



# Catholic Schools Week 2018

## Moment Three: Families of Love

### Boards of Management

#### Introduction

Love is central to the Catholic understanding of marriage and the family. In their daily lives, couples and their children experience and nurture this divine gift. Yet, we often hear it said that 'to love another we must first love ourselves'. In *Amoris Laetitia*, Pope Francis reflects on 1 Corinthians 13. He notes the language used by St Paul in his hymn to love: 'love does not seek its own interest', nor 'seek what is its own'. Such language tells us that love is not only an inbound but also an outbound reality; therefore, it is important for us to recognise that 'loving ourselves is only important as a psychological prerequisite for being able to love others: "If a man is mean to himself, to whom will he be generous? No one is meaner than the man who is grudging to himself" (Sir 14:5–6)' (AL, 101).

When love is understood through this biblical lens it becomes clear that 'generously serving others is far more noble than loving ourselves' (AL, 101). Pope Francis states, 'This love must be freely and generously expressed in words and acts.' In a manner similar to that of family life in the home, three words are of the utmost importance to our Catholic school families: 'please', 'thank you' and 'sorry'. These three words give expression to an unselfish love, one that moves beyond the limits of individual interests and towards other persons. Conscious of this point, Pope Francis tells us not to be 'stingy' about using these words. Rather, he calls on us to 'keep repeating them, day after day' for 'the right words, spoken at the right time, daily protect and nurture love' (AL, 133).

As members of boards of management, it is our duty to ensure that our school families are places where members learn to not be overbearing and to ask 'may I?'; where they learn to be altruistic and say 'thank you'; and where they learn to recognise when they are wrong and say 'sorry'. By ensuring that our school family educates towards these words and thereby nurtures a charitable disposition, members of the school family truly experience the 'peace and joy' of the Holy Spirit. In this way, Pope Francis reminds us that the love of friendship unifies all aspects of family life and 'helps family members to grow constantly' (AL, 133). All of the above occurs through a process of growth in our school families. This process is animated by the presence of the Holy Spirit in our midst. It is important that we, as members of boards of management, take the time to reflect on this mystery and to discuss what it truly means for our school families to be families of love.

#### Reflections

- Can you identify any way in which the Board of Management could better facilitate its members in their formation in Christian love and nurture their charitable disposition?
- Are there any ways in which the Board of Management can do more to reach out to members of the school family who find themselves on the margins of society?
- In what way could the Board of Management better promote the language of Christian love ('please', 'thank you' and 'sorry') amongst the school family?
- Could the Board of Management give more support and encouragement to their school family to get involved in charitable social justice initiatives? If so, in what way?



## Prayer

### Prayer to Love God above All Things

God, my Father,  
may I love you in all things and above all things.  
May I reach the joy which you have prepared for me in heaven.  
Nothing is good that is against your will,  
and all that is good comes from your hand.  
Place in my heart a desire to please you  
and fill my mind with thoughts of your love, so that I may grow in your wisdom  
and enjoy your peace.  
Amen.

(Prayer from 'Catholic Online':  
[www.catholic.org/prayers/prayer.php?p=798](http://www.catholic.org/prayers/prayer.php?p=798))

### W

#### Watch

Video by the Vatican Television Centre (CTV) of Pope Francis' homily about overcoming selfishness, delivered at morning Mass, 17 June 2013 (2 min 57 sec): [www.youtube.com/watch?v=qEsaHXbIP5k](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qEsaHXbIP5k)

### R

#### Read

Pope Francis, apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* (*The Joy of Love*), 101–102, 133–5, 185–6, 296–7, 313:

[w2.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20160319\\_amoris-laetitia\\_en.pdf](http://w2.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20160319_amoris-laetitia_en.pdf)

Pope Francis, apostolic letter *Misericordia et misera*, 1–11:

[w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_letters/documents/papa-francesco\\_bolla\\_20150411\\_misericordiae-vultus.pdf](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_letters/documents/papa-francesco_bolla_20150411_misericordiae-vultus.pdf)

