

Mary O'Connor – Immaculate Heart of Mary – Saint Ursula Academy

Saint Teresa of Calcutta once said, "Good works are links that form a chain of love". I have used this motto through many things I have done in my life. Through giving back to others, and loving the unlovable I have been fulfilled with happiness. As a Catholic, giving is something that is extremely important to me. From a young age, I always had a passion to give and to help as many as I could. God has taught me to put others before myself, and that has given me great reward.

One place I have given my time, treasure, and talents to is Our Lady of the Mountains. Our Lady of the Mountains is our sister parish in Stanton, Kentucky, part of Powell County, which is one of the poorest counties in the state. I have sorted socks and underwear for poor children there for multiple years. One of my favorite things to participate in at Our Lady of the Mountains church is the senior Thanksgiving dinner. At this event we serve a hardy thanksgiving meal to those in need. To see all of the joy and happiness people gain from this event is very special.

Another place that I have volunteered for is Saint Francis Seraph Soup Kitchen. This is a non-profit organization that centers on making sure the homeless get food. I have enjoyed volunteering there so much because it is a place where no one is ever rejected. To these people, you are the light in their darkness. These people who come to get a warm meal don't have anything. I feel like I make a difference in their lives. When we let Jesus speak through us, we are doing what we are called to do. We serve others, we impact others, and we make a difference.

I've had the privilege to volunteer for many different organizations and events. At my parish, Immaculate Heart of Mary, I've worked at our annual festival with my family, assisted Vacation Bible School and Summer Parish Religious Preparation, helped to lead the annual rosary rally, helped to place the Crosses of the Innocents, worked at the annual rummage sale, helped bake cookies for the prison retreat, participated in the music ministry, served at the twinning parishes luncheon, helped pack shoes for our Shoes for Success program and helped serve at the fish fry. I've also participated in the Run 4 Life and volunteered as a face painter there and I've worked at the St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry. All of those activities have given me more than I have given...its funny how that works.

When we come together as brothers and sisters in Christ, we are so powerful. We are one big community and family. A saying that I like to go by is: "FAMILY: Forget About Me, I Love You." Putting others first is all we have to do to live as we are called to live. We can be bold. We can be different. And we can make a positive change.

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“One of the greatest diseases is to be nobody to anybody.” – Saint Teresa.

If we want to make a change we have to be different. We will affect no one if we are like everyone. One of my favorite authors, Judy Blume, once said, “Our fingerprints don’t fade from the lives we’ve touched”. We have the gifts to serve others and we should use those gifts to go out of our way for someone else.