



Catholic Diocese of Richmond
1820 Bicentennial 2020

**Saint Vincent dePaul
Octave of Service
Planning Guide**



Catholic Diocese of Richmond

Bicentennial Octave of Service

To commemorate the 200th anniversary of our Diocese, all parish/school/campus ministries are invited to participate in the Octave of Service from September 27th, the feast day of Saint Vincent de Paul, to October 4th. An Octave of Service is a week-long opportunity for parish/school/campus ministries to carry out various forms of outreach in their communities while living out the Gospel values of encounter and accompaniment.

WHAT IS MEANINGFUL SERVICE?

Octave of Service projects should focus on supporting and improving your community as well as cultivating relationships with others, including through prayer. These opportunities could be new initiatives as well as ones your parish/school/campus ministry has already been involved with.

Please keep in mind that COVID-19 has drastically changed the landscape of volunteering. Therefore, modifying former methods of outreach and service will be required. Plan for service projects that allow for social distancing and equip individuals with the necessary personal protective equipment.

WHO CAN BE INVOLVED?

The Octave of Service is a great opportunity for collaborative efforts among different groups, or even with those closest to you. Consider if the following groups offer feasible opportunities for partnership.

- Other Catholic parish/school/campus ministries or churches in your area
- Community organizations
- Campus ministries or schools
- Within families

THE NECESSITY OF PRAYER

The Octave of Service allows us to put our Catholic faith into action, but any project or activity should be rooted in prayer and spiritual reflection, as well. Consider including the following opportunities throughout your week of service:

- Starting and ending each service project in prayer or the daily readings.
- Including those that you are serving in your Mass intentions.
- Scheduling a rosary or prayer service during the week for vulnerable populations.

SERVICE THAT CONTINUES

What follows from the Octave of Service is just as important as the week itself. The Catholic Diocese of Richmond's commitment to walking with those in our communities who are most in need should, and must, continue long after the projects have concluded. Consider this week not as a one-time event, but as an opportunity for your parish/school/campus ministry to kickstart a growing effort of outreach and justice.

SAMPLE SERVICE IDEAS

- **School Improvement** – Carry out improvement and beautification projects for a school such as painting walls, fixing up a playground, or general cleaning.
- **School Supply Drive** - Partner with Commonwealth Catholic Charities or Catholic Charities of Eastern Virginia to host a supply and book drive for local schools or youth in the CCC Refugee Resettlement Program.
- **Adopt a Highway, Road, or Beach** – Adopt a local piece of land and clean up trash and debris in that area. Consider planting some flowers and trees as a culminating event.
- **Beautify a Cemetery** – Clean the grounds of a cemetery by raking, pulling weeds, or restoring headstones.
- **Assist a Neighbor** – Identify neighbors in need of food delivery, home repairs, or yard clean up. Include hand-written cards to give to the residents.
- **Habitat for Humanity** – Build flower boxes or bird feeders to donate to the Habitat for Humanity homes.
- **Food Pantries**– Assist at a local food pantry by stocking shelves, helping with inventory, and distributing food. Consider hosting a food drive for the facility prior to visiting the site.
- **Jails and Prisons**– Write cards of encouragement to those who are incarcerated at your local jail, prison, or detention center (*special rules may apply).
- **Hospitals** – Write cards of encouragement to those who are hospitalized as well as the janitors, nurses, and doctors at the facility.
- **Advocacy** – Use the USCCB's resource [Civilize It](#) to prepare your parish/school/campus ministry for the elections.

**Any adults working with or around children must complete the Safe Environment program. Please email virtus@richmonddiocese.org for access to the online training module.*

While the Octave of Service is an eight-day event, parish/school/campus ministries are not expected to carry out service every day of the week. At least one day of service, though, should be planned.

The following are possible schedules a parish/school/campus ministry can use throughout the week:

- **One day** of service with everyone participating in the same project.
- **One day** of service with different groups at various sites throughout the community.
- **Multiple days** of service with different groups participating in different projects.

Each day can be dedicated to a particular group or issue, whether it is through service or prayer.

- **Sunday:** Hunger and Homelessness
- **Monday:** Racial justice
- **Tuesday:** Addiction
- **Wednesday:** Youth
- **Thursday:** Care for Creation
- **Friday:** Incarceration
- **Saturday:** The Sick and Dying
- **Sunday:** Displaced Persons (immigrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers)

The Octave of Service can be a time to lift up communities in prayer through parish/school/campus ministry-wide rosaries or prayer services. Below are sample ideas and resources.

