



**Welcome**

**Word**

**Wisdom**

**Worship**

**Witness**



**Catholic Schools Week 2014**

Seachtain na Scoileanna Caitliceacha 2014

Resources for the Post-Primary School  
Community: Home, School & Parish

**Catholic Schools: Places of Faith and Learning**

26 January–2 February 2014

# Table of Contents

## Getting Ready

Céad Fáilte/Welcome	1
Planning for Catholic Schools Week 2014	2
Board of Management/Governors and Staff Reflection	31

## Parish Resources

How to Celebrate Catholic Schools Week in Your Parish	4
---	---

## School Resources

The Catholic School ...	6
Thoughts for Each Day	7
Catholic Schools: Places of Faith and Learning	8

## Welcome

Welcome: 'I Was a Stranger and You Invited Me In'	9
---	---

## Word

The Word	13
----------	----

## Wisdom

Wisdom	17
--------	----

## Worship

Worship	22
---------	----

## Witness

Faith as Witness	27
------------------	----

Prayer on pages 27 and 30 taken from *Archbishop Oscar Romero Prayer* by Bishop Ken Untener. Reprinted with permission from Little Books of the Diocese of Saginaw, Michigan.



# Céad Fáilte/Welcome

We go to school to learn. We learn lots of things. From reading and writing to counting and spelling; from languages and mathematics to history and geography; from science and technology to religion and art; from praying and playing to music and acting; from seeing and listening to imagining and conjuring – there is so much to learn! Education opens people’s minds and hearts. It invites us to enter new worlds that we never even knew existed.

Literacy is the key. It is very sad to meet an adult who cannot read or write. To become literate is one of the great achievements in the life of each person. We shouldn’t take it for granted. It demands attention and work, which is why teaching and learning are so important.

There are many different types of literacy. Of course, the most immediate is being able to read and write in the language of our parents. As we grow in knowledge we can become literate in all sorts of other areas: mathematics and science; ancient and modern languages; poetry and art; music and religion. The theme of Catholic Schools Week this year is **Catholic Schools: Places of Faith and Learning**. There is a temptation in contemporary Irish discourse to dismiss religious belief as inherently irrational, divisive and anti-intellectual. This runs completely contrary to the Catholic education tradition which is built on a respect for faith and reason. Those who dismiss schools with a religious ethos as centres of indoctrination show little understanding of the long evolution of Catholic schools over many centuries, the rich diversity within the Catholic sector and the principles which underpin such education today. The value placed on both faith and reason is the most important principle of all, which helps to explain why Catholic schools are so popular and respected throughout the world.

We live in an era when science and religion might completely diverge from each other as if it was impossible for the same person to be a rigorous scientist and a sincere religious believer. Faith and reason can live and thrive in the same person: while one cannot be reduced to the other, they both play a dynamic role in forming and educating a mature person. There is no contradiction between being a fully educated person and a committed Christian.

In celebrating Catholic schools as places of faith and learning we are acknowledging that Catholic education is not closed or self-absorbed. It is open to the world and to new ideas. This year, Catholic Schools Week gives us an opportunity in our homes, schools and parishes to affirm Catholic schools as places of faith and learning. You will find many useful suggestions in this booklet to help you.

Fr Michael Drumm  
Chairperson  
Catholic Schools Partnership

# Planning for Catholic Schools Week 2014

This book provides resources to help celebrate Catholic Schools Week 2014. There are materials for use with the following groups:

- Students in the classroom
- Staff members
- Parents
- Members of Board of Management/Governors
- The wider parish community.

Two copies of this book have been sent to schools and one copy to all priests ministering in parishes. The different resources for the five target groups above have been colour coded for each category.

## Planning Meeting

The purpose of holding a planning meeting is to decide which elements of the resources your particular school community and parish will highlight during the week. By inviting representatives from the staff, Board of Management/Governors, Parent Association/Council, parish team, parish pastoral council and school chaplain to this meeting, you will be able to ensure the best possible celebration of Catholic Schools Week in your school and parish community. The agenda for this meeting might look like this:

**The Theme of Catholic Schools Week 2014: Catholic Schools: Places of Faith and Learning.**

## The Parish and Catholic Schools Week 2014

Consider marking the beginning of Catholic Schools Week within one of the parish Masses on Sunday, 26 January.

*Liturgical resources and suggestions for such a celebration of the Eucharist can be found on page 4.*

The parish might also get involved by:

- helping to create a display celebrating Catholic Schools Week
- hosting a discussion on the importance of Catholic education during Catholic Schools Week.



## **The School and Catholic Schools Week 2014**

Each day of Catholic Schools Week 2014 has its own theme and resources for classroom activity. This meeting might consider the events that will involve the whole school and perhaps the wider parish community.

## **The School Environment**

How will visitors to your school know that Catholic Schools Week is taking place? Take this opportunity to identify areas of the school where sacred spaces, religious images and display boards might be updated, enhanced or added in preparation for the celebrations. Parent Associations might be invited to help in this endeavour. See suggestions on page 5.

## **Staff and Board of Management/Governors and Catholic Schools Week 2014**

- A reflection for staff and Board of Management/Governors to help them to reflect on their work in Catholic education can be found on page 31. There is also a series of statements about the Catholic school on page 6. Consider how they best describe your school at staff, Board of Management/Governors and Parent Association/Council meetings in the coming months. Encourage members of Board of Management/Governors and Parent Association/Council members to be present at events planned for Catholic Schools Week 2014.

## **Resources**

It is our hope that you find the material included in this year's resource pack helpful as you celebrate Catholic Schools Week 2014. Copies of this resource are available to download *as Gaeilge* on [www.catholicschools.ie](http://www.catholicschools.ie). This resource pack has been prepared by Sean Goan, Karen O'Donovan, Tom Ryan, Orla Walsh and Brid Dunne in consultation with the Steering Committee for Catholic Schools Week 2014.

# How to Celebrate Catholic Schools Week in Your Parish

Catholic Schools Week 2014 begins on Sunday, 26 January, the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time. Over the past four years, parishes throughout the country have responded with great generosity and creativity to the invitation to take time during this week to celebrate the contribution made by Catholic schools to their communities. This can be done in a variety of ways: during the Sunday Liturgy, by joining in the activities in the parish schools and by creating opportunities for the parish community to connect with the school community.

Two copies of the Catholic Schools Week resources are sent to schools and one copy to all priests ministering in parishes. They will arrive during the week beginning 6 January.

There are many different ways in which parishes might choose to celebrate Catholic Schools Week and the following are just some suggestions that might help.

