

To my Family In Christ,

As we approach the deadline for service hour requirements, I wanted to share *My Refection on Service* with my Guerin Catholic family.

As I write this my first "baby", daughter Aurelia, just turned 18 and is set to graduate from Guerin Catholic this May. Like most parents, I wonder how time moved so quickly and how I came to this day so soon. But here it is upon me and as I reflect back on her upbringing, I am so grateful to God for entrusting my husband and me to raise her. I knew when she was born that I would only get one chance to parent this blessing from above. Early in my parenting, one of the biggest moments that impacted me was reading a heartbreaking letter that a friend posted in a group email. It was about the regrets of a father, who had raised his family in the "mainstream way" skipping masses for sporting events and passing over opportunities to grow in holiness; choosing to focus and build his family based on worldly ideals. Now that his children were grown, they had completely lost their faith, were addicted to drugs and found themselves in broken relationships. The father regretted not leading his family closer to God. He had simply missed, his only opportunity, and it was too late to turn back the clock.

Wow.

I did not want that to happen to me and my family. I knew that service to others had to be incorporated in my children's lives. I knew that to be authentic, my actions needed to speak *much louder* than my words. I was a busy mom with 3 little ones, but with my kids at my side, I signed up and volunteered in my church, their school and in my neighborhood. In Christ I found my strength and everyday a grateful heart.

I truly live in full joy when I am helping others. It draws me closer to the pain and suffering of others, which I might not have otherwise been aware of. This in turn makes me a more understanding, more loving, more sympathetic and more compassionate person. When serving, I feel like I am more fully living in the present; which then gives very little time to lament over the past or worry about the future. What a gift! I have seen the same beauty unfold in my children. Their concerns and cares are not for themselves but for others. They willingly pitch in to help and are often praying for others. Many times they are going the extra mile to brighten someone else's day or sacrificing their own time freely for others. They never talk

back, and my two dear daughters age 18 and 16 have never fought. This aura of service and putting one self aside for the needs of others has brought true peace to our home.

It saddens me to hear others complaining about "having to do" service. Some, I know, feel it is a burden and just an item to be checked off a list. In this one single thought I know that many may be missing beautiful opportunities. First, one may be missing the opportunity to serve lovingly along with his or her child and spend some quality time with them. Second, one may be missing the opportunity to build a servant's heart within his or her child and therefore creating a lasting legacy of service within his or her family that may carry on for generations. Third, when we serve others we often step out of our comfort zones, grow and gain a new perspective. Most importantly, one may be skipping an opportunity to build your kingdom in Heaven, unite your heart with Christ and bring joy to others. To serve is to truly be the face of Christ and to see the face of Christ in those you are serving.

Thank you dear Jesus that I did not miss my opportunity to love my children in this way. Thank you for the pain and suffering that is in my life so that I may further unite myself with you and others.

Saint Mother Theodore said it best. *"You will find yourself happy when you make others happy."*

Your Joyful Servant in Christ,

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