

Service Rocks!!

Faith Festival

By Jane Angha

Time: 90 minutes

Purpose

This Faith Festival is designed to help families learn how and why service is an integral part of family, faith and community. It is a hands-on experience of caring for others.



Session at a Glance

Gathering and Welcome (5 minutes)

Why Service? (5 minutes)

Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

Service Projects (60 minutes)

Service Changes Us (10 minutes)

Closing Prayer and Announcements (5 minutes)

Materials Needed

- Potting soil, containers for planting, small annual plants – flowers or vegetables, paint, cloths and water to clean containers
- Window-washing cloths and cleaner
- Trash bags, rakes, trimmers, gloves
- Craft supplies to make cards (paper, stamps, ink pads, markers, stickers)
- Lunch bags, granola bars, apples, small bottles of water
- Plastic treat bags, travel-size shampoo, toothpaste, toothbrushes and deodorant
- Paper punch, ribbon, scissors
- River rocks – one for each participant for closing prayer (using a sharpie marker write the word Witness on one side and Service Rocks on the other)

Prepare in Advance

1. Set up tables for refreshments and sign-in. Play upbeat Christian music while people arrive and have one or two people at the sign-in table with a check-in sheet and nametags and registration information. **Hospitality is really**

important! As the leader, spend the arrival time moving among the participants, greeting and welcoming them.

2. Ask the parish to donate containers to be used to grow plants and flowers: clay pots, large cans, old (cute) rubber boots, wooden boxes, etc.
3. Set up all work sites off campus such as yard work, window washing, park clean-up, and let the participants know in advance what they will need to bring (e.g., gloves, trash bags, trimmers, paper towels, window cleaner).
4. Ask participants to bring work gloves, a box of granola bars, a bag of apples or a package of small water bottles.
5. Invite parishioners to donate travel-size shampoos, toothbrushes, toothpaste and deodorant.
6. Ask bakers from the parish to provide a snack for the participants such as fruit kabobs, lemonade, cupcakes.
7. Invite a musician to assist in selecting music and leading the singing for the opening prayer and closing prayer.
8. Invite readers to proclaim the Word for opening and closing prayer.
9. Copy the resources and gather supplies. Copy Handouts for Service Project Assignments.
10. Invite volunteers to help lead/coordinate each project. Give instructions to them as to what work should be done and who is coming to work. Have them arrive 10 minutes early to be ready for the group.
11. Invite a young person in the parish to have pictures from twitter, FB, Instagram sent to him/her to put on a PPT slide show for the closing prayer.

Session Outline

Gathering and Welcome (5 minutes)

Warmly welcome everyone.

Welcome! We are so happy you have joined us for this faith festival! Today is all about service. It's a really big deal in our Church and it has the potential to change lives and make the world a better place. Everyone can do service—it just takes a willing heart and open hands. Are you ready?

Why Service? (5 minutes)

This icebreaker invites participants to get at the heart of why doing something for others without expecting anything in return is just what Jesus challenges us to do! Share the following:

Jesus had a very special way about him – he noticed people and the world around him. And I mean really noticed. He saw when someone was lonely, hurt, sick, unloved, rejected or sad. He never walked away, but chose to do something. He asks the same of us.

Give people a minute to gather into family groups or groups of five or six. Then continue:

Your group has three minutes to think of all the ways you can help other people – write them on the paper provided. Ready? Set? GO!

Give a couple of tables the opportunity to share, and then summarize:

Our lists range from smiling at someone to sharing your meal with a person, from donating clothes and items you no longer use to fighting for rights on Capitol Hill. There are millions of ways to help others. The most important first step is to notice the needs around us, just like Jesus did. Your lists show that YOU are people who notice too!

Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

Gather

Invite participants to stand and sing Jesse Manibusan's *Gracious God*. If someone in the parish can sign music, have him/her lead the group in signing as well as singing the song.