## Sunday, 26 January

### Celebration of the Eucharist for the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

- If you have a liturgy group, make sure that they are made aware of Catholic Schools Week as early as possible so that they can be involved in preparing the liturgy for this Mass. Encourage them to ensure that Catholic Schools Weeks becomes part of the annual life of the parish. It will always begin on the last Sunday in January.
- Consider how best the schools in your community might become involved in this Sunday's celebration of the Eucharist. Arrange a meeting with the principals and teachers in the weeks prior to Catholic Schools Week to discuss the various ways that the work of Catholic schools can be highlighted and celebrated during the liturgy on that day. Invite a member of the liturgy group to this planning meeting.
- The readings, Prayers of the Faithful etc. for the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time can be found in the December/January edition of *Intercom*. There are also homily notes for the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time in the January edition of *The Furrow*. Consider who best might proclaim the Word at the Mass – a staff member, member of the Board of Management/Board of Governors?



## Parish Newsletter

- Ensure that Catholic Schools Week is brought to the attention of the wider community by placing a note in the parish newsletter. Include specific public activities planned in your parish. Sample text might read as follows:

**Sunday, 26 January, marks the beginning of Catholic Schools Week 2014. The purpose of the week is to highlight and celebrate the wonderful contribution that Catholic schools make to our local communities and society in general. This year's theme is **Catholic Schools: Places of Faith and Learning**. Our parish is joining in the celebrations by ...**

Pupils from the school might distribute the newsletter on this Sunday.

## Display Area

Consider working with the school to create a display showing the ways in which the parish school/s are **Places of Faith and Learning**. This display could depict their work with local and national charities, their contributions to the local community and any other relevant activities.

## Boards of Management

Some Boards of Management in the Republic of Ireland will be recently formed and this might be an ideal opportunity to thank those who have served on the previous Board and acknowledge and congratulate the new members.

## The Pastoral Council

- Bring Catholic Schools Week to the attention of the Pastoral Council and ask them how the parish might best celebrate it this year. Consider the possibility of hosting an evening on the importance of Catholic education in Ireland today.

## The School

- The chaplain might take the opportunity this week to visit as many classrooms as possible. The Catholic Schools Week resources will help you to find a focus for your visit as it offers a theme for each day's work.
- Encourage schools to participate in Grandparents' Day on 29 January.
- Visit the staffroom this week. You might even bring a cake or a box of biscuits!
- Use the reflection for staff and Board of Management/Governors on page 31 to help all concerned reflect on their work in Catholic education.

# The Catholic School ...

- Has at its heart the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ.
- Builds an environment of care and concern for others that is rooted in Catholic social teaching.
- Creates a safe and happy learning environment where every child is encouraged and enabled to develop to their full and unique potential as human beings, made in the image and likeness of God.
- Seeks educational excellence while remaining faithful to its distinctive vision and approach.
- Is an inclusive and respectful community, welcoming students of all denominations and of none.
- Acknowledges the role of parents as the first teachers in the ways of faith and provides opportunities for their participation in the life of the school.
- Works in partnership with parents and the parish community to keep the light of faith burning brightly.
- Provides religious education programmes that confirm and deepen the child's understanding of the Catholic faith so that every child will be as articulate in their faith as they are in all other areas of the curriculum.
- Nurtures the child's appreciation and understanding of the sacramental life of the Church.
- Displays the symbols of our rich Catholic faith tradition.
- Spends time as a school community in reflection, prayer, ritual, celebrating the Eucharist and other sacraments in order to develop the spiritual life of each person in the school community.



Based on *Vision 08: A Vision for Catholic Education in Ireland* (A Pastoral Letter of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference)



## Catholic Schools Week 2014



# Thoughts for Each Day

**Monday:** As a Catholic school, let us take time to reflect on and celebrate the ways in which our school is a welcoming place. Some people imagine that education is all about acquiring information, but from our perspective that is a very limited view. Education is about people becoming the best they can be and so a very important starting place is the way we welcome each other. This is about the ongoing task, in which we all share, of ensuring that everyone who comes to our school understands that it is a place where human dignity is respected. That means that every day we make an effort to show kindness, to reach out to each other and to forgive. These are not easy things to do but ... 'if we only love those who love us what good is that?' (cf. Mt 5:46). We know that Jesus Christ is not only our great teacher, he is also our example.

**Tuesday:** Faith in God's presence with us always and everywhere is a guiding light in the Catholic school ... we believe that we can find God in all things. Today in our school many thousands of words will be spoken and written. All these words will be communicating a message, revealing something about the person who says or writes them. If we choose to we can use helpful and kind words, ones that build up, lend support or offer help. So, as we reflect on the power of words, let us remind ourselves that God not only speaks to us through his Word in the scriptures but also in the words that we both use and hear today.

**Wednesday:** In the long history of world literature, a common thread runs through much of the writing that has taken place in all civilizations: the search for wisdom. Being wise is something that we aspire to but it is not on our timetable. So where and how can we find wisdom? Wise people reflect on life, on the world around them and the world within. They look to those who went before them so that they can learn from their wisdom and experience. St Paul, reflecting on the story of Jesus, ended up describing him as the Wisdom of God. All our learning and time spent in school can benefit from us giving time to reflect on the wisdom that Jesus shares with us. This is a wisdom that teaches us to know our own worth and to be true to ourselves at all times.

**Thursday:** In our school community it is good to ask ourselves what are we doing when we pray together? The times when we gather for prayer we are saying that we are a community of faith, that we are searching and striving together to be the best school we can be. We know we are not perfect and so we learn to forgive each other. We know that we need help and so we learn to support each other. We know that we are blessed so we learn to say thanks. We know that we are all on a journey so we ask for God's help and guidance especially when we become disheartened. That's why we worship – it's good for us!

**Friday:** This week we have been celebrating Catholic Schools Week and reflecting on our school as a **Place of Faith and Learning**. What we have been doing is witnessing to the fact that there must always be a connection between what we believe and what we do. As a place where faith and learning are celebrated we remind ourselves that not just for this week but all year round we want our community to witness to the welcome we share, the Word that we live by, the wisdom that we are searching for and the worship that gives expression to what we believe. Thanks to everyone who makes that special effort to build our school community. May we continue to experience God's blessings today and everyday.

# Catholic Schools: Places of Faith and Learning

This year we offer our educational communities the opportunity to explore and reflect on five key areas at the heart of Christian living in Catholic schools: Welcome, Word, Wisdom, Worship and Witness. Each theme is presented as a class plan followed by a prayer service. These resources are suitable for use at any time and in any sequence that suits the teacher.

1. **Welcome** is about the welcome offered in Catholic schools, reaching out in Jesus to embrace all.
2. **Word** is about the ways in which God speaks to us through our faith and experience of school life.
3. **Wisdom** is about Catholic schools helping students move beyond information to knowledge, wisdom and fullness of life.
4. **Worship** is about living according to our ethos where our lives are motivated by love, just as God's life is.
5. **Witness** is about our way of being in the world as Catholics – who we are, what we do, how and why we do it.

