

*Ten Service Projects
Children Will Love*



Sandwich Making for the Homeless

Choose a Friday night and invite children to come to the parish hall or cafeteria with a pound of deli meat, cheese, and a loaf of bread. Ask other families to donate lunch bags, sandwich bags, drinks, and snacks. Divide all items onto their own tables. Have your students make sandwiches at their seats, then bring them up and assemble lunches in an “assembly line” fashion. In advance of the event, do research to find an organization that works to fight hunger in your area. Donate completed lunches to this organization for distribution to those who are hungry.

Easter Basket Party

As a way to help kids connect with other young people who are less fortunate, invite students to attend an Easter basket party. Explain where the tradition of the Easter basket comes from, and ask students to share their own Easter traditions. Explain that at this event, they’ll be helping another child to experience and celebrate Jesus’ Resurrection by giving them an Easter basket. Have all students bring items they would like to receive in an Easter basket and enjoy each other’s fellowship while filling the baskets with goodies and notes. End with a prayer service offered for the children that will receive the Easter baskets. Contact a local women’s shelter to donate the baskets.



Wrapping Night

During Advent, host a wrapping party for a parish “Giving Tree.” On a gift tag, write the age and gender (but not the name) of a child in need of a Christmas gift. Distribute tags to participating families in advance of the party. Have families shop for an appropriate gift at nearby toy or department store, and bring the unwrapped gift to the parish wrapping party, along with the tag. Offer a simple meal or snacks at the party, and provide wrapping paper and wrapping supplies for families to use to wrap the gifts. Affix the corresponding tags to the wrapped gifts and collect them for distribution to recipients. This is a great event to help students understand the true meaning of Christmas and to help them reach beyond themselves.





Christmas Cards for Deployed Soldiers

A few weeks before Christmas, gather families together for a night of prayer for those who fight to defend our freedom. Pray a prayer service for those in the military. If possible, invite a parishioner or a Catholic community member who is a soldier to speak to your parish. Decorate Christmas cards to send overseas through a card-sending project.

Packages for Military

A great service project at many parishes is a “Surprises for Soldiers” program. If possible, identify a military family within the parish. Ask them for an address of their battalion, and the needs of the group. Leave boxes at the entrance to the church where parishioners can drop off suggested items. After the drive is over, invite students to come write letters to soldiers, and stuff and wrap packages to mail overseas as a thank you for all the soldiers do to protect us!



Summer Camp Party

Identify a shelter or program that serves the needs of local children who are out of school during the summer months with a camp. Contact the organization to see if your parish’s junior high and high school students can plan and host an “end of camp” party for the children. Help the students in your parish to plan the event. Suggestions include crafts, games, book reading, sports events, and even water balloons challenges and face painting!

Letters to Those Who are Sick

One of the Corporal Works of Mercy is to care for the sick. This can sometimes be a difficult one for younger students to feel connected to, since they may not have had opportunities to do so. Inviting them to adopt a pen pal receiving treatment at a local pediatric cancer center. They can write each other on a monthly basis and discuss in class what they are learning about what their peer is going through. This will instill in them a drive to serve those who are ill, and comfort them in difficult times. Manage and monitor the correspondence throughout the program.





Caps for Kids

Another program that helps students connect to their Catholic responsibility to care for the sick is a program called Caps for Kids, which helps kids undergoing chemotherapy by obtaining for them a hat signed by their favorite celebrity or sports star. Parishes can help by raising money to obtain these hats and autographs, as \$45 dollars is the overhead to deliver a signed cap to a sick child. An idea to help in fundraising is to suggest that students spend a whole weekend wearing their favorite baseball cap, order to raise awareness and ask family members and friends to sponsor them with a donation (i.e. 50 cents) for each hour they keep their cap on over the weekend. Then, the students can donate the money to Caps for Kids to help in their mission!

Mentorship

When students feel invested in, they feel more connected to the parish. The same is true for older students when they are investing in someone else. Invite high school students to mentor a junior high school student by challenging them to learn more about their faith. This becomes a beautiful relationship where the younger student gains a valuable role model and the older student gets real practice in exercising their baptismal duty to share the Gospel!



Prayer-A-Thon

The idea of “making disciples of all nations” is certainly one that resounds with religious educators, but may not resonate as much with students. As a way to inspire them to share the Gospel with others, invite them to host a “prayer-a-thon” for first communion candidates in the parish. Have students run different stations in which they plan fun activities to teach the First Communicants different traditional prayers. Offer prayers for a sick parishioner or a particular cause.



