Good Morning and welcome to our tenth Community Service Sunday here at Holy Cross.

Today is the day each year when we pause to reflect on our role as a Parish…as part of the body of Christ…in our community.

Our Parish gathers here each week. We come together from varying locations throughout the area here, in our lovely church building, set on this beautiful peace of land, to worship. We come here to celebrate and receive the sacramental grace that God extends to us in the Eucharist.

At one point several years ago, I had the opportunity to capture the nature of God’s gift to us in the Eucharist. One of our children was working through his preparation for his first communion. I asked him to explain the Eucharist to me…he told me, “Dad, it’s I’m a car and each week I go to Church and God fills my tank with grace and with love.”

What insight! And what a beautiful picture of what happens here.

But as I thought a little bit more about my son’s comments, I realized that the Eucharist, our participation in communion with God had to mean more than the single hour a week we spend here together at Holy Cross. Certainly our relationship with God involved more than receiving from Him. Belief in God must mean something more.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ put it well, “What happens in Church is God’s gift to you. What you do outside of Church is your gift to God.”

Our Community Service and Community Outreach activities help to create a platform by which you can create your unique gift to God.

Some of our Community Outreach activities have their beginnings within these walls during our celebration of the Mass.

Our largest outreach activity over time was our effort to raise funds to assist in the expansion of facilities and programs at Our Lady of Guadalupe, the catholic mission church in northwest Indian River county. Your generosity raised more than $4.0 million for this effort. To date, with your help, the largely Hispanic community enjoys an expanded Church building with more than double the seating capacity of the original church building. We have been able to purchase a former private school that occupied the southwest corner of the Our Lady of Guadalupe. Now renovated, the Tepeyac Center, named after the Mexican town where Our Lady appeared to xxxxxxxxxx, houses a computer lab and vocational training facilities. Each day, some of our County’s neediest residents move forward learning English as a Second Language or preparing themselves for citizenship through classes offered by Indian River State College. More than $1.5 million of the original funds remain unspent to date. As we speak, plans are being developed by the OLG community to expand their current social space and complete the vision of an integrated campus we first brought forth here more than five years ago.

On a smaller scale, once each month we hold a second collection to raise money for our “Community Outreach Fund.” Your donations help our Parish help those with critical financial needs. Our wonderful Parish staff generally meets direct requests by referring those in need to local social service agencies. We couple these referrals with periodic contributions to the agencies from the Community Outreach Fund.

In cases involving homelessness, many of the referrals are made to The Source. The Source provides [ xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx}

Recent years have brought a dramatic increase in the number of individuals arriving at the Parish door, lacking even the basic ability to feed themselves or their families. These critical needs are met by referring those in need to Harvest Food and Outreach. Harvest runs programs that provide direct emergency food assistance to the hungry. Harvest also maintains a cost-share grocery program in which clients are able to buy groceries at a fraction of their retail price. Most importantly, perhaps, participants in Harvest’s programs earn dollars to spend on food by attending classes on financial and life management.

Pat Kroger in our Parish Office helps us to coordinate that part of our Community Outreach programs that call upon your time, rather than upon your treasure. We conduct a series of programs each year.

Holy Cross volunteers work to bring joyful holiday events to the residents of St. Francis Manor, a Catholic independent living facility for low-income seniors. Your time in serving Easter dinner or baking a fruit crisp can be a part of your gift to God.

Through our long-standing affiliation with the Education Foundation’s Sneaker Exchange program, your hands can work God’s love into a new pair of shoes for a child who cannot afford them.

This year we will be sponsoring our second Lenten Day of Service. On what we just know will be a beautiful spring day, we will work with our Parish youth in helping improve life for the poor here in our County.

This year we are developing a new service partnership with the Harvest Food and Outreach Program. You can volunteer to sort donated clothing and food for redistribution to those in need.

The best thing about giving a gift, I think, is matching what you can give with what the recipient wants to receive.

But by ([T](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians+15&version=NASB#cen-NASB-28729T))the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I ([U](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians+15&version=NASB#cen-NASB-28729U))labored even more than all of them, yet ([V](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians+15&version=NASB#cen-NASB-28729V))not I, but the grace of God with me