a difference. This passion is something I carry with me in every aspect of my life in hopes to make a positive impact on those around me, however big or small.

In the modern era, there has developed a very thin line between genuine service, and self promotion. Specifically, the age of social media has given a greater rise to this issue. Selfless actions are often shared for public recognition amongst ones following. However, I believe that there are communities out there, like Newman, where true service above self can exist, even in a world surrounded by likes, shares, and follows. Newman has opened my eyes to many individuals who embrace service above self and contribute to the value of strong, supportive communities built upon trust and solidarity. The bible says "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18, Matthew 22:39, Mark 12:31), this quote is embodied at Newman through the students and their actions to serve. Through helping our neighbors, volunteering, and participating in community events, these small acts of service create ripple effects that spread over the larger community, ultimately bringing everyone together. Service not only helps others, it offers a source of empowerment. These acts of service allow communities to come together and individuals to prioritize collective needs over individual desires, showing the power of putting service above yourself.

This sense of empowerment is deeply tied to the fulfillment that comes from genuinely helping others. Helping others creates an inherent sense of meaning and purpose in life. Service

can come in many forms, small acts of kindness, to grand gestures of volunteer work. Either way, knowing that my actions are making a difference creates a sense of fulfillment within. Service not only helps those around us, it also promotes well-being and true happiness amongst people within the community. By having a positive impact on others, I get a deeper feeling than just success, I feel like I have a purpose and true contentment. Service has also offered me a sense of long term pleasure. A big house, or a nice car are great, but being able to devote your life to making a positive difference on others invokes an overall sense of happiness and life-long success that doesn't come from material possessions. By building deeper connections, and putting others before myself, I am able to see what truly matters in life. Uplifting those around me and being able to use my skills to support other people is the greatest gift of all.

This deeper understanding of service has been reinforced by my experiences at Cardinal Newman, where I've learned how faith shapes the act of serving others. I have learned that Jesus Christ is the ultimate model of selfless service. His whole life was dedicated to helping others, and paving the way for all Catholics to live a fulfilled meaningful life. He taught people the importance of humility by loving everyone as his own, and caring for the sick and hungry. "You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love," (Galatians 5:13-14) highlights the overall meaning of what it is to be a Catholic, to sacrifice oneself for the benefit of others. Not only do I follow in Christ's footsteps by serving, but also by recognizing that the dignity of others should always be upheld, regardless of their circumstances.

As I graduate this year, and move on from Cardinal Newman and into my next steps, the lessons of service, community, and selflessness I learned will continue to guide me in everything I do. Service above self, is not just a saying, it is a lifestyle that has shaped who I am and what I

stand for. Through my examples of family, school, and faith, I have learned how to better myself through service. I have adapted the idea that true success is not measured by wealth, but by the impact I have on others. It is through service that I find purpose and can live a truly happy, meaningful life.