Lead the community in the Sign of the Cross. Then pray:

Loving God, you sent your beloved Son to earth to show us how to share the love we have been given. You ask us to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit those in prison. Teach us to notice those with needs in our midst. Train our eyes and hearts to see with love and compassion. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Listen

Reader One: Matthew 25: 31-46

Leader:

What do you think of that Scripture passage? How does it make you feel? It may sound a little scary because there are consequences if we don't do those things for our brothers and sisters in need. But have no worries, God will teach us! He will show us how to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, care for the lonely. Today we are taking time to learn how to do just that! Today we will care for others in many different ways and then it will be up to us to continue to do it each day!

Let us bring our thoughts to prayer.

Loving God, be with us as we take time to serve those in need. Teach us how to see the needs in our communities and have the courage and creativity to meet those needs. We pray this in the name of Jesus our brother and friend. Amen.

Song

Sing *Go Make a Difference* or another song of sending forth familiar to your parishioners.

Service Projects (60 minutes)

This part of the day is important – it is the action – where people will be doing service on campus or off. Each project will take about an hour and then they will return for discussion and prayer.

Pass out service assignments to each family/group.

We are pretty excited for you to get going to your worksite for the next hour so let's go, everyone! See you right back here in one hour! Be safe, have fun and don't forget to send some pictures!

Send folks off to work and get those working on the parish/school campus to settle in to the projects. Be ready to put the pictures into a slide show for the beginning of prayer. When everyone has returned, begin with the next session.

Service Changes Us! (10 minutes)

Once everyone is back in the gathering space, begin the debriefing and discussion.

Thanks to every group for all your work this past hour! Let's take a few minutes to talk about what this day has meant to us so far.

Can you tell me what you did?

Why was this work important?

Do you think even an hour can make a difference?

What needs did you see?

What will you do to continue noticing needs and serving others?

How do you feel about the work you did?

Thank you, everyone. Our time is nearly done for today, but we want to say thank you to God in prayer before we head home.

Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

Gather

Opening Prayer

We pray together in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Lord, we thank you for the gift of Jesus in our lives and for the ways he challenges us to love and serve those in need. We want to be people who notice when others are hungry, lonely, hurt or suffering. Give us eyes that see, hearts that care and hands willing to work hard for you. We ask this in the name of Jesus, our Savior. Amen.

Listen

Romans 58:6-10

Respond

Please respond: "We will be your witnesses."

When we see someone hungry and in need...

All: We will be your witnesses.

Jesus, when we notice someone who is lonely or left out...

All: We will be your witnesses

When we are uncomfortable with the way people or the earth is treated...

All: We will be your witnesses.

Go Forth

God, we are your witnesses in word and action. Give us courage and strength to be the people we are called to be—faithful, generous, forgiving and joyful. We ask this in the name of your Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Sing *Witnesses* by Paul Hillebrand to close and have someone pass out the rocks and take-home notes as people leave.

This session was written by Jane Angha of the Center for Ministry Development. Jane is Project Coordinator of Young Neighbors in Action, CMD's service-learning weeks for teens which can be found across the country and in Canada.

Handout 1-A: Care for Creation



Using donated containers, participants will fill them with potting soil and plant flowers or vegetables. The containers could be clay pots, large cans, old (cute) rubber boots, or wooden boxes. These will be given to the parish's elderly and homebound as a reminder that they are important and remembered by the parish family.

Instructions: Choose a pot or item to be used as a pot. Clean it with cloths and clean water. Paint or decorate as needed. Choose a plant, fill the container with potting soil and then place the plants in the soil, making sure the roots are covered. Lightly water it. Create a tag for the recipient of the planter. Create a little card to go along with the planter. Do more than one if the supplies allow.

This project is about recycling and renewing. The containers were donated by parishioners, and with a little work they can be turned into something special! These planters will be gifts to our elderly and home-bound. The plants will brighten their day, give them something to care for and remind them they are not forgotten, but are loved by the parish community. It is everyone's responsibility to care for creation—plants, animals and most importantly human beings—because we were created in the image and likeness of God. We are unique, special and valued.

