



## The Parish of Saint Catherine of Siena Religious Education

### Service Hours and Personal Testimony Due: Mid-March 8<sup>th</sup> Grade

*"Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me" (Mt 25:40)*

#### **Service Hours for Confirmation and a Written Personal Testimony**

St. Catherine of Siena Parish requires all Confirmation Candidates to complete:

- 1. A minimum of twenty (20) hours of community service**

Confirmation candidates should use the attached Service Hours Register to keep track of their service hours. (Additional documents produced and signed by other volunteer organizations can also be attached to the Service Hours Register to verify hours completed.) Service hours must be completed through **volunteer** service; work completed with any remuneration does not qualify as service work.

- 2. A Service Hours Personal Testimony** on their service experience, following the attached guidelines.

The goal of all faith formation is the deepening of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ through greater personal conversion- but faith is also supposed to lead us towards greater charity in love of God and in turn in love of neighbor. Service opportunities provide candidates for Confirmation an opportunity to place their faith into action. Personal reflection on these opportunities can help a candidate understand the difference between philanthropy and charity that is inspired by faith; as Catholics, we serve others not because it makes us feel or look good, but because we know we are loved and desire the good of another only for their own sake. Or in other words, we "pay forward" the love we have received from God who loves each of us for our own sake.

Opportunities for Service can be found through the [Catholic Service Corps](https://csc.tinyhelper.org/) sponsored by the Diocese of Bridgeport: <https://csc.tinyhelper.org/>





## Service Hours Personal Testimony

### Read and reflect on the following that was inspired by St. Augustine's writings on John 13

Real love changes us; real love is deeper than mere affection or being an acquaintance with another person. Real love is not selfish; a person who really loves another person desires what is best for the other person-for the other person's own sake- never because of what they can "get" from the relationship. But this sort of real love is difficult! It is actually super-natural, beyond our ability to do on our own without help. It is also risky, as it leaves us vulnerable to being rejected or hurt by someone else. There are many people in today's world that are afraid of meeting new people or helping others who are in need to avoid being vulnerable. As a result, many people are lonely, believing they are not known or loved by others. Fortunately, we have the gift of our faith where we can know- without a doubt- that we are both known and loved **first**, no matter what, by God. We know this because of Jesus' death on the cross, His supreme act of love for each of us. Recognizing that we have been loved by God **first** we can have the courage to respond to this love and serve others.

The Lord Jesus declares He is giving His disciples a new commandment, that they should love one another: *"I give you a new commandment: love one another."*

But, the commandment to love your neighbor as yourself is an ancient commandment from the Old Testament. Why is Jesus calling it a "new" commandment when it is really so old? Jesus commandment is "new" because it not just a commandment to love but to love one another **"as I [Jesus] have loved YOU."**

We know in faith- especially seeing the cross- that Jesus has loved us **first**, and this love changes us. Jesus' love renews us, making us new creation, heirs of the New Testament, heirs of Heaven. We can see God's love in action throughout the scriptures. It was God's love that renewed and inspired the patriarchs and prophets of the Old Testament to speak the truth no matter the consequence. It was God's love that inspired the apostles to even give up their lives for the sake of defending the name of Jesus. This is the love that is now in our present time that continues to inspire men and woman around the world to live their lives at the generous service of God through love of neighbor in both great and small ways. The world is being continually renewed in response to God's love transforming the hearts of men and woman to inspire them to love others. It is because we have been loved **first** by God, that the members of the people of God have a deep mutual connection- interest in one another. This connection is so real that and if one member suffers then all the members suffer with it; and if one member is honored then all the members rejoice with it.

This is why Jesus' commandment is really new, Jesus is saying:

I give you a new commandment: love one another, not as a person who pretends to love others only to “get” something from another person- because it makes you “feel” good or “look” good- this is merely a human way of loving. Instead, love one another as people who belong to God and have been loved by God **first**.

We are children of God and consequently brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ who shared with us God’s love. God’s love leads us to fulfillment and true satisfaction of our real desires. This love is given to us by Jesus who said, “just as I have loved you, you also must love one another.” In other words, the love we show others as Catholics is “paying forward” the love we have received from God. By loving us, Jesus bound us to one another in real mutual love, and by this united us into the Body of the Church which He is the Most Noble Head.

*(Adapted from the Diocese of Bridgeport’s Service Corps Reflection taken from <https://thechurchneedsyou.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Service-Challenge-Prayer-Reflection-Resource.pdf>)*

**Answer the following questions, reflecting upon the acts of service that you performed, and in light of John 13:31 - 35, and the commentary of St. Augustine in five (5) typed paragraphs.**

**Paragraph 1:** Describe the service that you completed in preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation. Who did your service help, and how?

**Paragraph 2:** What did you enjoy the most about your experience of service?

**Paragraph 3:** What did you find the most challenging about your experience of service?

**Paragraph 4:** In light of John 13 & St. Augustine’s commentary, what does it mean to love one another as Jesus loves us?

**Paragraph 5:** How can you incorporate your experience of service into your life going forward? Has this experience changed you, and if so, how?