In school we share, live and grow our faith, as well as work together to achieve high educational standards in order to realise our potential in a holistic way. Catholic schools offer transformative education that is essentially a spiritual process. Thus, in and through our lesson plans we extend an invitation to all to explore Catholic Schools Week 2014 in a vibrant, educational and spiritual way. The Saints' Days that are celebrated this week are: St Angela Merici, St Thomas Aquinas, St Aidan, St John Bosco and St Brigid.





# Welcome: 'I Was a Stranger and You Invited Me In'

## The Catholic School is an Inclusive Environment

Practicing hospitality and welcoming the stranger are themes that run throughout the New Testament. With so much interest in TV programmes such as *MasterChef*, *Bake Off* and *Come Dine With Me*, hospitality can very often come to mean creating a wonderful meal or dish for family and friends. While this can be an understanding, it is only part of the whole definition of the word hospitality – the biblical concept of hospitality goes far beyond this. The Greek word for hospitality is *philoxenia* and quite literally means, 'the love of strangers'. Interestingly, this is the exact opposite of xenophobia, the fear of strangers.

When we are with our friends and family it is not particularly difficult to show love or at the very least be a caring person. When we are in school we are called by the full understanding of the word 'hospitality' to show love and care for each other. This is a wonderful opportunity for us to be welcoming and show hospitality to each other as our difference is celebrated. There is a very thought-provoking verse in Hebrews 13:2 that invites us:

'to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.'

What a missed opportunity if we do not begin with the heart and extend welcome, care and love to all. Jesus takes this concept even further when he tells his friends that by welcoming a stranger, 'one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine', they have welcomed him, and will in turn be welcomed by him into his kingdom. Our understanding of welcome can evolve and grow as we think of new ways to encourage the other, appreciate and respect difference, support and advocate for the other, and to love in Christian ways.

### Discuss

1. In your own words create a definition for the word 'hospitality'.
2. Type the Greek word *philoxenia* into your search engine and explore the online definitions. This will give you a comprehensive understanding of the word. Share your findings with the class.
3. What are your thoughts on Hebrews 13:2? Explain your answer.

### Belonging

To **belong** is an innate human need. In school we are part of a Christian community where every person is valued, welcomed and given a real sense of belonging. We are called to believe, empowered to belong and invited to become all that we can be. In *Man's Search for Meaning*, a classic memoir written by Viktor Frankl who was an Austrian psychotherapist imprisoned at Auschwitz during World War II, the central theme is how we can be liberated to choose our independent response to any situation. To go with the crowd or to ignore a situation of injustice can often be the easiest of responses, but the most powerful response is one that demands courage, commitment and inner calm. Our responses to any given situation, and indeed the specific instance of welcome as discussed in this lesson, invite us to be inspired by giving and receiving Christian love in our daily activities no matter how small or unnoticed they may be, for example, helping out a First Year, interrupting a bully, offering to help when we are in a hurry, or simply by smiling and saying hello. Frankl suggests that, 'between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom'.

During Catholic Schools Week 2014 we can come together with different voices and a common vision. We can respond in many ways but we have a common vision of welcome for all. When each one of us feels welcomed and wanted we can respond to the educational philosophy of a Catholic school, a place of faith and learning, with a heart of welcome and love.

### **Name of Your School**

Have a look at your school's website and read about the specific characteristic spirit or ethos. With that in mind, have a go at answering the following three questions as part of a group work session or individually.

In Your School:

What are you called to **Believe**?

How are you empowered to **Belong**?

What are you invited to **Become**?

### **Welcome**

1. Think of your first year in school. Outline one way that you felt welcomed and included.
2. Name and describe three ways that you can convey a spirit of welcome (in the Christian sense of the word) in your school.

1.

2.



## Welcome Prayer Service

**Leader:** God's heart is a welcoming heart, reaching out in Jesus to embrace all. We listen to the theme of welcome in the gospels – its presence and its absence.

**Reader 1:** People welcome Jesus

Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.' (Lk 1:38)

**Reader 2:**

Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. She had a sister named Mary who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. (Lk 10:38)

**Reader 3:** Others do not welcome Jesus

Herod said to the wise men, 'Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word, so that I may also go and pay him homage.' (Mt 2:8)

**Reader 4:**

He was in the world, yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own and his own people did not accept him. (Jn 1:11-12)

**Reader 5:** Jesus welcomes us

'Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.' (Mt 11:28-30)

**Reader 6:**

And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, 'This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.' (Lk 15:2)

**Reader 7:**

Jesus said to them, 'Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.' (Mk 10:14)

**Reader 8:** Jesus tells us of God's welcoming heart

'But while he [the prodigal son] was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him.' (Lk 15:20)

**Reader 9:** We are called to welcome

Welcome one another just as Christ has welcomed you for the glory of God. (Rm 15:7)

'Whoever welcomes you welcomes me and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me.' (Mt 10:40)

**Leader:** May our hearts be filled with the welcome that fills God's heart.  
May we know God's welcome for ourselves.  
May we appreciate God's welcome for all God's people.  
May we cultivate a welcoming heart and communicate God's welcome in our world.

**Gospel Story** (Mk 4:30-32)

Jesus said: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed. Even though this is the smallest of all seeds, when it grows it is the biggest shrub of all and has such large branches that the birds come and take shelter in them.'

**Prayer for Guidance**

**'I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you.'** Ps 32:8

**All:** Today, many will break through the barriers of the past by looking at the blessings of the present. Why not you?

Today, for many the burden of self-doubt and insecurity will be lifted by the security and confidence of empowerment. Why not you?

Today, many will rise above their believed limitations and make contact with their powerful inner strength. Why not you?

Today, many will choose to live in such a manner that they will be a positive role model for all. Why not you?

Today, many will be confronted by difficult moral choices and they will choose to do what is right instead of what is beneficial. Why not you?

Today, many will take the action necessary to make a difference. Why not you?

Today is a new day!

Many will seize this day.

Many will live it to the fullest.

Why not you?

Adapted from Steve Maraboli, *Life, the Truth, and Being Free*

# The Word

## Faith in a Catholic School is Nourished by the Word of God

What's in a **WORD**? We use them all the time. We speak them, we write them, we even sing them; we listen to them, read them, reflect on them. We use them to write poems, tell stories, share ideas. By means of words we report on the things that have happened to us and we come to know what has happened to others. We share ideas, feelings and facts.

**STOP** for a few minutes and try to imagine a world without words.

What would be missing in your life that you enjoy, that you perhaps take for granted if there were no words? Take five minutes to write a short paragraph on what a day without words would be like.

Now make a list using three words from each person in the class, taken from their written pieces, and from this list make a word cloud. What is your word cloud telling you about words?

