

2007 - 2008 St. Joseph Gospel Service Program Student Guidelines

**“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink,
I was a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me.
I was ill and you comforted me, in prison and you came to visit me.
Then the righteous will ask him,
‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you,
or thirsty and give you drink?’
And the king will answer them: ‘I assure you, as often
as you did it to one of the least of my brothers, you did it for me.’” *Mt 25:34***

Jesus calls us to minister to our neighbors in the everyday passage of life. His message and ministry centered around two main objectives: bringing forth the kingdom of God and reaching out to the poor, vulnerable and marginalized in society. Through the St. Joseph's Service Program, students are given a chance to respond to Jesus' call to live this gospel message.

Participation in the Service Program is a sharing of God's many gifts to you and hopefully a start of a lifetime's gift of self to others, not simply a requirement for graduation or promotion. Service is a living faith experience that is woven into all we do and stand for at St. Joseph Catholic School and is at the heart of who we are as a Catholic faith community. Through our service, we can be Christ for others and manifest His love here on earth.

Your service participation can directly influence a donation to a church or school; funding for a charity to cure an illness or ease a patient's financial burden; build a house for the homeless; provide a meal to the hungry; bring joy and laughter to a sick child; comfort and companionship to an elderly resident; or educate a future priest or religious member. You can be the face of Christ and the answer to someone's prayers and deepest longings of those who are served.

Service Requirements & Deadlines

**The High School annual requirement is 25 hours of Gospel Service.
The Middle School annual requirement is 15 hours of Gospel Service.**

Service Hour due dates:

First Quarter - Summer Service Hours will not be accepted after **September 7**. The Religion teacher will determine the due dates for each quarter.

First Semester - On **December 7** a minimum of one-half of the service hour requirement is due. Students who do not meet this deadline will have five additional hours added to their second semester total.

Second Semester - **May 2** is the Senior Class deadline. Seniors who do not meet their service hour deadline will lose their Final exam exemptions.

May 5 is the deadline for Grades 7 – 11.

May 12 is the final deadline for late submission of hours that have been subject to review.

Students not meeting their semester deadlines will be required to perform an additional 5 hours of service.

Frequently Asked Questions ***How can I earn Gospel Service Hours?***

Students can obtain hours working in direct support of the programs two main objectives: bringing forth the kingdom of God and reaching out to the poor, venerable and marginalized in society. Service must be achieved within the specified program guidelines at a **NON-PROFIT people-helping agency, or an organization whose mission is to directly assist the disadvantaged, homeless, hungry, challenged, sick, children and elderly.** Some examples are Stewpot, Habitat for Humanity, nursing home visits, Catholic Charities, Diabetes Foundation. Service can also be performed at your church and its related organizations. A commitment of continual service to an elderly, disadvantaged, or challenged individual can be considered for the Gospel Service requirement upon approval of the Service Coordinator. Check the service bulletin board and the web site for availability of service opportunities. Posted service opportunities provide a source of service hours, but students are not limited to these projects. Service diversity is encouraged; therefore not all service should be achieved in one activity. If you are not certain whether an activity is truly Gospel Service, check with the Service Coordinator first.

Can I earn service hours during the summer?

On a daily basis, individuals in our community are hungry, homeless, sick, or challenged. Therefore, in order to maintain a continuous service presence and response to their needs, summer service hours will count towards one-half of the annual service hour commitment. Once the requirement is fulfilled, all summer hours will be totaled. Vacation Bible School, parish Retreat Team activities, and church sponsored Summer Mission trips are each given an initial maximum of fifteen hours of service.

Summer service forms will not be accepted after September 7.

How do I submit my service hours?

Gospel Service hours should be submitted promptly on a current St. Joseph Service Verification form, which can be found in the administration office and the St. Joseph webpage. The original form should be legible and completely filled out with the service activity supervisor's signature, phone number and your service reflection. A parent, sibling or relative cannot be the verifying supervisor for a student's service hours. If a parent, sibling or relative is the project supervisor; it must be acknowledged and documented on an official letterhead of the non-profit organization and attached to the required service form. Within two weeks of the service activity, the service documentation form should be returned to Mrs. Papale, the Service coordinator in the Administration front office.

St. Joseph reserves the right to verify all service forms.

Any service verification form that indicates altering or tampering will not be accepted.

How are service opportunities made available?

Service opportunities are posted on the Service bulletin board located in the Administration building outside the faculty lounge, on the St. Joe web page and through daily announcements. Posted service opportunities provide a source of service hours, but students are not limited to these projects.

The Handbook guidelines apply to all students representing St. Joseph. Students should arrive on time, dressed appropriately, and prepared to work. Some service activities require a limited number of students therefore we ask you to be considerate of others and honor your commitment to attend the activity you sign up for. **If you cannot attend, find a substitute. The organization is depending on you.**

Can meetings, planning sessions and service earned for other organizations count towards my service hour requirement?

Meetings and planning sessions, which are not followed by event participation, will not be considered towards the service commitment and cannot account for more than half of the annual hour commitment.

Service hours should not be used to earn credit for more than one program or organization.

Service Program Criteria

Service to Churches:

All service to a Catholic parish and its religious organizations is strongly encouraged. Support for other institutions sponsored by Catholic organizations such, as the Knights of Columbus, Catholic Charities, St. Dominic, St. Catherine's Village and Pro Life Mississippi are excellent opportunities for service. Students of other faith traditions are also encouraged to serve the needs of their own church community.

Being an Altar Server, Extraordinary Minister of Communion, Lector and Usher is an honor. Bringing Jesus' message during Mass and other Church Services is considered a privilege and true service to the Lord as Christians. This kind of service brings its own reward and therefore is not compensated with service hours. Vacation Bible School, summer Mission trips, summer Retreat Team and all other parish Retreat Team activities are limited to 15 hours of service for each event. Any additional hours will be credited upon completion of the annual service requirement.

