



FAMILY RESOURCE

**“Jesus wanted to show us his heart
as the heart that loved so deeply.
God loved us, he loved us with such great love.
I am thinking of what St. Ignatius told us...
he pointed out two criteria on love.**

The first:

Love is expressed more clearly in actions than in words.

The second:

There is greater love in giving than in receiving.”

**“These two criteria are like the pillars for true
love: DEEDS, and the GIFT OF SELF.”**

Pope Francis



YOU, as FAMILIES in the Catholic community,

have LOTS of opportunities to answer your baptismal call to SERVE OTHERS.

All you may need is some “support and guidance” - “SAG” as we call it! This “Family Resource & Theological Reflection Guide” is an effort to provide you, as Parents (the primary educators of the faith for your children), with information to enable you to plan and process your FAMILY SERVICE LEARNING activities for **HANDS FROM HOME**. Our prayer is that you will grow together in Christ and experience the joys of serving others.

Service is a response to one’s life of faith a part of Confirmation preparation because it is part of the Christian life in general. Candidates and their families are asked to choose three corporal and three spiritual works of mercy, and complete one suggested service project for each. Sponsors should participate in at least one of these works of mercy with their candidate. Families are invited to do even more service activities, and we pray you will continue to serve long after Confirmation preparation is over!

Let us know how we may assist you.

GOAL OF SERVICE LEARNING ACTIVITIES:
TO GET FAMILIES THINKING ABOUT DIFFERENT WAYS TO ANSWER
THEIR BAPTISMAL CALL TO “SERVE OTHERS” AND TO FOSTER IN
THEM A DESIRE TO SHARE GOD’S LOVE WITH THEIR FRIENDS,
FAMILY, NEIGHBORS, PARISH AND CIVIC COMMUNITY...to MAKE
FAITH CONNECTIONS!!!

“What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, and one of you says to them ‘Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well,’ but you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it? So also faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead. Indeed someone may say, ‘You have faith and I have works.’ Demonstrate your faith to me without works, and I will demonstrate my faith to you from my works. You believe that God is one, You do well. Even the demons believe that, and tremble. For just as a body without spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.”
James 2:14~19, 26

Family Group Preparation

Before the service activity

- o Use the **information** you gathered from the **service op info**, about the expectations for the service activity, to prepare your Family.
- o **Talk about your family members’ expectations**, questions, concerns, or past experiences of service.
- o Make notes of their questions and **find out the answers, if possible**, from the Confirmation Coordinator.
- o Help your family members **think about their own gifts** and how they can share them with others **BEFORE the service activity**.

Stress the importance of showing respect for those whom they serve. If you serve onsite at an agency, food shelter, nursing home, private residence, etc., it is important that volunteers be respectful to people and property. Try to leave every place BETTER than when they got there!!! Give your family a heads up about possible sights, smells, experiences...but try not to prejudice them into thinking an activity WILL “GO a certain way.”

After the Service Activity

- Be sure to **“process” with your Family**
- Use the **“Theological Reflection Guide”** found in the link for each of the **possible Hands from Home service activities**.

“According to the Christian message our relationship to our neighbor is bound up with our relationship to God; our response to the love of God, saving us through Christ, is shown to be effective in his love and service of people. Christian love of neighbor and justice cannot be separated. For love implies an absolute demand for justice - namely a recognition of the dignity and rights of one’s neighbor. Justice attains its inner fullness only in love. Because every person is truly a visible image of the invisible God and a sibling of Christ, the Christian finds in every person God Himself and God’s absolute demand for justice and love.”
(World Synod of Bishops, Jusitcia in Mundo, 1971, #34.)

† Justice resource information

Be aware of the role that Justice plays in our Catholic faith tradition. When processing with your family group, *and at other times in your daily life*, talk about **Justice** and the difference between “direct service” and “advocacy.” [There are TWO FEET to Justice - Direct Service \(or charity\) and Advocacy \(or systemic social justice\)](#).

–**Direct Service** is when we respond to immediate needs around us with a short term response (*e.g. picking up trash*).

–**Advocacy** is aimed at working towards long term solutions to prevent situations from happening... “addressing how we got here in the first place.” (*e.g. lobbying businesses to cut down on the amount of waste produced*).