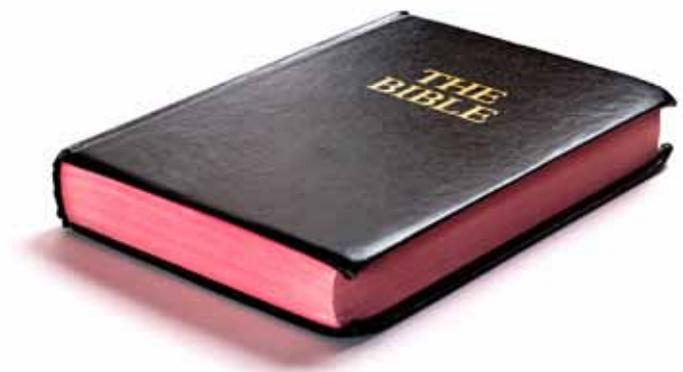
One of the most important things about words is that they help us to relate to each other, to make known our feelings and thoughts so we can come to know one another. They help us to **reveal** ourselves.

In the Catholic faith tradition a great deal of importance is attached to words and this is because we believe that God **reveals** himself to us. This happens through our experience and one of the most important ways in which we can reflect on that experience is through the Bible, which we describe as the **Word of God**.

How can the Bible be the Word of God? Does God talk – did he dictate the words of the Bible to someone? No!

When we say the Bible is the Word of God we mean that God speaks to us in human words. It came about because a whole range of people over a long period of time were writing down their reflections on the presence or even absence of God in their lives. They thought a lot about what God had done in the past, what he was doing in the present and what they hoped he would do in the future. The communities who preserved these writings believed that they revealed they had come to know the living God – they were inspired by God's Spirit and so became their Sacred Scriptures.

Consider these prayers found in the first part of the Bible, which we call the Old Testament:



The Lord is my shepherd,  
There is nothing I shall want. He leads me  
beside still waters;  
He restores my soul. (Ps 23)

The heavens are telling the glory of God;  
the sky proclaims his handiwork.  
Day to day pours forth speech and night  
after night declares knowledge. There is no  
speech, no words are heard but their voice  
goes out through all the earth, and their  
words to the end of the world.  
(Ps 19)

My God, my God why have you forsaken  
me?  
Why are you so far from helping me, from  
the words of my groaning?  
O my God I cry by day but you do not  
answer;  
and by night but I find no rest. (Ps 22)



These are short extracts from prayers in the Bible, found beside each other in the Book of Psalms. What do the words of these prayers say to you about the human experience of God?

As Christians we believe that Jesus of Nazareth is the high point of God revealing himself to the world. People who heard him preach and teach, who saw him heal and reach out to the brokenhearted knew that something truly amazing was taking place. As they thought about him and looked for ways to describe what they had come to understand about him, one of them wrote about him in this prayer:

**In the beginning was the Word  
The Word was with God  
and the Word was God ...**

**And the Word became flesh and lived among us  
And we have seen his glory. (Jn 1:1, 14)**

So when Christians speak about the Word of God they are not just talking about the Bible, they are talking about how Jesus reveals God.

In the second part of the Bible, which we call the New Testament, the early Christians used words to describe their experience of God working in and through the story of Jesus' life, death and Resurrection. This is the good news: the Gospel.

**'The word of the Lord remains forever. This word is the gospel which was preached to you.' (1 Pt 1:25)**

Divide the class into pairs and look up the following passages in the Bible taken from the Old and New Testaments. Select the correct title for each passage from the list below.

- |                      |                            |
|----------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Jeremiah 1:4-10   | a) What to pray for        |
| 2. Micah 6:8         | b) Loving as God loves     |
| 3. Isaiah 43:1-3     | c) Learning to pray        |
| 4. Matthew 5:43 -48  | d)What God wants           |
| 5. Luke 11:1-13      | e) God's promise           |
| 6. Ephesians 3:14-21 | f) The call of the Prophet |

**So, what's in a word? Especially when that word is the Word of God?**

## A Service of the Word

Create a centrepiece using a lighted candle, a Bible and an image of Jesus.

**Opening Hymn:** 'O The Word of My Lord' (Song of a Young Prophet)

### Opening Prayer:

God our Father, bless us now as we gather to pray  
Make us aware that you are present with us in many ways  
Through your Word in the scriptures you show that you are with us  
In the beauty of creation  
In the love of friends and family  
In the poor who need our compassion  
In the sorrowful who look to us for hope.  
May we respect your presence in your Word so that we may recognise your presence in our world. Amen.

### Reading from the Gospel of Matthew 7:24-28

Jesus said: 'Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise person who built their house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall because it had been built on rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish person who built their house on sand. The rain fell, the floods came and the winds blew and beat against that house and it fell – and great was its fall.'

- ⊕ The image Jesus uses in this reading to describe his words is that of a solid foundation.
- ⊕ One of the things we are doing in school is laying a good foundation for our future lives.
- ⊕ Part of that foundation is learning to be aware of God's presence.
- ⊕ This is a presence that guides and protects us.
- ⊕ It helps us to choose wisely and to pick ourselves up when we fall.
- ⊕ It is a presence that teaches us our true worth.
- ⊕ It reminds us of the beauty of the world we live in.
- ⊕ It reminds us of the dignity of every human being.

Jesus, may we build our lives on the solid foundation of your Word.  
May your Word become a lamp for our steps and a light for our eyes.  
May we take time to hear and understand it.  
So that every day we may grow stronger in your love. Amen.

# Wisdom

In a recent book on Catholic education, David Tuohy says that the Catholic school focuses in a special way on the holistic formation of the person. This formation is guided by the vision that each student is a 'child of God' who will grow to be an active citizen in the world. The inspiration for the formation is always the person of Jesus who is the centre of the school, and the values of the Gospel should be present in all school activities.

The Catholic school is to 'assist in the total development of the individual student' and to help students move beyond mere facts and information to knowledge, wisdom and the fullness of life.

## Discuss

Identify some ways that Gospel values are seen in the life of your school. Link the value you identify to the preaching and teaching of Jesus.

**Total development** involves Catholic schools helping their students to be ...

**Aesthetic** – to encounter beauty, to see God in all things, art, design.

**Creative** – to think freely and to dream, create music, study drama.

**Cultural** – to be critically aware within modern culture.

**Emotional** – to find personal meaning and experience positive relationships.

**Intellectual** – to achieve to the best of our academic ability.

**Religious** – to commit to a life centred on Jesus and his values.

**Social** – to be positive agents of change, building justice and peace.

**Spiritual** – to take time out, to reflect, to pray.



### For you to do

Identify some ways that you experience the presence of some of these qualities in your school. Are there any of these qualities that your school is particularly good at developing? Are there any qualities that you feel need to be developed further?