Pope Francis, encyclical letter *Laudato Si'* (*On Care for our Common Home*), 231:

[w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si.pdf](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.pdf)

Pope Francis, apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (*The Joy of the Gospel*), 102, 143, 171, 176–81, 198–9, 205:

[w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20131124\\_evangelii-gaudium.pdf](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.pdf)

Pope Benedict XVI, encyclical letter *Deus Caritas Est* (*On Christian Love*), 19–25:

[w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_enc\\_20051225\\_deus-caritas-est.pdf](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20051225_deus-caritas-est.pdf)

Saint John Paul II, apostolic exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* (*The Role of the Christian Family*), 57, 64, 71:

[w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_19811122\\_familiaris-consortio.pdf](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_19811122_familiaris-consortio.pdf)



## Staff to Staff

### Introduction

As teachers who are animated by the ethos of our Catholic school, we aspire to educate our pupils in a manner that is inspired by the Word of God. Teaching in this way is not always easy. When faced with the challenging circumstances that are part and parcel of daily life in our school families, it is not a simple task for teachers to sustain the charitable disposition that is demanded by the Gospel: 'You received without pay, give without pay' (Mt 10:8). The Word of God calls on us to look not only to our 'own interests but also to the interest of others' (Phil 2:4). In reflecting on this biblical passage, the words of the medieval scholastic theologian St Thomas Aquinas resound, 'It is more proper to charity to desire to love than to desire to be loved.' Teachers in Catholic schools always move towards such generosity as it enables us to give freely and fully to our students. This charitable disposition is shaped by the virtues of tenderness and forgiveness, and sustained by God's love.

Pope Francis tells us that this charitable disposition is nurtured by the celebration of the Eucharist. In coming together as a family of families to celebrate the Eucharist, we collectively discern in faith and charity the body of the Lord. In this way, the Eucharist becomes a constant 'summons for everyone "to examine himself or herself" (1 Cor 11:21–2)' (AL, 185). It opens 'the doors of the family to greater fellowship with the underprivileged' (AL, 185). As members of our school family of love, we are called to move towards charity both inside and outside the classroom. We have a responsibility to encourage all members of the school community to reach out in faith, hope and charity to those on the margins of society. When we educate in the spirit of generosity as the Gospel demands, we find ourselves in the privileged position to witness the exhaustible mystery of charity as it unfolds and grows in the lives of students.

Saint Thomas Aquinas encourages us to testify to the limitless character of Christian charity: 'Charity, by its very nature, has no limit to its increase, for it is a participation in that infinite charity which is the Holy Spirit ... Nor on the part of the subject can its limit be fixed, because as charity grows, so too does its capacity for an even greater increase.' Therefore, it is important for teachers in Catholic schools to take time to consider what it means to be a member of a family of love with our colleagues and discern the implications and responsibilities that this membership carries for us.

### Reflection

'If you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday.' (Is 58:10)

'And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.' (1 Cor 13:13)

- The above scriptural references are concerned with the concepts of charity and love. Write a diary entry for one day of the week. Try to account for the various ways in which your activity that day expressed charity and love. Having completed the diary entry, reflect on the concepts of love and charity and consider their potential to enrich lives. Could you have given better witness to love and charity in your daily activity?
- Watch the following video of Pope Benedict XVI's general audience (2 December 2009): [www.youtube.com/watch?v=SysPacymOlw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SysPacymOlw) (1 min). Discuss Pope Benedict XVI's catechesis on love with other members of staff and discern two ways in which teachers could give greater expression to Christian love in the daily life of the school.



## Prayer

### Prayer to be Generous

Teach me, Lord Jesus, to be generous:  
to serve you as you deserve;  
to give, not counting the cost; to fight,  
not heeding the wounds;  
to toil, not asking for rest;  
to labour, not seeking any reward,  
save that of knowing that we do your will.

Amen.

*(Prayer from the 'Catholic Online':  
[www.catholic.org/prayers/prayer.php?p=769](http://www.catholic.org/prayers/prayer.php?p=769))*