







Dear Chairperson and Principal,

On the week beginning January 26, 2009 the Catholic Church in Ireland celebrates Catholic Schools Week. The theme for Catholic Schools Week 2009 is "Catholic Schools – A Vision for Life".

We hope this week will afford you and the school community an opportunity to celebrate something that expresses the Catholic identity of your particular school. A range of resources has been prepared to facilitate you in doing this. The following gives some indication of the resources and how they might be used during the week.

Catholic Schools Week 2009 – A Fact Sheet

We encourage you to photocopy the fact sheet and make it available:

- * for display in the Staffroom and other public areas of the school
- * to parents and members of the Board of Management/Board of Governors

WHAT IS A CATHOLIC SCHOOL?

This resource together with the pages entitled 'Reflections for Staff' and 'Reflections for Board of Management/Board of Governors members' is designed to be used as a basis for discussion and reflection with these groups during Catholic Schools Week. This page together with the pages entitled 'Catholic Schools Week at Home' is intended to help broaden the discussion into the home. Your school's Parent Association might collaborate with the school in assuming some responsibility for this information reaching the homes. These pages may also be used by the Parent Association during this week.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK ACTIVITIES

The remaining pages are suitable for classroom use by all teachers. We hope that they will provide a focus for them to celebrate Catholic Schools Week with their pupils.

As the week ends on Sunday, February 1st we are suggesting to parishes that one of the Sunday parish masses include a celebration of the work of the local Catholic Schools. You will find in Catholic Schools Week Activities some ideas as to how your school might participate in this. Further resources for this liturgy are available in the February issue of *Intercom*.

These resources are by no means exhaustive. We hope that the imagination and creativity that abounds in all our schools will have an opportunity to blossom during this first ever all-Ireland Catholic Schools Week. May it be a memorable and enjoyable week for all!

With our best wishes for the celebration of Catholic Schools Week 2009.

Yours sincerely,

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BISHOP LEO O'REILLY Co-Chair Strategic Task Group on Education

Elizabeth Maxwell, porm

Sr Elizabeth Maxwell рvbм Co-Chair Strategic Task Group on Education



Acknowledgements

These resources have been prepared by Maeve Mahon and Tonya Hanly in consultation with the Steering Committee for Catholic Schools Week 2009. The members of the Steering Committee are:

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CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK 2009: A FACT SHEET January 26th – February 1st

WHAT IS CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK?

This year Catholic Schools Week is being celebrated nationally: in Northern Ireland where it has been part of school life for a number of years, and for the first time in the Republic of Ireland. It is hoped that it will become an annual celebration of the important role that our Catholic Primary and Post Primary Schools play in providing a particular type of education for our young people. Catholic schools in Ireland are justly proud of their distinctive philosophy of education that is rooted in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

WHY HAVE WE DECIDED TO HAVE A CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK NOW?

The well being of the Church community, family life and the nation is linked to our schools. It is important that we reflect on the vision that gives life to the school. Earlier this year the Irish Bishops' Conference published a Pastoral Letter **'Vision 08 – A Vision for Catholic Education'**. This document will provide a central focus for our celebrations of **Catholic School Week** 2009.

WHAT IS THE THEME OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK?

This year the theme for the week is 'Catholic Schools – A Vision for Life'.

IS IT ONLY FOR SCHOOLS?

The events scheduled for Catholic Schools Week will take place in schools, in parishes and at national level. There will also be resources provided through the schools to help extend the celebrations into homes all over the country. In this way the key mission of schools in the Church, the home, in parishes and in the life of the nation will be highlighted.

How Do I GET INVOLVED?

Keep a look out in local and national media for activities connected to Catholic Schools Week. Ask your local school Principal/Parent Association/ Board of Management/Board of Governors representative how the school is celebrating Catholic Schools Week. More information will be available on www.catholicbishops.ie





WHAT IS A CATHOLIC SCHOOL?

THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL:

- Offers a distinctive vision of life and corresponding philosophy of education based on the Gospel of Jesus Christ
- * Strives to create a 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 to form pupils who will unselfishly use their gifts for the common good and are committed to work for a more just and caring society
- * Is a welcoming and inclusive community that is respectful and tolerant of all religious traditions and beliefs
- Works in partnership with parents and the parish community to keep the light of faith received at baptism burning brightly
- Provides opportunities for worship through prayer and the celebration of liturgy and the sacraments





Reflections for Staff

The following questions might form the basis of a short reflection on 'What is a Catholic School?' with staff during Catholic Schools Week:

- * Which of the six statements offered best describes your school at this moment in time? Put these six statements in order of priority for your school.
- * Does the Ethos Statement of your school reflect these six statements?
- * What are the similarities? What are the differences?
- * How does someone who walks through the door of your school know that they are in a Catholic School?
- * How do you evaluate how effectively you are living out the Ethos Statement of your school?
- * How can you as a staff enhance the implementation of the Ethos Statement of your school?
- * What one thing can you as a staff agree to do in the coming month to make the Ethos Statement a living reality?

You might like to conclude the discussion with the following prayer:

STAFF PRAYER

Dear Lord, help us to take an active part in creating in this school a faith community where all feel welcomed and cherished. Guide us, so that we fully understand what a privilege it is to belong to this Catholic community which values respect, peace, justice and joy. May we constantly challenge ourselves, our colleagues and our students by our words and deeds so that together we may always strive for excellence. Help us to support a learning environment that enables everyone to achieve their full potential and develop their natural talents. Remind us daily that we are part of a strong tradition carved out by generations of committed people. When we are challenged by difficulty and adversity may your Spirit touch our hearts with patience. May we always be people of understanding and discernment. Amen.



Reflections for Board of Management/ Board of Governors

The following questions might form the basis of a short reflection on 'What is a Catholic School?' with members of the Board of Management/ Board of Governors during Catholic Schools Week.

You might like to begin your discussion with the following prayer:

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT/GOVERNORS MEMBERS' PRAYER

Loving God, we ask you today to be present with us as we participate in this Board of Management/Board of Governors. Guide us to make decisions with discernment and justice. Grant us the courage to deal with the challenges we may meet. May we always uphold the ethos and characteristic spirit of this school so that it is a community built on good relationships with others and with you. Amen.

- * Put these six statements in order of priority for your school.
- * Which of the six statements offered best describes your school at this moment in time?
- * Does the Ethos Statement of your school reflect these six statements?
- * What are the similarities? What are the differences?
- * How does someone who walks through the door of your school know that they are in a Catholic School?
- * How long has it been since the Ethos Statement has been evaluated and revised?
- * Does the board actively support the ongoing faith development of all members of the school community?
- * Do you know how liturgies and the sacraments are celebrated in the school and do you ever attend these celebrations?
- * How do you as a Board promote partnership between home, school and parish?





CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK AT HOME

Dear Parents/Guardians,

This is the first time that Catholic Schools Week has been celebrated in the Republic of Ireland. This week helps us to become more aware of the important role that Catholic education plays in our country. It is hoped that during this week all members of the school community, parents, staff members, Board of Management/Board of Governors members and pupils, will take time to reflect on what it means to be in a Catholic school and how we can best support the wonderful work that is done in our Catholic Schools.

The following activities are designed for you to do with the children of school-going age in your home. We hope that it might help you to think about the kind of school you have chosen for your child and why you made that choice.

A PRAYER FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Loving God, I have chosen a Catholic education for my child/children. Help me to be a good role model for them so that they know what it means to belong to a community of faith. Be with me God, when my responsibilities seem overwhelming or when decisions are hard to make. Help me to understand my children and to listen patiently to what they have to say. May I always accept my children for who they are and not for what they do. May I give them the courage to be true to themselves and to you. Amen.

Reflection Question for Parents/Guardians

- * Do you think it is important that your child is in a Catholic school?
- * How can you and your family support the work of the Catholic school?
- * Have you read your school's Ethos Statement?



TAKE TIME TO PRAY TOGETHER AT HOME

Loving God, we thank you for making each and every one of us in your image. We know that you love us. We believe that you hold us always in the palm of your hand. Help us to do our best each day to be more like you. Bless all the adults in our school who care for us in so many different ways. May we all work together to help our school to be a place where we care for one another, take time each day to pray and be the best that we can possibly be, for you made us and we are wonderfully made. Amen.

IN A CATHOLIC SCHOOL – WORD SEARCH

This word search is full of words that describe life in a Catholic School: our behaviour, who and what we might talk about, the things we might find, the people we might meet.

