

## Why I Am Catholic ... Service.

Other denominations and churches have great histories of service, but only the Catholic Church has a 2,000 year history of service, charity, and active love; one that is unmatched and is the largest in the world.

This past week, 10 of our teenagers, three lay leaders, and our summer seminarian Luis Alvarez actively participated in Catholic Heart Work Camp (CHWC) in Jackson, Miss. They truly lived the prayer of St. Theresa of Avila. "Christ has no body now but yours. No feet, no hands on earth but yours."

Guided by God's call to love, and the Holy Spirit, they reached out to people they did not know and renewed their hope and trust in God. They did this by word and deed, by attitude and action, by smiling and caring. They painted and rebuilt homes. They cleaned up yards. They served at hospice centers, shelters, service agencies, and churches. And they grew closer to God and learned how we can make a difference together. We thank them: Aaron Derham, Krystal Funes, Juan Hernandez, Timmy Jones, Nick Martinez, Ruben Sanchez, Andrea Shiney, Ron Thompson, Kory Tracey, Kyle Tracey, Greg Brown, Todd Derham, and Wendy Sosa. They joined a long line of parishioners and saints who continue the mission of Christ. For Kyle Tracey, this was his sixth work camp!

The Catholic Church still has one of the two largest hospital and healthcare organizations in the world. In Georgia alone we have St. Joseph Hospital (Atlanta), St. Mary's (Athens), and St/ Francis Hospital (Columbus) just for starters. In the Archdiocese of Atlanta, we also have nursing homes, hospice care, Our Lady of Perpetual Help Cancer Home, and other parish-based healthcare resources. We care about physical and spiritual health.

We serve the needy in many different ways. In Atlanta, Catholic Charities provides many different sources of relief and hope. We care about mental health and provide counseling services through the Village of St. Joseph. We have the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, an international organization that works locally in parishes to deal with short term financial crises and to provide food and clothing. Often forgotten is the charitable work of the Knights of Columbus who raise funds and get involved in helping a variety of charities.

Then there are Catholic foreign missions the ongoing missionary work in every corner of the world. From Catholic Relief Services to the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, to religious communities and lay missionaries, the Catholic Church strives to serve, to love, and to live the Gospel call.

All of us by our baptism are called to serve: in our homes and churches, in our schools and communities, and possibly in places we have never even heard of. You are called. Christ sends us here and now to love and to bless the world by being instruments of love and humble servants.