Examples of Service on behalf of St. Joseph Catholic School:

- St. Joseph Development Office Activities Draw Down and Soul & Creole
- After school tutoring should be through the St. Joseph NHS or Mu Alpha Theta organizations
- Taking part in school sponsored service programs and club activities
- Service to St. Joseph Parent School and Booster Club Organizations

Examples of Unacceptable Service Options:

Although many good works performed by students are admirable and worthy, they may not fall within the framework of the Gospel Service program's two main objectives. We expect our students to help their families, neighbors and friends; to contribute to their community; to care for the environment, and God's creatures. We expect that they will do this as a matter of course because they are generous, thoughtful citizens and contributing members of human society. However, these volunteer activities do not bring into focus the program objectives nor meet our service program requirements; therefore they are not considered Gospel Service.

- Unpaid services for family members, friends and neighbors, i.e. Baby sitting, tutoring siblings, animal care, lawn care, house repairs, moving etc. will not be counted towards service learning hours.

- Projects that are more properly regarded as supportive of St. Joseph's school activities, such as decorating, fundraising, ticket taking, coaching, or assisting with athletics, club functions or fundraising, working a concession stand, scoring, timekeeping, etc. are unacceptable.
- **Non-profit Community civic and athletic organizations whose proceeds or activities do not directly benefit the disadvantaged, homeless, hungry, challenged, sick, children or elderly are not considered Gospel Service.**
- Service performed at St. Joseph, which would be considered a requirement for a class, club or organization.
- Helping Teachers correct/file papers/clean classrooms/bulletin board design.
- Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts activities relating to achievement badges (gospel service related activities are accepted).
- Babysitting for neighbors, friends, and family or after school daycare centers.
- Working at a relative's business.
- Doing short-term chores for someone including moving, cleaning grandparent's garage, or mowing someone's lawn.
- Baking or cooking items for an organization or function.
- Door to door fundraising or collections.
- Working at a doctor's or business office or retail establishment.
- Working (helping) at any organization or business that is not non-profit.
- Short term mentoring or tutoring neighbor's children or siblings.
- Working at an event, which does not totally benefit a non-profit organization.
- Political activities or Community functions, which are politically based.

General Points:

- Service hours are required for promotion and graduation. (See School Handbook)
- No more than ten hours of the required service may be submitted for service to the school such as the Development Office Draw Down and Soul & Creole events.
- Some service activities require a limited number of students therefore we ask you to be considerate of others and honor your commitment to attend the activity you sign up for. **If you cannot attend, find a substitute. Someone is depending on you.**
- Religion grades may be impacted by your quarterly Service program participation.
- **St. Joseph reserves the right to verify all service forms.**

Final Remarks

Christian people throughout the centuries have sought to model their lives after the example of Jesus, who Himself was sent to bring glad tidings to the poor and needy (Lk. 4:18). Since there are “all sorts of service to be done, but always the same Lord, working in all sorts of different ways in different people” (1Cor. 12:6), we would be remiss at St. Joseph Catholic School, if we were not to introduce our students to faith-in-action in the Catholic tradition. We are called not only to preach God’s love, but also to serve and minister. We believe that all of us have been chosen, blessed and deeply loved by God. Christian service comes out of gratitude as we recognize these gifts and the goodness of God. We would hope that all of our students experience the grace and peace that comes to those who serve the less fortunate and others truly in need. The St. Joseph Gospel Service program is a means to affirm that when you help “the least of my brothers and sisters,” you are in fact helping Jesus continue His earthly work.

Principal: Mr. William Heller

Service Program Coordinator: Mrs. Charlene Papale

“The experience of Christian community leads naturally to service. Christ gave His people different gifts not only for themselves, but also for others. The church is a servant community in which those who hunger are to be filled, the ignorant are to be taught, the homeless to receive shelter, the sick cared for, the distressed consoled, the oppressed set free... all so that men may more fully realize their human potential and more readily enjoy life with God now and eternally.”

National Conference of Bishops Pastoral Letter

“To Teach as Jesus Did”

May the Lord bless your generous gift of self on behalf of others.

Student Reflections on Gospel Service

In performing this service, how did you encounter the Lord?

While working with these underprivileged children, I was able to appreciate how God has blessed me, in addition to how blessed I feel when I help others.

It is important for us to know that as a Christian community we are responsible for giving to the less fortunate.

I saw God's love and mercy in the ones who were finding Christ. The Lord was in the children's smiles as they learned about God.

This really helped me get close to God because I know that if He were here, He would help the homeless men and women I helped.

I felt as though by helping with the mentally challenged, I found most of my blessings.

Bringing joy and delight to the residents as I visited and played games with them, really took their minds away from their disability and loneliness.

When I visit the disabled residents, I help them not feel alone and unwanted.

Through serving others as Jesus did, I realized the importance and the necessity for Gospel service. Also through my experiences, I found joy and peace in helping others.

I learned that I am blessed by what God has given me and to be thankful for what I have and not take things for granted.

I saw that God wanted us to embrace and respect people of all nationalities.

I learned what Jesus meant when He told us to use our gifts to the fullest extent to help those around us who are struggling.

I realized that my life is very small compared to the rest of the world.

I encountered the Lord in the hopeful and very grateful expressions on the faces of those living in the shelter. It was very moving.

I came closer to God in this service by seeing the happiness on the people's faces as we sang and visited at the nursing home. It made me realize not all are as fortunate as me in age or health. When we were in each others company for at least a couple of hours, age or health did not matter.