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BIBLE CARING CATHOLIC GOD GOSPEL JESUS LITURGY LOVE MARY MASS PARISH PRAYER PRIEST RELIGION ROSARY SACRAMENTS SACRED SPACE SAINTS STATUES WELCOMING





CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK ACTIVITIES

SACRED SPACE

Many schools already have a Sacred Space in the entrance area of their schools. This Sacred Space is a very simple way to reflect your school's Catholic ethos. The celebration of Catholic Schools Week offers an opportunity to create a Sacred Space if you do not already have one and provides a new focus for existing spaces.

A Sacred Space will almost certainly have the following as its key elements:

- * Green cloth to signify that we are in Ordinary Time
- ✤ Candle
- ✤ Bible
- * Cross or Crucifix
- ✤ Holy Water
- ✤ Statue

For Catholic Schools Week you might add some of the following:

- * A framed copy of the school's Ethos Statement
- * A list of all staff members
- * A poster advertising Catholic Schools Week
- A Prayer Petition box or basket (all members of the school community might be invited to put their prayers in the box/basket during the week and the intentions could be prayed for at Mass on Sunday February 1st)
- * School Motto, Crest, Patron Saint

DISPLAY AREAS

Teachers might be encouraged to have displays in or outside their classrooms depicting the Catholic life of the school.



Assembly for Catholic Schools Week

Opening Prayer

Loving God, we gather today in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. We light our school candle and this flame reminds us that you are with us whenever we gather in your name. This week we celebrate Catholic Schools Week in our country. We are glad that we belong to a Catholic school. We give thanks for all the people who belong to our school community and who help make it a very special place. Help us to always be the very best that we can be and to try to live as you want us to. Amen.

SUGGESTED OPENING HYMNS

Time & Time & Time Again We Are The Body of Christ Christ Be Our Light (*Alive-O 8*, page 326) (*Alive-O 6*, page 211) (*Alive-O 7 & 8*, pages 283 & 273)

READING

Jeremiah 1:4-9 – The call of Jeremiah

The Lord said to me, "I chose you before I gave you life, and before you were born I selected you to be a prophet to the nations."

I answered, "Sovereign Lord, I don't know how to speak; I am too young." But the Lord said to me, "Do not say that you are too young, but go to the people I tell you to and tell them everything I command you to say. Do not be afraid of them, for I will be with you to protect you. I, the Lord, have spoken."

PSALM SUGGESTIONS

Wonderfully Made Whatsoever You Do (Alive-O 8, page 334) (Alive-O 5 & 6, pages 209 & 246)

Reflection – Prayer Of St Teresa Of Avila

Christ has no body but yours, No hands, no feet on earth but yours, Yours are the eyes with which he looks Compassion on this world, Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good, Yours are the hands with which he blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, Yours are the eyes, you are his body. Christ has no body now but yours, No hands, no feet on earth but yours, Yours are the eyes with which he looks Compassion on this world. Christ has no body now on earth but yours.



PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Place eight candles in the Sacred Space (one for each class group and light one candle for each prayer read)

Response:

Lord, hear our prayer.

God our Father, bless our school and all of us as we learn to work and play together. We pray to the Lord

God of knowledge, help us to listen to our teachers and all those who are helping us to learn about ourselves, our world and most especially about you. We pray to the Lord

God of love, may we always show love to one another in our actions and in our words. We pray to the Lord

God of peace, help us to make our school a peaceful and prayerful place. We pray to the Lord

God of wisdom, be with us when we have choices to make. Help us to always do what is right. We pray to the Lord

God of creation, you gave us this beautiful world. May we always take good care of it. We pray to the Lord

God of healing, bless all those who are sick at home and in hospital. Hold them in the palm of your hand so that they may know your loving care. We pray to the Lord

God of all things, thank you for the gift of your love and your peace. Help us always to live as children of the light and to bring your light and love to all we meet. We pray to the Lord

CLOSING PRAYER

Loving God, we give thanks for teachers, parents, priests, and all the people that make our school the wonderful place that it is today. We remember all those who were part of this school community in the past. We look forward to keeping the light of faith burning into the future. We ask this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.

