Christian Service Guidelines, 2026-2027

Our Mission

Christian service at St. Joseph High School is rooted in our call to live the Gospel. As disciples of Christ, we are called to recognize the dignity of every person and serve those most in need. Rooted in the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy, our service helps form us in the virtues necessary for a life of Christian discipleship. Through service, we encounter Christ in others and respond to His command to love our neighbor, while striving to make Christ present to those we serve.

Service Expectations by Grade Level

Freshmen & Sophomores

Students may complete service hours through:

- Service within St. Joseph High School
- Service in their local community (parish, school, town)
- Opportunities that support those in need (hungry, homeless, sick, elderly, disabled, economically disadvantaged)

Focus: Growing in the virtue of charity.

Juniors & Seniors

Students are called to a deeper level of service by:

- Engaging in direct service to those in need
- Ministries and opportunities that fulfill the Corporal Works of Mercy (serving the hungry, homeless, sick, elderly, disabled, or economically disadvantaged)
    - Supporting organizations that directly serve these populations
    - *example*: Volunteering for Swim Across the Sound (supports cancer research), etc.
- Ministries that fulfill the Spiritual Works of Mercy (altar servers, lectors, cantors, choirs, religious education, etc.)

Focus: To make Christ present to those in need.

What Qualifies as Christian Service?

To be approved, service must:

- Be voluntary (no payment or compensation)
- Benefit others, especially those in need
- Reflect the mission and values of the Catholic Church
- Be completed through a non-profit organization, parish, school, or approved community effort.

Opportunities @ SJ

The following may count toward service hours when completed outside of normal obligations:

- Pre-approved St. Joseph High School programs and events that serve others
- St. Joseph High School organized camps (school-run programs only; not facility rentals by businesses)
    - Students assisting with athletic camps **must receive pre-approval**.
- Student Ambassador Program (school tours, open houses, and events where students give their time freely)

Non-Approved Activities

The following will not be approved for service hours:

General Restrictions:

- Volunteering for for-profit businesses (doctor's offices, vets, law firms, retail stores, gyms, studios etc.)
- Babysitting, housework, or yard work for family, friends, or neighbors
    - *Note: Initiatives organized by community centers and non-profits are allowed*.
- Any work for which you are paid, or would normally be paid
- Service connected to organizations that contradict the mission of the Catholic Church

Additional Restrictions to Consider:

- Sports managers (valid for Freshmen & Sophomores, but **not** for Juniors & Seniors)
- Extracurricular activities that serve to the benefit of the participants, including:
    - *Most club activities*
    - *Potlucks*
    - *Performing in musicals*

- Participation in <u>privately owned</u> gyms, teams, clinics, dance studios, tournaments, preschools and daycares, tutoring centers, or similar organizations that are <u>not</u> verified non-profits.

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What is a non-profit organization?

Any registered organization where service is performed must be a verified non-profit. Most organizations that our students serve the community through are non-profit organizations.

- Organizations will be asked to provide an IRS tax-exempt determination letter or equivalent documentation.
- If an organization cannot verify non-profit status, hours will not be approved. Check if an organization is an IRS approved non-profit BEFORE you engage in service. The Spiritual Life Office can assist you with this, if needed.
- Organizations that are businesses (LLC's, etc.) are generally unacceptable for service.

Service Hours Requirement & Recognition

- 25 hours are required each year for advancement to the next grade level and graduation

Additional recognition:

- Principal's Service Award: 100+ hours
- President's Service Award: 200+ hours

Important Reminders

- When in doubt, ask for approval in advance
- Not all "good activities" qualify as Christian service
- Service should be focused on the needs of others

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