Why I Am Catholic

The church's missionary activity.

Since its beginning, the Catholic Church has spread the Gospel and been an instrument of hope to people in need. Missionaries have fed people physically and spiritually and have helped those who have nothing and are thought to be nothing in the eyes of the world. For the first 1800 years, the emphasis was generally on the spiritual needs first. Then church leaders increasingly realized that once people are fed, clothed, and sheltered, they listen a whole lot better. And that we must love and care before we preach and teach.

St. Francis reminds us: "Preach the gospel, use words when necessary." Beginning with Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903), the church has increasingly focused on the social gospel—"When I was hungry, you gave me to eat"—and the corporal works of mercy.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has a number of departments and programs dedicated to these efforts. These include Catholic Relief Services; Catholic Campaign for Human Development; Migration & Refugee Services; and Justice, Peace, and Human Development.

This week, 27 members of this parish continue this missionary activity as they travel to Catholic Heart Work Camp (CHWC) in Mishawaka, IN. We have 19 teens and 8 adults who desire to serve and learn, to pray and to grow. To paint houses, clean up yards, serve the poor and to encounter Christ present in each person we meet. "Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me." (Mt 25:40)