CLOSING HYMN SUGGESTION

Christ Be Beside Me

(*Alive-O 6*, page 191)





Prayer Journal

When we spend time with God in prayer we make our friendship stronger and better. Prayer helps us to know that God's love is ours forever. Jesus taught us how to pray when he gave us the words of the Our Father. As Jesus grew up his faith in God grew stronger. "The child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom and the grace of God was upon Him." (Luke 2:52) We too are growing up and learning to know God better. Write your own prayer asking God to stay with you always and to help you to get to know God better. Look up what Jesus says about prayer in the following scripture passages: Matthew 14:22-23, Mark 1:35, Luke 5:15-26, Luke 6:12-13, John 17:1-26.

Below is a template that you could use as a journal which you might keep for each day of this Catholic Schools Week.

Name Date

How do I feel today?

What are the things that I want to say "thank you" for today?

Is there anything that I am sorry about today?

What do I need help with for the rest of this day?



Prayer

You might like to encourage the pupils in your class to pray the following prayer during Catholic Schools Week. They could write it into their Religion copies and decorate it. They might also like to write their own prayer.

STUDENTS' PRAYER

Loving God, we thank you for making each and every one of us in your image. We know that you love us. We believe that you hold us always in the palm of your hand. Help us to do our best each day to be more like you. Bless all the adults in our school who care for us in so many different ways. May we all work together to make this school a place where we care for one another, take time each day to pray and be the best that we can possibly be, for you made us and we are wonderfully made. Amen.







St Angela Merici

Catholic saints are holy people and human people who lived extraordinary lives. Each saint of the Church answered God's invitation to use his or her special gifts. God calls each one of us to be a saint.

January 27th: Feast Of St Angela Merici; Foundress Of The Ursuline Order

Fact File:

- * Angela Merici was born in Italy in 1474.
- * Her parents died when she was ten and she went to live with her uncle.
- * Times were very different then and most girls did not go to school. There were no women teachers and Angela decided that something had to change.
- * She brought together a group of her friends who were willing to teach young girls.
- * They taught the girls to read and write. They also taught them about Jesus. They were so good at what they did that soon other people began to copy them. The Pope heard about Angela's good work and asked her to set up a new order of nuns who would become nurses. Angela said 'no' to the Pope because she believed that teachers were needed more than nurses.
- * Later she gave the women who worked with her a name. They became Angela's Company of Saint Ursula, or the Ursulines. They were the first group of women religious to work outside the convent and they were the first group of nuns to teach.
- * She died in 1540, at about seventy years of age.
- * She became a Saint in 1807.
- * Her Feast Day is January 27th.

To do:

Is your school named after a Saint? If so, find out all you can about this Saint. Make a Fact File about them.

or

Is there a Saint associated with your parish? If so, find out all you can about this Saint. Make a Fact File about them.





St Thomas Aquinas

January 28th: Feast Of St Thomas Aquinas; Patron Of Schools, Universities and Students

The answers to the clues can be found in the following story.

Thomas Aquinas was born in the year 1226. He was sent away to school at the age of five and his teachers soon realised that he was very clever. At the age of seventeen, as soon he was old enough, he decided to join the Order of Saint Dominic, the Dominicans. After he was ordained he spent time teaching in Naples. After four years he was sent to Paris. He became very friendly with the King of France, Louis. In 1261, the Pope asked him to come and teach in Rome. Thomas loved to write. He wrote more than twenty books during his lifetime. He died in 1274. He was canonised in 1323 and made a Doctor of the Church by Pope Pius V. He loved teaching so much that he is the Patron Saint of schools, universities and students.



Across

- 2. He became a member of this order
- 3. The age he decided to become a Dominican
- 6. He was canonised in this century
- 7. He loved to do this

Down

- 1. The age he went to school
- 2. He was given this title because of his great knowledge
- 3. St Thomas Aquinas is patron saint of these
- 4. He was a teacher in this city
- 5. The number of books that he wrote





St Brigid

St Brigid's Day is celebrated on the 1st of February every year, the first day of Spring. She is a Patron Saint of Ireland and of the Diocese of Kildare & Leighlin.

The answers to the following questions, which will give you some information about St Brigid, are to be found in the word search below. You may need to do some research to find the answers.

