



Bishop O'Connell High School

How I Practice Catholic Values Outside of School and Church

By Michelle Tansey

Besides my school and church, I practice my Catholic values within three important areas of my life: my family, my workplace, and my community.

I am blessed with a large extended family. I love my family and I enjoy spending time with them. I believe that "Honor thy father and mother" describes how Christians should treat not only their parents but their whole extended family. My great aunt is 82 years old and I like to visit her on school holidays and help around her house. I invite my friends and we take her out and walk her dog and tend to her garden for her.

At the YMCA of Reston, I am a life guard. I work with many non Christians. At work I have the opportunity to tell my co-workers about Christianity and Catholicism. I also have the chance to meet people of many faiths and different nationalities at my job and I treat them with respect and dignity. Sometimes, the hardest part about showing your faith is not sharing it, just living it out for others to see. In these times, I bring my moral values to my work place even when they are not shared or not accepted by others. I feel like sometimes, it's the little things, like the way you act in difficult situations or being a trustworthy employee, that can send your message out the loudest not just to your employer but to everyone who comes in contact with you.

Lastly, I practice my Catholic values by volunteering in my community. I give others my time as an act of charity but also as service and action for justice. In 2007, I joined a week long mission trip to Mississippi with a group of teens and adults. In Mississippi, we repaired homes that had been damaged by hurricane Katrina. While working there, we shared our faith and our energy with the residents to improve their lives. In 2008, I spent a day laboring in Northern Virginia with teens and adults doing odd jobs and yard work. All the money we earned that day was donated and used to purchase food for a local family in need. We delivered several hundred dollars worth of groceries to "our family". In 2009, I spent a week in Elmira, New York at work camp helping to repair homes of the poor and disabled. We prayed for the residents every day at lunch and invited them to join us. At the end of the week we invited them to a service where they could hear more about God and why we did all that we did for them. This was the greatest part of the week because they had seen our faith in action and they had seen God's love for them made real.

By using my energy and strengths for the good of others I was able to put my Catholic faith in action to benefit my family members, my co-workers, and the people of my community.