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The Value of Service

Service is not just a part of the Christian faith. It *is* the Christian faith. Jesus lived a life of service- He forgave the sinners, touched the sick, fed the hungry, and ultimately gave His life as the greatest act of selfless love in history. He didn't wait for people to come to Him, but instead chose to willingly seek out those in need. In Peter 4:10-11, we are urged— "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms... Be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord" (Bible). This verse reminds us that when we serve others, we are serving Christ Himself. This passage is not just an instruction, but a statement that describes who we are called to be. Every gift that we possess, such as our time, our talents, and our presence, is meant to be shared with all of God's people.

At Cardinal Newman, service is much more than a requirement—it is a reflection of our faith and a way to strengthen our relationship with God and our community. It is integrated into our school's culture, not just as an academic requirement, but as a reflection of our mission as a faith based community. Through service, we not only express our faith, but deepen it. As Catholics, we follow Jesus' example. He was not chasing wealth or status, but remained humble His whole life by helping everyone that He could. God calls us to do the same. Hebrews 13:16 tells us "And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased" (Bible). Service is like a bridge. It connects us to others, to God, and to the best versions of ourselves.

The concept of service above self is powerful because it challenges us to push past our comfort zones and our own self-interest. It asks us to go against the norms of today's society, which tell us to prioritize our own success, comfort, and to seek validation from others. The question we must ask ourselves is not just *what* we do for others but *why* we do it. Are we putting the needs of others first for recognition, or because we know in our hearts that it is the right thing to do? True service means sacrifice.

It doesn't always feel convenient, and can even feel unappreciated sometimes. Life is busy and stressful. We're overwhelmed by academic workload, family responsibilities, extracurriculars, and personal struggles. It can be tempting and very easy to say, "I don't have time." However, service doesn't always have to be grand or time-consuming. It can be as simple as offering kind words, checking in on someone, holding the door, or even a smile. In the moments where we make the harder choice for the benefit of others, service is the most meaningful. It becomes a sacrifice, an offering of love. That sacrifice provides joy that is different from joy that we get from most other things. Not short term happiness, but deep, genuine joy that only occurs when we feel fulfilled. Service gives us purpose, and when we serve out of genuine love instead of obligation, we begin to see service not as a burden, but as a privilege.

Without people acting from their hearts and recognizing the act of service in this positive light, our world would be filled with isolation, selfishness, and a general sense of disconnect. Service is the foundation of a healthy community. Communities thrive when people prioritize the needs of one other over their own, fostering a sense of trust, safety, and belonging. Service brings together individuals from different backgrounds, uniting them in a shared mission of compassion. It teaches us that no matter our differences, we are all God's children, and we must thus support one another no matter what.

Service is not just about who we are helping, but it is about personal growth too. It changes us from the inside out. When we spend time serving, it helps us develop valuable virtues that can't be taught in a standard academic setting, like humility and gratitude. We see life and our blessings from a whole different point of view, recognizing the struggles of others and what we take for granted in our own lives. It teaches us to slow down, to listen, and to truly notice those who usually get overlooked.

A good example could be a student who volunteers at a homeless shelter. At first, that student might feel nervous, uncomfortable, and not sure how to help. The environment is most likely unfamiliar, and the people seem different. Over time, however, through conversations and trivial acts of kindness, these walls start to come down. The student gets to know some of the people that they serve, learning their stories and understanding their circumstances. They begin to see these people not as the "homeless", but as individuals with their own dreams, challenges, and worth. This recognition is holy. It is the

realization that every person is made in the image of God, and therefore deserves dignity and love. This kind of awareness forces us to be more appreciative of our own blessings, and use them for good. Service opens our eyes to injustice, calling us to action. It becomes not just an act of charity, but a commitment to justice. The Catholic Church teaches that through service, we grow in love, and that love must be active. Saint Mother Teresa once said, “Prayer in action is love, love in action is service” (Hall). Any act of service, no matter how small or seemingly ordinary, can inspire great love and make a huge difference in someone's life.

In addition to serving because of our faith and shared humanity, we serve because we are wired to care. Biology confirms what our religion teaches us: humans are made for community. We are social creatures, and always have been. It is proven through evolutionary science that helping others, especially people within our community, improves the survival of the group as a whole (Braren). Since the beginning of humanity, helping others has not only been good, but necessary. The human brain even releases feel good chemicals like dopamine, oxytocin, and serotonin when we help others, which motivates us to keep doing so (Ritvo). Furthermore, to see suffering affects our emotions. It moves our hearts, and we feel called to help if we witness poverty, hunger, loneliness, or struggle. True service is about recognizing our shared responsibility to care for one another, acting upon it, and reaping the spiritual, personal, and external benefits.

Service is the core value of Christianity. It reflects who Jesus was and who we are called to be. He lived a life of humble, active love, showing us that true faith is expressed through action. At Cardinal Newman, service isn't just a checkbox, but a meaningful way to live out our Catholic identity and deepen our connection with God and others. Though service can be inconvenient or uncomfortable, it challenges us to look beyond ourselves, grow in virtue, and offer love even when it's hard. It unites communities, builds empathy, and reminds us of our shared humanity. Whether driven by faith, biology, or both, we are all made to serve. When we serve with genuine love, not for recognition, but for the well-being of others, we reflect God's love in the world, inspiring change that causes a ripple effect far beyond what we can see.

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