Catholic Social Teaching to Share:

Care for God's Creation

"Stewards do not own; rather, they are charged with taking care of something that is not theirs. Earth belongs to God and we are the stewards of it. When we do things that protect the Earth and care for it, we acknowledge that the Earth is not ours to do with as we please, but we also show reverence to God, the creator of all. It is very Catholic to be an environmentalist!" United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1998

The Call to Family, Community and Participation

"Our faith calls us to community in an active way. We have a responsibility to live our values in our social world. We need to stand up for the dignity of all people, especially the poor and vulnerable. When we participate in society, we must always make decisions for the common good of society." United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1998

Pope Francis Quote: "Creation is a gift, it is a wonderful gift that God has given us, so that we care for it and we use it for the benefit of all, always with great respect and gratitude." May 2014

Handout 1-B: Yard Crashers

Groups of participants will be sent out to homes to do yard work which has been decided upon at an earlier time. They are to practice safety and do the very best job they can for the home they are helping.



Instructions: Give directions to teams on where to meet to do yard clean-up. If you are going to multiple homes, have some within walking distance and have someone to greet them when they arrive with instructions on what needs to be done. This work may include lawn mowing, trimming bushes, raking, weeding, picking up debris or branches, etc.

This project is about caring for creation as well as caring for those in need. The work may be needed due to illness, age, or special circumstances, and your work will be a gift in so many ways. The newly-cared for yard will brighten their day and remind them they are not forgotten, but are loved by the parish community. It is everyone's responsibility to care for creation – plant, animal, and most importantly, human beings because we were created in the image and likeness of God. We are unique, special and valued.

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Handout 1-C: Looking Good Care Packs

Instructions: Give directions to teams on what goes into each care package. Each person can put together as many as they can depending on how many supplies are on hand. For each package, a personal card should be made and the bag decorated.



This project is about bringing dignity to people. It feels good to be able to brush your teeth, wash up with soap and have clean hair, too. It gives us dignity. There are people in our community who don't have access to a shower, a washing machine or even a tooth brush. These care packs will remind them that we care and want them to know they are valuable, they are not forgotten and that God cares for them very much.

Catholic Social Teaching to Share:

"We believe that we are all created in the image and likeness of God. Because we believe this fact, every single human life is sacred. There is nothing anyone can do to take this dignity away. All of our Catholic social teaching flows from this principle. People are more important than things. All institutions are judged by how they protect or how they violate the dignity of the human person." United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. 1998

Pope Francis Quote: "To protect creation, to protect every man and every woman, to look upon them with tenderness and love, is to open up a horizon of hope; it is to let a shaft of light break through the heavy clouds; it is to bring the warmth of hope."

3/19/13

Handout 1-D

Snack Bags



Instructions: Give directions to teams on who will receive these snack bags and why it is such an important project. Each person will decorate a bag, make a card to put inside and then fill it with the donated non-perishable ingredients.

This project is about caring for the poor and vulnerable in our community. It is a terrible feeling to be hungry and not know when or if you are going to be able to find food and feel full again. Often our communities can offer people one meal a day, but you and I know that we get hungry more than once a day. These little snack bags will help fill in the gap until they can find another meal. With a note of encouragement, you will have raised hope and reminded the person that they are important and not forgotten.

Catholic Social Teaching to Share:

“We believe that God loves everyone in such a way that even our most powerful experience of love is just a taste of how much God loves us. God loves each of us equally, but Scripture reminds us that some people’s needs are so urgent and so great that their needs come first. Therefore, while everyone is important, those who have no voice in our society, those whose human rights are violated, those whose dignity is not recognized, must take our first priority as Catholic Christians. We must give the preferential option to the poor and vulnerable.” United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1998

Pope Francis Quote: “Even the weakest and most vulnerable, the sick, the old, the unborn, the poor are masterpieces of God’s creation, made in his own image, destined to live forever, and deserving of the utmost reverence and respect.” 7/17/13

Handout 1-E

Park Rescue



Instructions: Give directions to teams on where to meet to clean up the park or public area. If you are going to multiple sites, have some within walking distance and have someone to greet them when they arrive with instructions on what needs to be done. This work may include picking up trash, trimming bushes, raking, weeding and picking up debris or branches.

