



August 29, 2016

Dear parents and guardians,

St. Matthew's Catholic School faculty and staff are committed to the religious education of the whole person. It is our unique mission to guide young people in developing a Christian social conscience and a commitment to a life of justice and peace. Religious education does not stop at the threshold of the classroom door. Therefore all students in grades 6-8 are required to complete hours of community service each year they attend St. Matthew. Guidelines are as follows:

- Hours required per grade:
 - Grade 6: 10 hours
 - Grade 7: 15 hours
 - Grade 8: 20 hours
- The time frame for performing community service is June 1 through May 15.
- Students should pace themselves by setting goals of four to five hours per quarter (about 30 minutes a week).
- Students are responsible for completing and submitting a Community Service Form to their religion teacher as documentation of each completed service by the end of each quarter. Forms are available online at www.stmatthewscs.com and/or from the religion teacher. Forms must be signed by an official representative of the organization; that representative may not be a family member.
- Eighth graders must complete community service hours/projects in order to attend the year-end trip and to participate in graduation exercises; however, **eighth grade students making their Confirmation and completing service hours as part of their sacramental preparation may be exempt from part of the school requirement.**
- Students who do not satisfy the required number of hours will receive a grade of Incomplete in Religion. Upon completion of the service requirement, the grade of Incomplete will convert to the grade earned for the year. The final report card will be withheld and a student will not be promoted until this requirement is met.

Service opportunities are plentiful in the greater Jacksonville area and will be posted in religion classrooms, in the Falcon News, and on the website. Ordinarily, service should be completed through non-profit or charitable organizations such as homeless shelters, soup kitchens, convalescent homes, home-building projects, tutoring children, volunteering at parish festivals, community service agencies, local hospitals and parish religious education programs, and for church-related ministry done outside the weekend worship service. A list of "pre-approved" service will be available as a downloadable form on our school website. Students are eligible for half of their service hours to be completed during the school day as requested by teachers and administration.

When in doubt about the criteria of a service opportunity and in order to prevent unnecessary misunderstandings, students are encouraged to discuss their plans with their religion teacher. While students are not limited to the above-mentioned service opportunities, service hours must be volunteer (non-paid) and should be completed before or after school hours. Chores or service performed in the home or in a family-operated business as a responsible family member are indeed commendable but are not considered community service.

Credit for participation in parish liturgical celebrations (e.g. altar serving, usher, lector, choir, etc.) may be applied to service hours only after the minimum requirement of 20 hours has been completed.

The Gospel calls us to the values of compassion and service to those in need. This both requires and involves interaction with the community in which he/she lives. Community service is central to what we stand for as a Catholic community. Participation in both our education and service hours will enable students to accomplish this goal.

Please sign and return this letter. Contact us if you have any questions.

God bless,
Mrs. Tuerk

Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____

**St. Matthew's Catholic School is a community where the paths of
faith and knowledge come together guiding us through life.**