### The School Crest

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart College is a Marist Catholic School in Alice Springs, Australia. Their school crest is rich in symbol and tradition.

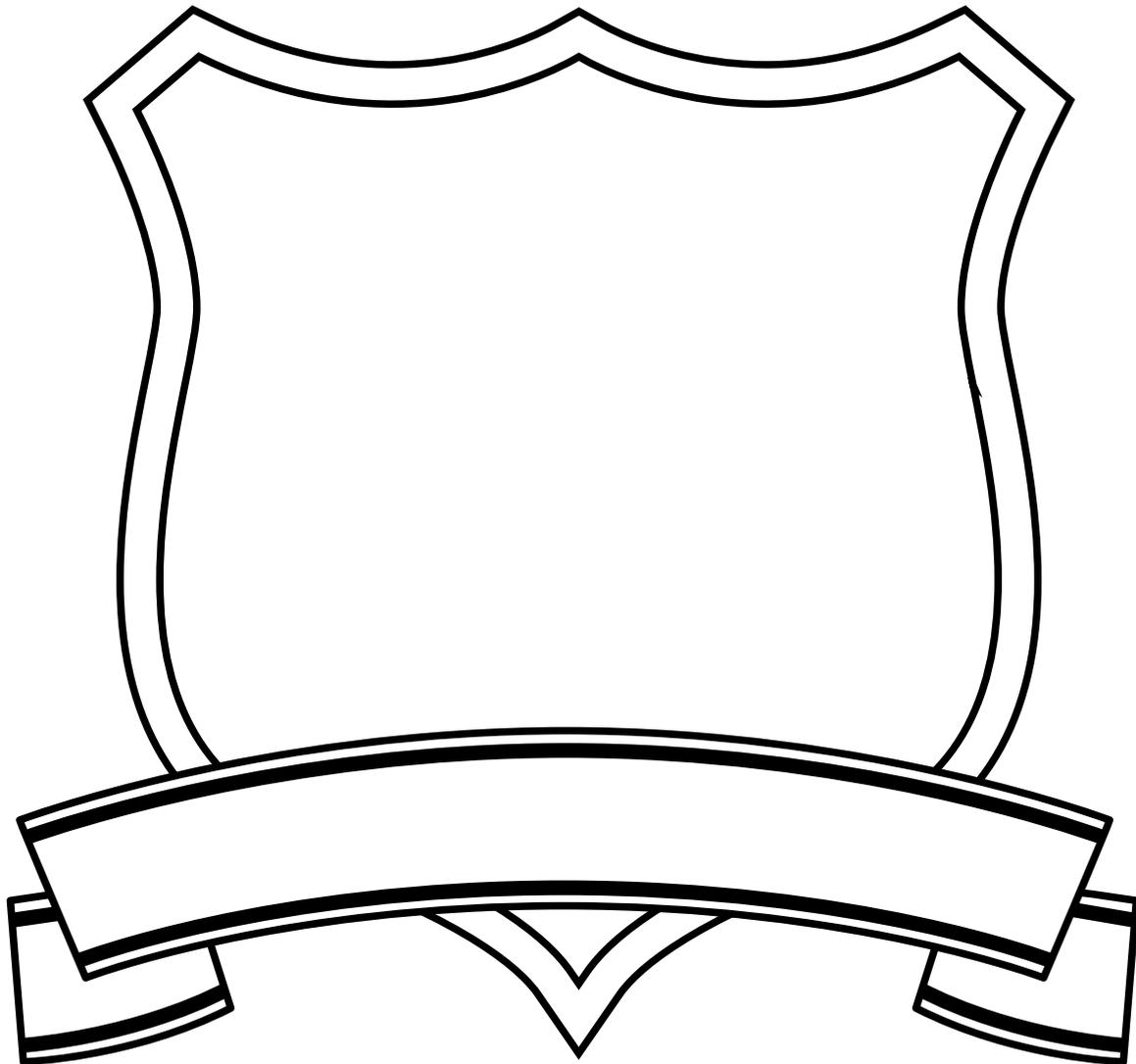
- The Shield: a symbol of protection, the shield unifies and protects the school community.
- The Decoration: incorporates elements commonly found in the marks made by desert Aboriginals.
- The Scrolls: the name and identity of the Catholic school – who they are and where they belong.
- College Motto: Justice, Love and Peace are the message of the kingdom preached by Jesus.
- Heart: the love of Mary forms the heart of the Marist tradition.
- The Cross and 'M': represent the Gospel story of Mary standing at the foot of the cross. Marists use this Gospel reading on their feast days.



WISDOM

**For you to do**

Using the template below, design a school crest that reflects the wisdom present in your Catholic school. The central shield can be divided into three, four or five sections to show the particular talents and values of your school.



## Prayer Service

**Leader:** Each of us has special gifts and talents that God has given us. We come together in prayer this morning to ask God's help for each one of us to use our talents to the best of our ability for the benefit of all in our school, in our families and in our community.

### Reflection

#### The Bundle of Sticks

A certain father had a family of sons and daughters, who were forever quarrelling among themselves. No words he could say did the least good, so he cast about in his mind for some very striking example that should make them see that discord would lead them to misfortune.

One day when the quarrelling had been much more violent than usual and each of his children was moping in a surly manner, he asked one of them to bring him a bundle of sticks. Then, handing the bundle to each child in turn he told them to try to break it. But although each one tried their best, none was able to do so.

The father then untied the bundle and gave a single stick to each son and daughter to break. This they did very easily.

'My children,' said the father, 'do you not see how certain it is that if you agree with each other and help each other, it will be impossible for your enemies to injure you? But if you are divided among yourselves, you will be no stronger than a single stick in that bundle.'

### Scripture

*The Parable of the Talents*

Mt 25: 14-30

For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.' But his master replied, 'You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

Give students time to reflect on what talents they can give thanks for. Get each student to write down one positive talent that they see in each person gathered in the room.