A Parable of sorts... *A man was sitting alongside the riverbank one day when he noticed a small child floating in the water. He immediately jumped in and saved the child. A while later, he noticed another child in the water and did the same thing. Pretty soon, there was a steady stream of children floating down the river. After jumping in several times, he decided to go upstream to investigate what was happening. Apparently, there was no fence at a daycare center near the river and the young children kept falling into the river. He worked with the daycare center to put up a safety fence near the river and the problem was solved. His jump was **Direct action (charity)**, while his work towards a permanent solution was **Advocacy (social justice)**. Help young people know the differences between these two aspects of service!!!*

Corporal Works of Mercy

The Corporal Works of Mercy are found in the [teachings of Jesus](#) and give us a model for how we should treat all others, as if they were Christ in disguise. They “are charitable actions by which we help our neighbors in their bodily needs” ([United States Catholic Catechism for Adults - USCCA](#)). They respond to the basic needs of humanity as we journey together through this life. **The seven Corporal Works of Mercy are listed below.** After each work of mercy there are also suggestions and words of advice for living them out in our daily lives.

FEED THE HUNGRY—There are many people in this world who go without food. When so much of our food goes to waste, consider how good stewardship practices of your own food habits can benefit others who do not have those same resources.

GIVE DRINK TO THE THIRSTY—Many of our brothers and sisters in Christ do not have access to clean water and suffer from the lack of this basic necessity. We should support the efforts of those working towards greater accessibility of this essential resource.

SHELTER THE HOMELESS—There are many circumstances that could lead to someone becoming a person without a home. Christ encourages us to go out and meet those without homes, affirming their worth and helping them seek a resolution to the challenges they face.

VISIT THE SICK—Those who are sick are often forgotten or avoided. In spite of their illness, these individuals still have much to offer to those who take the time to visit and comfort them.

VISIT THE IMPRISONED—People in prison are still people, made in the image and likeness of God. No matter what someone has done, they deserve the opportunity to hear the Word of God and find the Truth of the message of Christ.

BURY THE DEAD—Funerals give us the opportunity to grieve and show others support during difficult times. Through our prayers and actions during these times we show our respect for life, which is always a gift from God, and comfort to those who mourn.

CLOTHE THE NAKED—Donate new needed clothing or money to organizations that have the ability to provide support and services for those in need. “Clothing” means more than just the “shirt on your back.” Do research and find organizations that put people in need first, rather than profit.

Spiritual Works of Mercy

The Spiritual Works of Mercy have long been a part of the Christian tradition, appearing in the works of theologians and spiritual writers throughout history. Just as Jesus attended to the spiritual well-being of those he ministered to, these Spiritual Works of Mercy guide us to “help our neighbor in their spiritual needs” ([USCCA](#)). **The seven Spiritual Works of Mercy are listed below.** After each work of mercy there are also suggestions and words of advice for living them out in our daily lives.

COUNSEL THE DOUBTFUL—Everyone has moments of doubt in their faith journey. Nevertheless, we should always remember that Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life and turn to him along our way.

INSTRUCT THE IGNORANT—Learn about our faith and be open to talking with others about our beliefs. There is always something more to discover about our faith.

ADMONISH THE SINNER—Do not judge, but be supportive in helping others find their way and correct their mistakes. Together we can learn to walk more closely with Christ.

COMFORT THE SORROWFUL—Be open to listening and comforting those who are dealing with grief. Even if we aren't sure of the right words to say, our presence can make a big difference.

FORGIVE OFFENSES WILLINGLY—

Forgiving others is difficult at times because we do not have God's limitless mercy and compassion. But Jesus teaches us that we should forgive as God forgives, relying on him to help us show others the mercy of God

BEAR WRONGS PATIENTLY—Do not be bitter about wrongs done against you. Place your hope in God so that you can endure the troubles of this world and face them with a compassionate spirit.

PRAY FOR THE LIVING AND THE DEAD

—Prayer is one of the most powerful ways we can support others. Joining together in prayer for the living and the dead entrusts us all into God's care.

