

# Christian Service Paper Guidelines

*You are expected to use MLA formatting and carefully follow the guidelines below. Include a running header – your last name and page number – at the top right of each page of your essay. Start with first page of essay, not the cover page.*

1. **COVER PAGE**

Include only the following information (centered in the middle of the page):

Student Name  
Christian Service Final Paper  
Class of 20\_\_  
Name of Your Placement(s)

2. **INTRO (max ½ page)**

**Engage the reader** in an opening paragraph that introduces themes and leads to a clear **thesis statement** (what you learned) in the last sentence of this paragraph.

3. **SUMMARY (max 1 page)**

**Summarize** your service project in a paragraph that includes agency information, your role, responsibilities, schedule, etc.

4. **MAIN BODY (3-4 pages)**

**Explain what you learned and how you learned it** in 3-5 body paragraphs that focus on different areas of growth. (This is the most important part of your essay!) Remember, each time you start a new topic/idea, begin a new paragraph with a topic sentence that states the lesson of focus in that paragraph. Then, tell stories about specific people that you worked with to illustrate what you learned from them. Stories might be funny or sad or even seemingly ordinary... just be honest. You must include:

A. **Your educational growth** (consider the questions below, but **do not answer all of them**):

- How did I view the people or placement before I began this service project? How did my view change or stay the same?
- Have I changed or do I want to change because of the people I met or the circumstances I witnessed?
- What new attitudes or talents have developed in me? Can I apply what I learned to other parts of my life (such as family or friend relationships, school, future career, further service)?
- What were my biggest struggles during my service, and what did I learn from these struggles?
- What are the greatest gifts I have been given because of my involvement with the people I came to know? How might I use those gifts in my life to help others?

B. **Your spiritual growth** (again, consider the questions, but **do not answer all of them**):

- Where did I notice God? Where was love? How did my work respond to "what it means to be Christian"?
- How did I see God present in the people I worked with? Does this affect how I see God now?
- How has this experience challenged my faith? Strengthened it?
- Do I see Jesus differently after meeting these people? Has my view of the Church?

C. **At least one connection to Catholic Social Teaching** (page 16 of your journal)

Choose one to two elements of Catholic Social Teaching that you either witnessed or felt were not present at your service placement. Demonstrate your understanding of each teaching with a specific story from your experience.

5. **CONCLUSION (max ½ page)**

Close with a paragraph conclusion that restates your thesis and describes **how you have applied what you learned** to life outside your service project (connect your service experience to your life today).

# ***What you should AVOID...***



Let's recognize a few things you *already know*...

- Patience is a virtue. We're all constantly challenged to grow in patience as we face new experiences, people, and situations in life.
- We should not judge people. We've heard "Don't judge a book by its cover" since grade school.
- The Golden Rule, which says to treat others like you want to be treated, should always guide us. People should be treated equally.

In other words, these are **not new lessons or insights, so do not write about them as if they are.** DIG DEEPER and identify new insights, areas of personal growth, lessons, and perspectives that you gained during your 65+ hours of service.

Avoid the following language that is outdated, vague, or offensive:

- Words like: normal, regular, disabled people, handicapped people (use "people first" language).
- Unfair assumptions like: "Being poor is all they know, so they don't mind it." "Having a disability is all they know, so he's okay with it." "These campers with disabilities are just like any other kid."
- Collective pronouns like "us" and "them" or "we" and "they" when you could narrow it down. Focus on **your** experience. Instead of saying, "**We** assume homeless people are..." say, "Going into my service, **I** made some unfair assumptions about people who are homeless..."