

Why I Am Catholic

Service

A tradition of serving unmatched by any other denomination or religion, the Catholic Church since its beginnings has been a church of service and acts of charity. A church committed to living the gospel by loving others through acts of kindness.

This week I have been inspired by the teens and adults who have been here at Catholic Heart Work Camp (CHWC) in Mishawaka, Ind. More than 400 Catholics from all over the country have come here to serve, to pray, to reach out in love to those who are less fortunate and at times cannot do for themselves. CHWC alone coordinates about 30 of these camps—all across the country.

Many other Catholic organizations coordinate mission work and many parishes do similar things on their own. This week we have fed the poor and homeless, painted and repaired houses of widows and the disabled, arranged clothing and food at a women's shelter, helped a church rebuild after a tornado, and countless other acts of generosity and caring.

These activities are not optional for us—they are the required response of disciples called by our baptism to serve in Christ's name. We at St. Clement's must do more of these acts of service in the coming year. Otherwise we risk committing sins of omission and neglect.

We must also continue to grow spiritually as our service flows from a strong relationship with Christ, a life of prayer, the sacraments (especially the ones we can receive regularly—Eucharist and Penance/Reconciliation), a life of study, and the desire to imitate Christ.

In Mark's gospel, a huge number of people come to hear Christ. When He finishes, the disciples urge Jesus to send everyone home for dinner. They believe they have no resources, nor the ability to feed them. Jesus says: Find a way to feed them. They collect five loaves and two fish and after Jesus blesses the food, they give out food to 5,000. And they have leftovers!

Jesus shows them they can do nothing on their own. With His help, they can do amazing things. Over the centuries, many have been fed, clothed, cared for in Catholic hospitals and nursing homes, and nurtured by the Word of God and active discipleship. Today our teens continue that service and their example should move all of us to respond in love to the call Christ makes to all of us.