Prayers of the Faithful

Christ the Lord bore our infirmities and endured our sufferings. He went about doing good, leaving us an example to follow. Having Christ's charity as the foundation of all we do, let us pray to him, saying:

R. *Lord, teach us to serve our sisters and brothers.*

1. For the sick and disabled, including those suffering with mental illness, that Christ, who understands pain and suffering, will grant them faith and perseverance in their trials so they will know His healing comfort and grace. We pray to the Lord.
2. For persons who are elderly, that we might cherish their presence in our midst and drink deeply of their wisdom; and especially all the people in nursing homes, that we would be inspired to reach out to them, giving them the love and attention they need. We pray to the Lord.
3. For those on the margins of our society, especially the refugees and immigrants who have fled their countries to escape war and persecution or to look for better livelihoods, that they not grow weary and lose heart, but instead know God's gracious and abundant mercy and love. We pray to the Lord.
4. For those who do not have equal access to quality education, that they may be granted opportunities for intellectual growth and achievement regardless of their race or economic status, and that we may be advocates of pursuing justice for the youth and schools of our communities. We pray to the Lord.
5. For those who experience persistent hunger or food insecurity, that they may have greater access to nourishing food and be given the physical strength necessary for carrying out their daily lives. We pray to the Lord.
6. For women who are experiencing an unplanned pregnancy, that they may find the spiritual, emotional, and material support they need to care for both themselves and their child, and that they might find strength in the Lord on their journey of motherhood. We pray to the Lord.

Gathering these prayers together into one voice, we ask for the intercession of our diocesan patron, Saint Vincent de Paul, as we pray:

Noble Saint Vincent de Paul,
beloved servant of the poor,
may we follow your example and do good works
among those whom society has abandoned,
enslaved, or forgotten.
Inspire us to feed the hungry,
to love a child,
to provide comfort and medicine to the sick,
to clothe those whose garments are threadbare,
and to offer hope and our Lord's words

to all who need respite.
Pray for us to our beloved God
that we may commit ourselves selflessly
to doing the same charitable acts
that you did all your life,
and intercede with him
that we may have the favor of his guidance
and strength and love upon this important and meaningful work.

Amen.

Additional Prayer Resources

- [Prayer resources for social justice issues](#) (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops)
- [Examination of Conscience in Light of Catholic Social Teaching](#) (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops)
- [Social justice prayers](#) (Social Justice Resource Center)
- [Prayers and reflections for social justice issues and the Corporal Works of Mercy](#) (Catholic Charities USA)
- [Care for Creation liturgical, prayer, and spiritual resources](#) (Global Catholic Climate Movement)

HOW TO PLAN FOR YOUR OCTAVE OF SERVICE

Before the Octave of Service

- **Save The Dates**
 - Ensure your parish/school/campus ministry is informed about the Octave of Service dates via the website, bulletins, Flocknote, etc. and that the dates are blocked off on the parish/school/campus ministry calendar.
 - Continuously include save the date reminders in your parish/school/campus ministry's electronic and print communications.
- **Volunteer Recruitment**
 - [Sign-Up Genius](#) is a free and easy-to-use online tool that allows individuals to sign up for specific projects, volunteer time slots, or prayer time slots.

During the Octave of Service

- **Communications**
 - Encourage participants to post on social media throughout the day.
 - Send photographs with the corresponding site and service information to the Diocese.
 - Ensure that permission is granted before taking anyone's photograph.
- **Take Count**
 - Keep track of numbers that can be used for post-event communication. Examples include miles of highway cleaned, cards written, meals delivered, and hours prayed.

After the Octave of Service

- **Communications**

- Publish the results of your impact through your parish/school/campus ministry and send the information to the Diocese (see survey information below).
- Send a hand-written thank you card to any main point of contact your group worked with at the site locations. Include a group photo if available.
- Ask volunteers, including any youth who participated, to write a short reflection from the Octave of Service for your parish/school/campus ministry's bulletin and website.

Important

Following the Octave of Service, each parish/school/campus ministry must fill out a survey for the Diocese. Because this form asks for specific numbers and measurements of impact, it will be important that your parish/school/campus ministry tracks particular numbers throughout the week. Please visit this link to view and complete the survey: <https://forms.gle/jVMzCALywCFaCpTEA>

QUESTIONS

As you are planning your Octave of Service, if you have any questions, contact the Office of Social Ministries via email (osm@richmonddiocese.org) or via phone (804-622-5206).



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SPIRITUAL WORKS OF MERCY

ADMONISH THE SINNER

Lead others towards the best choice in a situation

Kindly and privately talk to a person you have difficulties with to resolve the issue

Receive the sacrament of reconciliation and encourage a family or friend to join you

Remind others that little things add up. Gossiping or fighting with siblings are actions that pull us away from Christ.

Host a family or parish discussion on the sin of racism using *Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love – A Pastoral Letter Against Racism*

Bible Verse to Reflect On:

Luke 17:3

BEAR WRONGS PATIENTLY

Be slow to anger and less judgmental of others around you

Go out of your way to show love for or get to know someone you may have judged in the past

Learn about the practice of Restorative Justice and how this can be used in your family, school, or work place to resolve conflicts. Click [here](#) to read more.