### Intercessions

**Response** Blessed be God

**Leader** Jesus asks us to use our talents ... *Response*

**Leader** We can hear what people need with our ears ... *Response*

**Leader** We can help people with the work of our hands ... *Response*

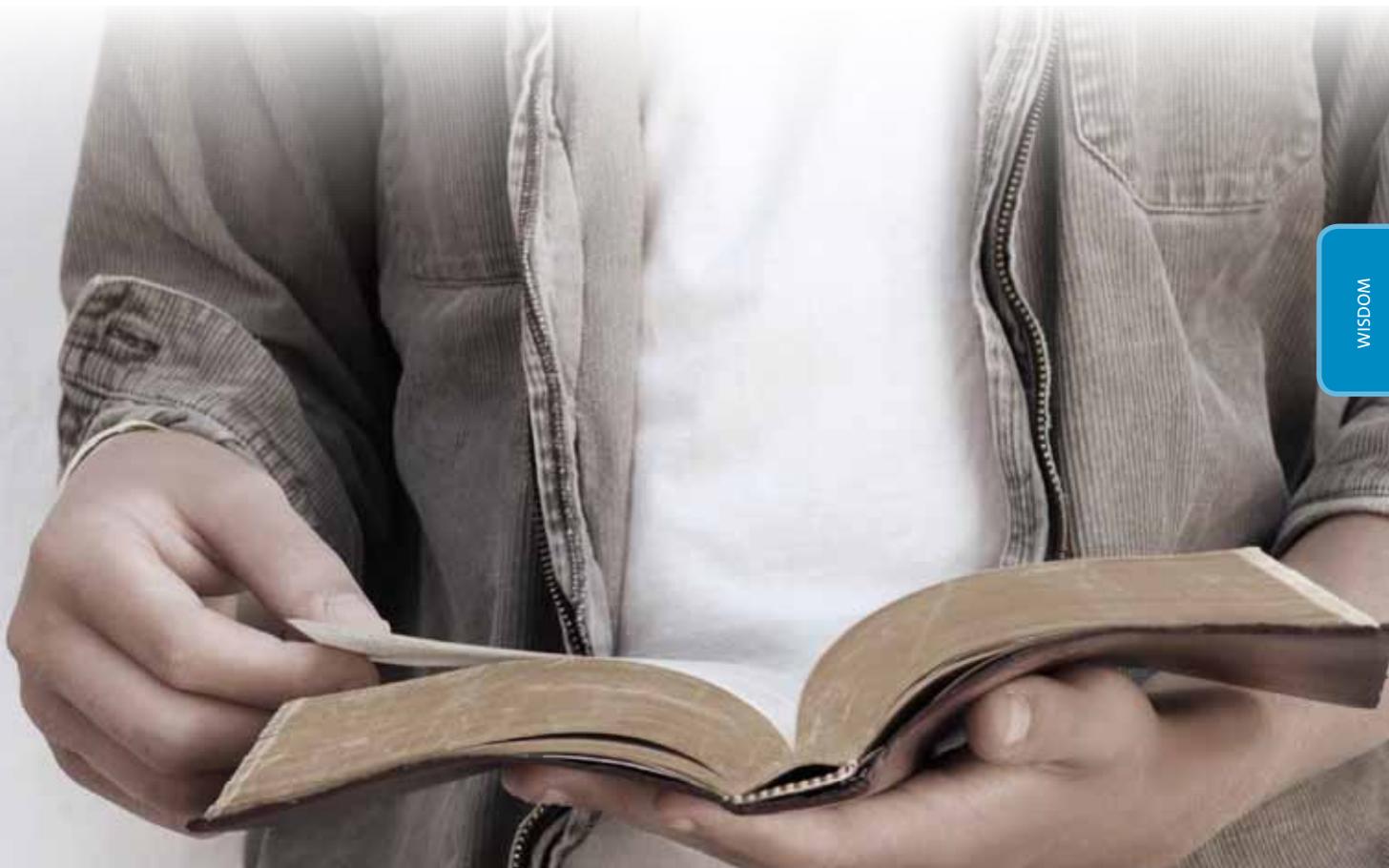
**Leader** We can go where people are in need with our feet ... *Response*

**Leader** We can love people with our heart ... *Response*

**Leader** Blessed are you, Lord of all creation, through your goodness we have our talents to offer ... *Response*

**All** We pray the words that Jesus taught his friends: *Our Father*

**Leader** God our Father, we thank you for this time of prayer. We thank you for the many gifts and talents within our school and in particular within this class group gathered here today. Help us always to appreciate your goodness and to work together and support each other in everything we do. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.



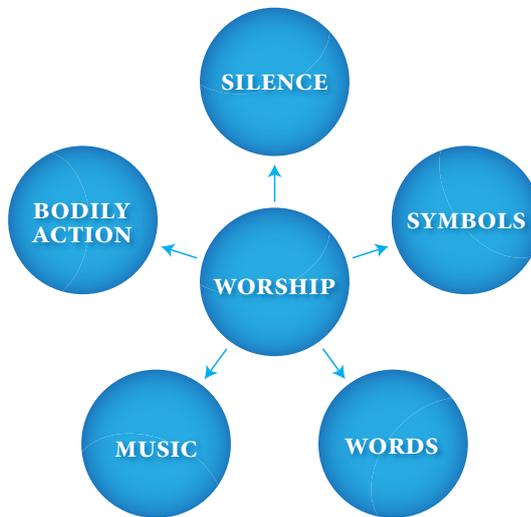
# Worship

## Keywords:

WORSHIP RESPONSE INITIATIVE COMMITMENT RELATIONSHIP ETHOS  
VENERATION TRANSCENDENT ANAMNESIS EPICLESIS LITURGY REPETITIVE  
CELEBRATORY INDIVIDUAL COMMUNITY SYMBOLS PETITION ADORATION  
REVERENCE PENITENTIAL

One of the ways we express our faith is by worship. When we worship we respond to God's love with our whole self, body, mind and spirit.

So ... how do we respond to God's love?



The following images are common symbols of worship:



**Task 1:** List symbols that could be used as a sign of your school and an expression of prayer.

**Task 2:** Based on your experiences in your school situation, pick a thought or a symbol which you could use as the centre of a silent meditation. It should be something that is meaningful and accessible to all students in the class.

**Task 3:** Examine the following scripture passages and prayers. Choose one of these, or one of your own that you can connect to your school and personal life.

**(1) Matthew 11:25-30**

**(2) Mark 9:33-37**

**(3) Mark 10:13-16**

**(4) 1 Cor 10:16-17**

**Prayer by Jacopo De Rossi, Italy**

Once, Moses came across a man who was praying, but he was reciting a strange prayer. The man was saying: 'Let me get closer to you, O Lord, and I promise to clean your body when it is soiled and rid you of lice should you have them. And I am a good cobbler, I will make you some perfect shoes. No one takes care of you O Lord. I will take care of you! When you become ill, I will serve you and bring you medicines. And I am a good cook!' Moses shouted: 'Enough, enough of these absurdities! What are you saying? That God has lice? And that his clothes are soiled and you will clean them? And that you will cook for him? Who has taught you this prayer?' The man replied: 'I did not learn it from anyone. I made it up ... and these are the things I know. Lice disturb me so I think they would disturb God too. Sometimes the food I eat is bad and I get stomach ache. God, too, must get a stomach ache from time to time! This is quite simply my life and has become my prayer.'

**Prayer by Monika Gaar, Germany**

You are like a woollen glove in the winter. You are like a good book: a surprise on every page. You are like an enormous handkerchief into which I can pour my tears. You are like a helpline that's never busy.