This project is about caring for creation as well as caring for those in need. The work may be needed due lack of funding from the city or the community not having the resources or people to keep up with the work. Your work will be a gift in so many ways. The newly-cared for park will brighten the space and remind the neighborhood they are not forgotten, but are loved by the community. It is everyone's responsibility to care for creation – plant, animal and, most importantly, human beings because we were created in the image and likeness of God. We are unique, special and valued and have inherent dignity. Where we live and what we have for our enjoyment is important. Our challenge is to be an active part of our communities and take care of the people, the parks, the schools and all that has been entrusted to us!

Catholic Social Teaching to Share:

“Stewards do not own; rather, they are charged with taking care of something that is not theirs. Earth belongs to God, and we are the stewards of it. When we do things that protect the earth, we care for it, we acknowledge that the earth is not ours to do with as we please, but we also show reverence to God, the creator of all.” United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1998

Pope Francis Quote: “The life of Jesus is a life for others. It is a life of service.” 7/28/13

Handout 1-F

Shine On – Window Cleaning

Instructions: Give directions to teams on where to meet to do some window washing. This can be done at homes, in your downtown area, at a shopping center, on cars in a safe parking lot – wherever it is needed. It is an activity of kindness, without expectation of anything in return.



This project is about doing little acts of kindness that might brighten a day, bring a smile or a sign of hope to someone who witnesses the acts. We don't need much to do things like this. For us, it will be using cloths and window cleaner and doing our very best to clean a window and let the light shine in. It is a symbol or sign of what we believe our faith in Jesus does – it brings light into the darkness and gives hope. Doing something without having to be asked or paid is a pretty strange thing. But when we do these acts of kindness, incredible things begin to happen. Just watch and see.

Catholic Social Teaching to Share:

“We believe that every human person was created by the same God. Ultimately we are all brothers and sisters, we are all connected. Solidarity reminds us of this connection that we have to our whole human family. This connection is greater than anything that divides us, including race, religion and even geography.” United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1998

Pope Francis Quote: “In the heart of every man and woman is the desire for a full life, including that irrepressible longing for fraternity which draws us to fellowship with others and enables us to see them not as enemies or rivals, but as brothers and sisters to be accepted and embraced.” 12/8/13

Handout 2: Project Leader Job Description

Thank you for saying yes to being a part of our Service Rocks Family Festival! Your job is to be prepared to help families and all participants in your project know what the job is and what is expected, and then joyfully encourage them in their work!



Please look over the project, make sure you have all the supplies you need, and be ready to help the participants get the work done, feel good about the hour spent, and have fun too.

Please take some pictures along the way and send them to the person designated to help with the closing prayer. This should be done early in the project. Once your team is finished, help them gather materials, clean up, and head back to the parish/school for closing prayer.

Upon returning to the parish/school, bring supplies in and see if any help is needed for the refreshments after the closing prayer.

Handout 3: Bringing it Home

How can you continue to serve as a family and make little changes that will go a long way? Here are some ideas for you:



- Recycle.
- Go through closets monthly and donate things you have outgrown or do not need.
- Get to know your neighbors.
- Offer to help new neighbors with yard work, child care or transportation.
- Volunteer to mentor a child.
- Volunteer with the homeless or hungry by making meals or creating care packages.
- Plant a garden.
- Buy food locally if you can.
- Eat simple meals more often.
- Count up all the electronic devices in your home and make some decisions about what to do with them all. What is necessary? What isn't?
- Don't use disposable plates or cups.
- Adopt an elderly parishioner to visit and invite to your home.
- Help with your community events – races, parades etc.
- Check out Catholic Relief Services, Catholic Charities and other national Catholic organizations that serve the poor in the U.S. and around the world.
- Look into KIVA.org to lend a little money to help someone start a business.

Add to the list as a family. What else can we do? What are we already doing?