



Monica T. | “If Nobody Was Counting”

When did helping someone become something we have to prove?

When did service become a number?

Ten hours. Twenty hours. Forty hours.

We count them. We record them. We get signatures. We turn them in.

And somewhere along the way, the words “service hours” can start to sound less like an opportunity to serve and more like another requirement we have to complete.

But I want to ask you something.

Are we serving because we are required to, or because we have been called to serve?

I’m not saying service hours are bad, they aren’t. Food drives, volunteering, cleaning up our communities, and helping people in need all matter.

But what happens when we become more focused on how many hours we have than on who we are serving.

Every Wednesday I help teach young children about Holy Communion, the sacrament they are preparing to receive. I could count those hours, I could get signatures but I choose not to.

Because when I see these children asking questions about their faith, growing closer to God, and looking at me as an example I realize that what I am doing is much bigger than a number.

I get to watch their faith grow.

I get to see their excitement.

I get to see their smiles.

And knowing that I helped them grow closer to God means more to me than any service hour I could ever complete.

If I counted every single thing I did for others, what would that say about me? Would it mean I only want to help if someone gives me credit?

The only person who needs to see the things I do is God.

Sargent Shriver understood this kind of service.



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In a speech to the Washington Hebrew Congregation on Mitzvah Day, Shriver spoke about Abraham and Moses being called by God. He said they responded “I will serve.” He also pointed out that they could have chosen to say “I will not serve.”

That different is a choice.

And maybe that is what service really is.

A choice.

Not, “I will serve if someone is watching.”

Not, “I will serve if I get credit.”

Not, “I will serve because I need the hours.”

Simply, “I will serve.”

Shriver carried that same message into his 1986 speech to the National Conference of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers and Staff. He said “Service is the heart and soul and substance of the peace corps.”

He challenged those volunteers to serve their families, their neighbors, their communities, and those in need.

Then he ended with three simple words.

“Serve, serve, serve! That’s the challenge.”

As Catholics, we are called to do the same.

Jesus spent His life serving other. He didn’t serve because someone was counting His hours. He didn’t serve because he needed recognition.

He served because he loved.

Colossians 3:23 reminds us, “Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people.”

So who are we really serving for?

Who do we claim to love?

Who do we claim to serve?

And do our actions actually show it?



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As Catholics, we believe every person is created in the image and likeness of God.

Every person has dignity. Every person has value.

So when we serve someone, we aren’t serving a requirement.

We are serving a person.

And there is a difference between doing service and being a servant.

Doing service can be something we check off.

Being a servant becomes part of who we are.

So imagine that tomorrow, every service hour requirement disappeared.

No signatures.

No deadlines.

No resume benefit.

Nobody asking for proof.

If nobody was counting, would you still show up?

If nobody knew what you did, would you still do it?

If there were no hours to earn and no recognition to receive, would you still choose to help someone?

Because your answer tells you something.

It tells you whether service is something you do or something you are.

Shriver said “for in the end it will be the servants who save us all.”

So maybe the question isn’t how many hours do I need?

Maybe it’s “who needs me?”

And when nobody is counting, nobody is watching, and nobody is giving us credit.

Will we still be able to say

“I will serve.”

Because service is not something we do just to meet a requirement.

Service is not something we do.

It is who we become.