**Task 4:** Listen to the following examples of music that can be used for worship. Choose two of these pieces or pieces of your own choosing which are appropriate for your school situation at the moment.

- (1) 'St Theresa's Prayer' by John Michael Talbot
- (2) 'Receive the Power' by Guy Sebastian & Gary Pinto
- (3) 'Shout to the Lord' by Darlene Zschech
- (4) 'Ubi Caritas', Taizé cover
- (5) 'May the Goodness of the Lord be Upon Us' by Ronan McDonagh

**Task 5:** We praise God through the use of our bodies. The following are the most common types of bodily movements we use.



- Kneeling
- Standing
- Sitting
- Walking
- Bowing
- Joining with Others

Practice all of these gestures in the classroom and decide the reasons for choosing each one.

**WHY?**

Why do we worship God?

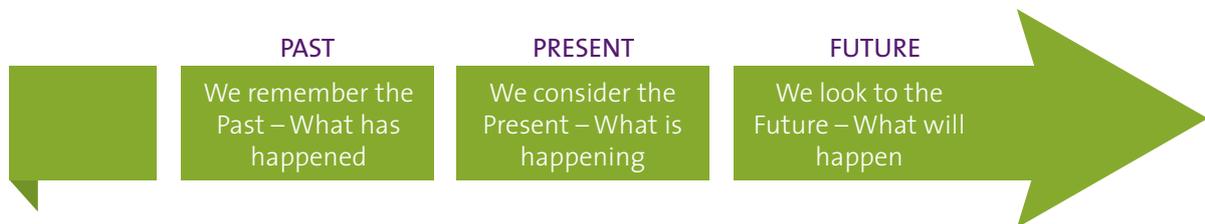


We worship ...



**Task 6:** Divide the class into five groups. Each group is to compose a prayer of one of the following: Petition, Adoration, Reverence, Thanksgiving or Penitence to God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Try to relate it to your life experience in school.

What do we remember when we worship?



Where?

**Task 7:** Make a list of all the ways we worship in 'Private' and as a 'Community'.



WORSHIP

## Prayer Service

Using the following template and the music, symbols, topic for silence, words and bodily gestures you chose during the class, create your own prayer service that celebrates through worship your life in your school community.

Materials needed: A central point of focus, holy water, a copy of a scripture reading, the symbols which the students have chosen, and a copy of chosen prayer text. If you are using a prayer box you will need paper and pens for students and a prayer box and oil.

Section	Text/Directions	
Opening Music	Insert your own choice of music either from the choices given or one of your own choice	All invited to stand
Blessing with Water	Today we remember the wonders of God's creation and the moment we joined the Christian community at Baptism. I invite everyone to come forward and make the sign of the cross with the holy water present here	Remain standing and then walk in procession when invited to come forward
Opening Prayer	God of love, ever caring, ever strong, stand by us in our time of need. Watch over us all and protect us from every danger. May we show your love to all those we meet every day. We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord. Amen.	All stand
Scripture Reading	Insert your own choice of reading either from the choices given or one of your own choice	All sit
Second Piece of Music	The choice of a psalm setting here would be very appropriate	Remain seated
Focused Silence	Using your experience from Task 2, read a short explanation for your focused silence	All sit
Presentation of Symbols	Using your list from Task 1, bring forward these symbols and place them in the central point in the classroom	Students bringing symbols walk in procession while other sit
Prayer	Insert your own choice of prayer either from the choices given or one of your own choice	
Invitation to Students	Either students are invited to pray their intentions aloud or they can be invited to write their intentions on a piece of paper and place them in a box at the central point in the classroom	Students bow after calling out or placing their prayer in the prayer box
The Lord's Prayer	Students are invited to pray the 'Our Father' together	All students are invited to hold hands in prayer
Closing Prayer	God we ask you to protect us. I now invite each student to come forward and I will place a drop of oil on your hands. I will make the sign of the cross on your hand, while asking God for what you need	All kneel and then walk in procession when invited to come forward
Closing Music	Insert your own choice of music either from the choices given or one of your own choice	All stand



## Faith as Witness

The way we live our lives tells us something of who our God is and what our faith means to us. The way we are in the world is an expression of our values, of what we believe in. It is a living out of our faith. 'You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world' (Mt 5:13a, 14). In choosing to live out of our faith we are choosing to be 'the light of the world' for others. To witness to our faith is to begin to express in action what we read in the Gospels. We can bear witness to our faith in many ways by living out the Gospel message – visiting the sick, supporting agencies such as Trócaire, and reaching out to those on the fringes of our community. But what does witness really mean?

### • W – worship

At the heart of worship is a meeting place with God, a God who cares for us as a mother cares for her children (cf. Is 49:15). Through worship we grow in relationship with God and with one another. Our worship, especially at Eucharist, speaks to the reality of people's daily lives, the highs and the lows, the ordinary times and the times for celebration. It constantly refreshes our understanding of God's love for us and his invitation to 'do this in memory' is an invitation to live life as Jesus did, continuously reconnecting with the source of life – God. How can you respond in a new way to Jesus' invitation to worship? What can you now do during the Mass to connect with Jesus' vision of a just world?

### • I – impact

It is sometimes hard to really feel the impact of our faith witness. We are used to pressing buttons to get exactly what we have ordered – a movie, a takeaway, a new jacket. Faith is different. As it grows within us, the impact becomes more obvious. However, we can still become frustrated at the pace. The *Archbishop Oscar Romero Prayer* talks about impact in an interesting way.

We cannot do everything and there is a sense of liberation in realising that. This enables us to do something and do it very well.

It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.

We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker.

We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future not of our own.

In what way does the excerpt above talk about impact of witness of faith? What is it encouraging us to do/think/be?

### • T – together

Consider the shape of the cross, one axis leads us to God and the other axis connects us to one another. Faith is about togetherness and relationship. Our faith calls us to connect with God and with one another. Not just the people we like, but all around us. We are called to live out of a sense of the dignity of every human being, without exception. In bearing witness to our faith we must listen clearly to what Jesus has to say about others. In the new commandment there is no space to 'select' who is to be included. Jesus talks about real togetherness: How can we follow Jesus' commandment, everyday, to love beyond our circle of friends? How can we love people we will never meet?

‘So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.’ (Jn 13:34-35)

- **N – now**

We cannot press snooze on the faith button! Living out our faith is not something we can postpone. Jesus said ‘I came so that everyone would have life, and have it in its fullest’ (Jn 10:10), not tomorrow, or next week, but NOW. Jesus wants us to experience life in the fullness of his love. How can we make space to witness our faith in every moment?

