

CHRISTIAN MINISTRY PROGRAM

“...whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.”

(Mt 25, 40)

Christian Ministry “is the public activity of a baptized follower of Jesus Christ flowing from the Spirit's charism and an individual personality on behalf of a Christian community to witness to, serve and realize the kingdom of God”

(Thomas F. O’Meara, Theology of Ministry)

The call to serve others—especially those less fortunate than ourselves—can be found in the literature and sacred texts of every major religion. As Catholic Christians, we are called to service by our Baptism as followers of Jesus: the perfect example of loving service.

The Christian Ministry program at Juan Diego Academy is an opportunity for students to become involved in direct service to both the Church and the wider community.

Elements of Juan Diego Academy’s Christian Ministry Program:

The Spirituality of Service

Christian Ministry is the freely offered gift of one’s time, talents and personality. We can be Christ for others in many ways. While some agencies where we carry out our ministry are not directly tied to the Church, we consider the student’s contribution to be Christian ministry because faith is the motivation, prayer is the source of strength, and service in the imitation of Jesus is the goal.

The Opportunity to Learn

Christian Ministry is an opportunity to learn and grow outside the traditional classroom environment. Through Christian ministry, students may discover their personal gifts, values, limitations, and perhaps, come to realize their personal vision/mission for the future. They will develop a new awareness about others, as well as issues of justice in our neighborhoods, communities, and the world.

The Choice of Ministry

As Christians, we believe in the prayerful discernment of important choices and decisions we make. We believe the Holy Spirit can guide our choice of ministries if we let it. Students are challenged to prayerfully examine their gifts and interests and then listen to the Holy Spirit. Often the Spirit’s call may be to do something more difficult or challenging than we are comfortable with. Risk is an essential element of human growth. When we stretch beyond our “comfort zone,” we often gain the most from an experience.

The Commitment to Serve

It is the investment of oneself that makes for rewarding ministry. While there are many short term ministry opportunities, it is recommended that students make a long term commitment (a semester, a summer, a year) to one ministry. This will give them the opportunity to develop relationships, become experienced in the field, and perhaps witness changes or growth in those they are serving. The agency also benefits because they can count on the student's continued service. Students are reminded to make sure their ministry conforms to the guidelines of the Christian Ministry program.

The Action/Reflection Process

Students will reflect regularly upon their ministry through journaling and periodic conversations in their religion classes. This opportunity to reflect on and share ministry experiences with others is where much of the learning takes place.

Requirements for the Christian Ministry Program

Hours

Beginning with the fall semester of 2014, Students are required to perform a minimum of **100** hours of Christian Ministry beginning with the first day of classes in the fall of their freshman (or first year) at Juan Diego Academy and concluding by the deadline set during the student's senior year. Because this is an ongoing experience that will be reflected upon throughout one's time at JDA, Students are required to complete at least **25** hours by the end of each academic year. Five (5) of these must be earned through service in the student's home parish/church. Students should contact their pastor, coordinator of religious education, or youth minister for help in fulfilling the home parish/church requirement.

Seniors who graduate in June, 2015 through June, 2017 must have completed a minimum of **75** hours in order to graduate from Juan Diego Academy. Students graduating after that date are required to earn the **100** Christian Ministry hours, including meeting the home parish/church requirement. Diplomas may be withheld if hours are incomplete.

Criteria for Ministry Sites

A list of suggested ministry sites will be provided to students through their religion classes at the beginning of the academic year. This list will always include the student's home parish, any Diocesan ministry, and Juan Diego Academy. A student may perform service at a site not on the suggested list, so long as it meets the criteria listed below:

- the ministry must involve direct service to or with people
- the ministry must be voluntary (no monetary or other goods may be exchanged for service rendered)

- the ministry must be supervised by an adult (age 21 or over)
- the organization must not publicly endorse a position or value that contradicts the teachings of the Catholic Church

Students should check with the Christian Ministry Coordinator for approval before performing any service if there is any doubt about the ministry site or the service to be performed.

Documentation of Ministry

The student is the Christian minister. It is the Christian minister's responsibility to report the hours of service on the approved CM Form. Only complete, original, readable copies of the form, signed by the student and the ministry supervisor, can be accepted. A parent signature may not substitute for the signature of the ministry supervisor, who must be an adult (21 years of age or older). A parent/guardian may not supervise a student in performing their ministry. Students are urged to make a copy of each form they submit for their own records and verification, as well as to keep track of their hours.

During the school year, CM forms should be turned in to the Christian Ministry Coordinator within 30 calendar days of the completion of the work being documented, or by the deadline set by the Coordinator at the end of each semester, whichever comes first. For service performed during the summer months, completed forms must be submitted no later than 30 days from the first day of classes for the fall semester.

Any service hours not properly documented and submitted by the required deadline will not be accepted.

What counts as hours

Simply put, all time spent in direct Christian ministry to others, including any required orientation at an agency. For fairness and consistency, any ministry done as part of Mass or another prayer/worship experience (lector, extraordinary minister of Holy Communion, altar server, cantor/choir member, etc.) is counted as one (1) hour of Christian Ministry.

What doesn't count

You are not allowed to count transportation time to and from the ministry site, breaks, or meal times. Babysitting (unless for a parish/agency in a group child care setting with supervision), and work for family/friends do not count. Donations of goods do not count, regardless of the donations site's policy. However, time spent gathering the goods can count. Work done in one's home, even with parental and/or adult supervision, cannot be counted. Remember that parents may not supervise your Christian ministry hours.

Senior Recognition

Beginning in June, 2018, seniors performing 150 or more hours of Christian Ministry are eligible to receive a special service cord to wear at graduation. For graduates of June, 2015 through June, 2017, 100 hours or more is required for special recognition.

Consequences for Incomplete Hours

Towards the end of the spring semester, there will be a final due date for hours to be counted toward that school year. The date will be published and students will receive periodic reminders of it. Any student not completing the required service hours by this date may be placed on academic probation with the approval of the Principal. The student will remain on probation until the required hours are completed. While on academic probation, a student is not allowed to participate in any of the school's extracurricular activities, clubs, or organizations.

Special Projects and Initiatives

Juan Diego Academy will endeavor to support new and creative student initiatives aimed at serving those less fortunate than ourselves. Therefore, the Christian Ministry Coordinator (in consultation with the Principal) may grant an exception to certain reporting and documentation requirements for students involved in a project or activity where the normal program guidelines would hinder the development or completion of the project or activity. These exceptions will be handled on a case-by-case basis.