Bible Verse to Reflect On:

Philippians 2:3-4

COUNSEL THE DOUBTFUL

- Donate time or money to local mental health organizations
- Paint rocks with uplifting messages and leave them in parks near your home
- Encourage someone to speak with a priest, counselor, or spiritual director
- Say a rosary for those contemplating suicide or struggling with depression
- Learn what legislation you can support that helps those with mental illnesses

Bible Verse to Reflect On:

John 14:27

COMFORT THE SORROWFUL

- Pray for families who have lost loved ones
- Create an uplifting social media post every day for a week
- Offer comfort by baking cookies, making a meal, or sending a card
- Create encouraging yard signs and place in the yards of your neighborhood
- Have a family Zoom session with someone who is struggling with loneliness or loss

Bible Verse to Reflect On:

1 Peter 5:5 – 11

FORGIVE OFFENSES WILLINGLY

Give someone a second chance

Accept apologies with grace and kindness

Pray a rosary that victims of crimes and their families will forgive their offenders

Research Saint Maria Goretti and ask her to intercede for you if you are struggling to forgive someone

Bible Verse to Reflect On:

Matthew 18:15-35

INSTRUCT THE IGNORANT

Start a family Bible study

Commit to learning about a new Saint every day

Write about a social justice issue in your parish's bulletin or local newspaper

Teach others about Catholic Social Teaching by posting one principle of CST daily on social media

Bible Verse to Reflect On:

Timothy 3:16-17; 4:1-5

PRAY FOR THE LIVING AND THE DEAD

Pray through journaling once a day by yourself or as a family

Make homemade rosaries and deliver to others with a prayer card

Attend Adoration or pray a Rosary, Chaplet, Holy Hour, or Novena for a marginalized community

Start a prayer group chat with friends and family members, lifting the prayers up at the end of each day

Bible Verse to Reflect On:

John 17:24



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CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY

BURY THE DEAD

- Pick up trash at a local cemetery
- Send cards and flowers to a grieving family
- Make food for a family who has suffered a loss
- Visit a gravesite to pray and put out flowers or flags
- Donate to a cause that is special to a family who has lost a loved one
- Help pay bills related to funeral expenses (cantor stipends, church donations, reception, etc.)

Bible Verse to Reflect On:

Tobit 1:16 – 22; 2:1-8

CLOTHE THE NAKED

- Crochet or knit hats for cancer patients
- Make masks and put them in a “free” basket at your parish
- Donate suitcases and duffle bags to foster care organizations
- Donate clothes to those recently released from jail or prison
- Clean out your closet and donate to an organization or a family in need
- Collect baby items for mothers in need and donate to a local pregnancy resource center

Bible Verse to Reflect On:

Ezekiel 18:16-18

FEED THE HUNGRY

Donate food to a local food pantry

Pay for the person behind you in the drive-through

Send a surprise pizza to a teacher, nurse, or service worker

Bring meals to someone who is sick, recently had a baby, or an elderly neighbor

Make “Blessing Bags” for your car to hand out to those in need (healthy snacks & toiletries)

Bible Verse to Reflect On:

Isaiah 58:10

GIVE DRINK TO THE THIRSTY

Purchase reusable water bottles and donate to a local school

Donate water to shelters, police/fire stations, or organizations collecting for an emergency situation

Leave a bottled drink and packaged snack on your porch for those that make deliveries to your home.

Include a Bible verse or letter of encouragement.

Bible Verse to Reflect On:

Isaiah 55:1

SHELTER THE HOMELESS

Donate or build items for Habitat for Humanity homes

Donate to an organization that helps find homes for returning citizens

Donate furniture to refugee families or migrant farm worker residences

Use plastic bags to crochet plastic sleeping mats for the homeless. Click [here](#) for instructions.

Bible Verse to Reflect On:

Deuteronomy 15:10-11

VISIT THE IMPRISONED

Donate to a local bail fund

Write letters to those who are incarcerated

Donate Bibles to your local jail, prison, or detention center

Write or call your representatives about issues related to incarceration, including state and federal executions, bails, and juvenile sentencing

Do a drive-by hello with signs and noisemakers for someone who is homebound

**Note: There can be many restrictions with sending items to jails, prisons, and detention centers. Check with your parish's prison ministry group or the facility itself to learn what the rules are.*

Bible Verse to Reflect On:

Hebrews 13:1-3

VISIT THE SICK

Plan a family or parish rosary for the sick and dying

Write get-well cards for patients at a local hospital

Plan a Zoom call with someone who is ill at home or in a hospital

Gift items for someone who is sick, such as books, board games, and snacks

Bible Verse to Reflect On:

James 2:1-26



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THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION GUIDE

TIPS FOR PROCESSING AND REFLECTING ON SERVICE

Take time to intentionally reflect upon your service experience shortly after it happens. This can be formal or informal.

- Ask each person involved to share one or two things they learned from the experience and how it affected them.
 - My first impression was...
 - I realized my first impression was right/wrong because...
 - I can't stop thinking about...
 - Today I witnessed Jesus when...
 - Because of today, in the future I plan to...
- Spend time processing the experience through private journaling.
- Use the Daily Examen to reflect upon the experience at the end of the day.

Connect your service experience to scripture and Catholic Social Teaching.

- Conduct a mini-Bible study that relates to your service experience using Parables, the Beatitudes, or other parts from scripture for reflection.
- Discuss which principles of Catholic Social Teaching relate to your service experience and why that principle is an integral part of the Catholic faith.
- Learn about a Saint whose life and work reflects the cause associated with the service experience.
- Encourage youth to process their service by writing reflections for their parish or school, or giving a presentation on their experience.