- **E – empathy**

Each person is born in the image and likeness of God, with innate dignity. How we listen to people can be a witness of our faith. We must be aware of what we listen through first. Do we judge people based on where they are from, who they are, their image? Empathy is a way to listen without prejudice, realising a person’s worth. Empathy is not about pity, but real understanding. ‘So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets’ (Mt 7:12). List some ways you can be more empathetic and less judgemental in your life.

- **S – service**

Each of us has gifts and talents. How we use our gifts and talents can give expression to our faith. ‘As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace’ (1 Pt 4:10). Our giftedness is a grace from God, a grace we can only fully appreciate in the service of others. Not using our gifts to their full potential is similar to receiving a gift and not opening the wrapping. ‘Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house’ (Mt 5:15). In what way can you light a path for others using your own unique gifts and talents?

- **S – solidarity**

1 Corinthians 12:26-27 says, ‘If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.’ In standing with those who face poverty and injustice we are bearing witness to our faith. To fulfil our baptismal promises we must strive for a just world where everyone can live lives of dignity, potential and hope. Trócaire, as the overseas development agency of the Catholic Church in Ireland, is a living witness to Christ’s message of justice and solidarity of the world. How can your school connect with agencies like Trócaire to be a sign of solidarity in the community?

### **For you to do**

1. Having answered the questions after each section, reflect on witness as a whole or on one section that appeals to you. What can you do to carry this insight into the future?
2. How can you be a witness to faith in your family, school, community, to the stranger? What actions might you take?
3. Research how agencies such as Trócaire demonstrate each aspect of witness as explored above.



## Prayer Service: Living Witness in Our World

### Introduction

Being living witnesses of the Gospel in our world today is not easy. It is a conscious decision, a way of being, an attitude. The ability to make choices is one of the characteristics that mark humans as unique. We know that a new day offers a new way of being; for Christians, this 'way' is guided by being a living witness to Christ, living Jesus' vision for the Kingdom of God.

### Opening Prayer

Open our hearts to be a living witness to Christ's love in the world. Guide us to see and respond as you would. Bring us together as in love, as one community, to live out the Kingdom of God. Amen

### Gospel Reading: Mark 4:26-29

Jesus said to the crowds: 'This is how it is with the kingdom of God; it is as if a man were to scatter seed on the land and would sleep and rise night and day and the seed would sprout and grow, he knows not how. Of its own accord the land yields fruit, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. And when the grain is ripe, he wields the sickle at once, for the harvest has come.'

### Litany

**Response:** Guide us to be a living witness to Christ's love in the world.

- We pray that the Kingdom of God will 'sprout and grow' in and amongst us when we worship. *R/*
- We pray that the impact of our living witness will be felt as we build the Kingdom of God. *R/*
- We pray to always nurture our relationships with God, with one another and those living on the margins. *R/*
- We pray to live in the present moment, fully in God's love. *R/*
- We pray our hearts will be fully alive to be as Jesus was, to each other. *R/*
- We pray for guidance to use our gifts and talents for the service of others, in Christ's name. *R/*
- We pray we will work always for a just world, to live out the Kingdom of God. *R/*

### **Ritual of Promise**

In silence, take a moment to think about how you can be a living witness of Christ's love in the world. Write your personal promise on a piece of paper and place it in the sacred space as an outward sign of your inward promise.

### **Reflection**

No statement says all that could be said.  
No prayer fully expresses our faith.  
No confession brings perfection.  
No pastoral visit brings wholeness.  
No programme accomplishes the Church's mission.  
No set of goals and objectives includes everything.

This is what we are about. We plant the seeds that one day will grow.  
We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise.  
We lay foundations that will need further development.  
We provide yeast that produces far beyond our capabilities.

### **Closing Prayer**

Lord, guide us on our journey as living witnesses of your love.  
Support our commitment to justice in our world; help us to grow in understanding. Lord, strengthen our faith. Amen.





## Board of Management/ Governors and Staff Reflection

The following is offered as a basis for a short reflection on Catholic schools with staff and members of Boards of Management/Governors during Catholic Schools Week 2014.

The theme of Catholic Schools Week 2014 is **Catholic Schools: Places of Faith and Learning**. A Catholic school has both dimensions to it and if one or the other was missing then it would no longer be a Catholic school. However, it is good for us to consider the relationship between the parts. The temptation might be to leave the faith dimension to the religious education department and the learning to the rest of the school. That, however, would be a denial of a basic belief about Catholic education, which is beautifully summed up in the words of Pope John Paul II:

**‘The person of each individual human being, in his or her material and spiritual needs, is at the heart of Christ’s teaching: this is why the promotion of the human person is the goal of the Catholic school.’**

In these resources we have reflected on this theme through a focus on the following words that offer pointers to the ways in which our schools can grow and develop as places of faith and learning.

**Welcome** – The school as a place of hospitality following the example of Jesus.

**Word** – The school as a place where the presence of God is revered.

**Wisdom** – The school as a place where students grow to their full potential.

**Worship** – The school as a place where the community prays together.

**Witness** – The school as a place where the values of the kingdom are taught and lived.

Pope Francis is encouraging Catholics everywhere to reconnect with the person of Jesus and the simplicity of the good news he preached. The Board might use these pointers to reflect on the way the school is living up to its mission of being a place of faith and learning.

### Prayer for Teachers

Lord Jesus,  
Guide us in our work so that  
the young people before us may grow to become  
all that you have called them to be.  
May our teaching encourage them to embrace life  
in all its beauty and mystery.  
May our patience with them allow them to  
learn from their mistakes.  
May our listening to them help them to  
respect themselves and others.  
Through the gift of your Spirit  
inspire us to love what we do,  
to be a support to one another  
and to never give up on a child in our care.

### Prayer for Board Members

Heavenly Father,  
We give thanks for the  
opportunity to serve this school community.  
May we use the gifts you have given us generously  
for the good of all who are teaching and learning here.  
Guide us in our work of creating a place of faith and learning  
where each person feels welcome  
and comes to know that they have something to contribute  
to the beautiful enterprise that is the education of the young.  
We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.



This resource pack has been prepared by Sean Goan, Karen O'Donovan, Tom Ryan, Orla Walsh and Bríd Dunne in consultation with the Steering Committee for Catholic Schools Week 2014.

**The members of the Steering Committee are:**

Jim Cassin; Colette Dower; Martin Delaney; Brenda Drumm; Michael Drumm; Bríd Dunne; Paul Farren; Sean Goan; Maura Hyland; Ferdia Kelly; Martin Long; Elaine Mahon; Maeve Mahon; Anna Maloney; Tony McCann; Michael Redmond; Maria Spring; Eithne Woulfe.

**Catholic Schools: Places of Faith and Learning**

Resources for the Post-Primary School Community: Home, School & Parish

26 January–2 February 2014