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Not a day goes by where I don't think "How am I being the Christian God has called me to be?" When this question pops into my head each day, my response to myself is always "It's the little things I do with great love for God." Ever since reading about Saint Therese and her little way to sainthood, I now admire how she lived her life. She wasn't trying to save the world, but was showing the love God had for her toward others. I can be like Saint Therese by doing small deeds for those around me that could make a big difference in the long run. I try to help others just out of kindness because I don't want these people making a big deal out of something God is expecting from me. A simple "thank you" would be nice in some cases, but I'm not looking for any kind of praise. God will give me a reward later in life.

A couple of my neighbors started an organization a few years ago called "Go Pantry". It started out in her basement with only a few people contributing to their cause. The purpose of "Go Pantry" is to help feed hungry kids in Boone County that do not get enough to eat on the weekends, during the summer, or on breaks throughout the school year. As a group, they started to pack boxes full of food for entire families. In order to get enough food, they started food drives at local stores such as Kroger. Immediately, I wanted to help in any way possible. On the weekends, when the food drives take place, all of my neighbor friends and I hand out fliers as shoppers walk into the store. The fliers contain the types of food that "GO Pantry" is in need of. As I handed out fliers for my first time, I was amazed at how many people wanted to help. While I talked to them about "Go Pantry", I was shocked to see how much they listened and were intrigued in the cause. Most people were

excited to go into the store and contribute to what “Go Pantry” was working towards. One specific time that I remember was when I handed out a flier and talked about “Go Pantry” to a little girl and her dad. I could tell that they weren’t rich nor poor, but the little girl’s desire to help is what really stood out to me. She was so excited to go into the store and pick out items to bring back. Once they were finished shopping, I was star struck at all the bags she struggled to carry to the bins. I could tell by the smile on her face that she was so excited she was able to help. Her dad spoke to me saying, “She wasn’t going to let me walk out of the store without buying something to help you.” This small act of kindness put a smile on my face for the rest of the day and I knew nothing could bring me down after what I had just seen. One little girl had done something for God and made a difference in the life of others and that is something to always be proud of.

However, some people wanted nothing to do with me. They would shoo me away or say, “I’m not interested”. Then I thought to myself, “You didn’t even hear what I was going to say.” Sometimes that would make me sad, but I didn’t let it get to me too much. I continued to have a positive attitude, knowing that I was doing something for the Lord. Now I love going to the food drives with all my neighbors and friends. The shoppers love to see young people, sometimes as young as five or six, doing something for God. It gives me such a good feeling knowing that someone wants to help those in need. Every time my neighbor tells my mom that “Go Pantry” is doing something, I am eager to jump in and help in any way I can.

Last year, while I was in the car, I got an idea. After seeing how much “Go Pantry” had grown, I wanted to start something too. Many ways to help ran through my head such as collecting blankets, hats and scarves, or clothing. However, that all sounded too cliché. Then I came upon the idea of shoes. When I thought about this, shoes were something that the less fortunate were in great need of. The first person I talked to was my mom. She said it was a great idea and that she was there to help in any way she could. Next, I asked my teacher at school about what she thought. Within a few days, we had a name, “Shoes for Smiles”, posters made and t-shirts ordered. My school owned SPAC at that time and it was a perfect place to have a shoe drive. While a tournament was going on there, we collected over one hundred pairs of shoes. Although that number seemed really small, it was still a great start. My mom and I dropped off the shoes at the Women’s Advocacy Center, local schools in the area, and other places. I was overwhelmed with compassion when I saw the shoes going to those in need. Unfortunately, “Shoes for Smiles” only lasted for a couple of months. With so many shoes left over, I donated them to a donation center in Florence. Although it wasn’t how I expected “Shoes for Smiles” to turn out, God knew that I had put in great effort to help my community and I know that I helped make a difference in the lives of people around me.

A few years ago when I was in about the fourth grade, my grandpa and grandma asked me to come join them at the St. Paul’s Food Pantry. I was very excited when I was given this offer, but I was nervous too. Never having done this before, I didn’t know what to

think. How would these people react to a small kid trying to help them, I thought to myself. When I got there, my grandparents showed me around and introduced me to all the other volunteers. Almost immediately, I felt right where I belonged. There were no more nerves and I was engaging in conversation with those around me. As the homeless and poor started to arrive, my grandma and I helped them shop for the items they needed. One thing that surprised me the most was that the volunteers were talking to these people like they had known each other for years. They would call one another by their names and have friendly little conversations. This surprised me to the point where I wanted to talk to them as well. After a while, I could tell that these people really enjoyed being around others who care for them and love them. They didn't have much of anything and the one thing I could show to them was love and compassion. Smiles were filled on most of their face as I talked to them. Once they started to leave and everything started to die down, it was time to go home. That night was a night that I will never forget because I was able to have a positive effect on those around me.

Whether it is a simple "hello" or a genuine smile, I always try to make the days of others better. People constantly say, "You are always in a good mood." Most of the time I am and if I'm not having the best day, I will still show respect and be kind to those around me. It is not their fault that I am down so it wouldn't be right to take my sadness out on them. I do my best to put a smile on the face of others when they are around me. Just recently, my friend came into school one morning and told me she had made me a brownie.

The first thing I responded with was “Thank you, but why?” She responded by saying, “You’re always being nice and sharing your things. You are just a really good friend.”

This was such a small act of kindness but it made a huge difference in my day. My goal each day is to show respect to all those that share the day with me, and put a smile on their face.

While I may not be trying to save the world, I am trying my best towards my “little way to sainthood”. My parents have always told me to treat others the way you want to be treated. These are words that will be a part of my life for forever. I will always treat others with respect and show them kindness because that is how I would like to be treated. Kind words and simple acts of courtesy are ways I can have an effect on the lives of those that surround me. As I grow older and more educated, my will to be kind to others and treat them with respect will continue to grow. What will happen in my future? I do not know, but one thing I know for sure is that I have and will always try to have positive effects on the lives of the people around me.