Seven Key Themes of Catholic Social Teaching

The Church's Catholic Social Teaching is a rich treasure of wisdom about building a just society and living lives of holiness amidst the challenges of modern society. Modern Catholic social teaching has been articulated through a tradition of papal, conciliar, and Episcopal documents. The depth and richness of this tradition can be understood best through a direct reading of these documents. In these brief reflections, we wish to highlight several of the key themes that are at the heart of our Catholic Social Teaching tradition.

(This summary should only be a starting point...)

Life and Dignity of the Human Person – The Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. Our belief in the sanctity of human life and the inherent dignity for the human person is the foundation of all the principles of our social teaching. In our society, human life is under direct attack from abortion and assisted suicide. The value of human life is threatened by use of the death penalty. We believe that every person is precious, that **people are more important than things**, and that the measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person.

Call to Family, Community and Participation – The person is not only sacred but also social. How we organize our society—in economics and politics, in law and policy—directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community. The family is the central social institution that must be supported and strengthened, not undermined. **We believe people have a right and a duty to participate in society**, seeking together the common good and well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable.

Rights and Responsibilities – The Catholic tradition teaches that human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met. Therefore, **every person has a fundamental right to life and a right to those things required for human decency. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities—to one another, to our families, and to the larger society.**

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable – A basic moral test of a society, is how our most vulnerable members are faring. In a society marred by deepening divisions between rich and poor, our tradition recalls the story of the Last Judgment (Mt 25:31-46) and instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first.

The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers – The economy must serve people, not the other way around. Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God's creation. If the dignity of work is to be protected, then the basic rights of workers must be respected—**the right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, to organize and join unions, to private property, and to economic initiative.**

Solidarity— We are our brothers’ and sisters’ keepers, wherever they live. **We are one human family, whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences.** Learning to practice the virtue of solidarity means learning that “loving our neighbor” has global dimensions in an interdependent world.

Care for God’s Creation— We show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. Care for the earth is not just an Earth Day slogan, it is a requirement of our faith. **We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God’s creation.** This environmental challenge has fundamental moral and ethical dimensions that cannot be ignored.

Seven Steps of Justice

First - OPEN YOUR EYES! Who is vulnerable? Who can lead me to them? The poor, the home less, etc. are more than statistics...They are God’s creation and treasure.

Second - DO GOD’S AGENDA. Your work or activity may seem insignificant (in society's eyes) but in God’s eyes what is important is how your faith grows and what you become as a result.

Third - PRACTICE MERCY. Jesus never decided who was deserving/undeserving. The invalid, the addict, the unproductive people in our society scream out for our presence and attention. God is always there in the people you and I are tempted to “write off” and “throw away” - who am I to disregard and say “you don’t deserve the same attention as our hard working, productive people.”

Fourth - JUSTICE SHOULD BE RELATIONSHIP CENTERED, not activity centered. When I see it as “us” and “them” I am tempted to do “for” you. I am blind to your real need and pay more attention to what makes me feel good. Focused on our “doing” I see you as the “one I do to/for.” The attitude of “I have more” to give to “you who have less” will not allow me to enter into a relationship with you - I stand above you; I want to change your reality/experience. Justice says you are not just a person who receives from me but you are a person who enters with me in this work.

Fifth - FIND THE CAUSES, by looking further into the issues we address. It also demands that we reflect on our experiences of service (charity or otherwise) to see what God is saying to us in them. Those are times when we will be stretched. What does this experience teach me about our system? About people? About myself? If we ask these questions, we go into each service experience with new insight and better awareness.

Sixth - EXAMINE YOUR LIFESTYLE. Is the way I live and consume reflective of my concern for the vulnerable and marginalized? Is my agenda so “activity packed,” that I have no room to be empty? Society says our closets must be cluttered; our schedules must be “packed” if we are to be successful, productive people. This is contradictory to Jesus’ challenge. Jesus doesn’t knock being rich. Jesus knocks being blind. Does my drive to possess things and time, strangle me or distance me from those in the world that live without so much?

Seventh - HOPE. Hope is not passively waiting for something to happen or change. Hope is seeing every opportunity to make justice reign! In any situation, practice believing love is stronger than sin. You cannot ‘take on’ the whole world. Even Jesus healed one heart at a time. Find that which speaks to your heart and stand firm on it. Make your justice work more of an *attitude change* and you will impact many more people.