Brigid was born in this place in Co Louth: F_____. Brigid's mother was baptised by St Patrick and her name was B_____. Her father was a King of Leinster called D_____. As a child she once went to hear St P____ speak. She loved to take care of $p_{_}$ and $s_{_}$ people. She once gave away her father's s_{-} to a leper. She decided to spend her life giving service to G___. She built a convent in K_____ and soon a m_____ was built beside it. St C____ became its first bishop. Brigid loved to travel and she built c_____ all over Ireland. She died in 523. Her Feast day is on the first of F_____.

There are lots of s _ _ _ _ about St Brigid.

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Class Quiz

Questions about Jesus:

- 1. Where was Jesus born?
- 2. Why did Mary and Joseph have to go to Bethlehem?
- 3. What prayer did Jesus teach us?
- 4. On what day did Jesus rise from the dead?
- 5. What did Jesus call his special friends?
- 6. What gifts did the three wise men give to Jesus?

Questions about the Bible:

- 7. What is the first book of the Bible called?
- 8. Name the two sections that the Bible is divided into.
- 9. To whom did God give the Commandments?
- 10. How many Commandments are there?
- 11.Name one book in the Old Testament.
- 12. How many Gospels are there?
- 13.Can you name the writers of the Gospels?
- 14. Can you name one person that Jesus cured?

Questions about the Sacraments:

- 15. How many sacraments are there?
- 16. Which sacraments have you celebrated?
- 17. What oil is used in Confirmation?
- 18. Which sacrament can only men receive?
- 19. What is the first sacrament that you received?
- 20. When do you get absolution and penance?



Questions about the Saints:

- 21. Who used the shamrock to help people understand about God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit?
- 22.Name two Irish Saints.
- 23. What Saint's day is celebrated on December 26th every year?
- 24. What Saint do you associate with Lourdes?
- 25. Which Saint was a friend to animals?

Questions about your diocese:

- 26. What is the name of the Bishop of your diocese?
- 27. Where is the Cathedral in your diocese?
- 28. What is the name of your parish?
- 29.Can you name five parishes in your diocese?
- 30. How many dioceses are there in Ireland?

General Knowledge Questions:

- 31. How many Mysteries of the Rosary are there? (Name them for 5 bonus points.)
- 32. How many Hail Mary's are prayed in one decade of the rosary?
- 33. When does the Liturgical year start?
- 34. How many readings do we listen to at Mass on Sunday?
- 35.Name the members of the Holy Family.
- 36. What do we call the time of fasting and penance before Easter?
- 37. Where does the Pope live?
- 38. What did Zechariah and Elizabeth call their son?





St John Bosco

January 31st: Feast Of St John Bosco; Patron Saint Of Youth

Fact File:

- * John Bosco was born in Turin, Italy in 1815.
- * His father died when he was two.
- His mother had great faith in God and passed this on to her son.
- * John Bosco had a dream as a young boy. In this dream a man and a woman told him to prepare himself for a great battle. He would fight this battle on behalf of all poor and unhappy children. He was told in this dream that he had the gift to help these children, and make them his friends.
- * John Bosco knew what it was to be poor and hungry and he wanted to help other young people like him. Some of these young people were very badly behaved and it was hard to get their attention.
- * So, he learned how to do magic and discovered that this helped him to get the attention of young people and then they would gladly learn or pray with him.
- * This dream stayed with John Bosco all his life. It inspired him to become a priest and after six years of study he was ordained just after his 26th birthday. In Italy priests were called Don and so he became Don Bosco.
- * After he was ordained he decided to continue his work with young people. He spent time visiting prisons where there were a lot of young boys and girls and he became determined that he would spend his life trying to ensure that life would be better for those who grew up in poverty.
- * He had many followers and he founded an order of priests and brothers called the Salesians, named after St Francis de Sales.
- Don Bosco knew that the best way to help these young people was to give them a good education. He and his followers spent their time teaching them and helping them to find jobs that paid fair wages.
- * Soon there were Salesians all over the world.
- * He died on the 31st January 1888 at the age of 73. We celebrate his feast on this day.





Don Bosco's Message

More than one hundred years on, Don Bosco still has a message for young people. The following could be his words:

I was a person like you. I tried to give meaning to my life. With God's help I decided against having my own family to become a father, a brother and a friend to those who do not have a father, brothers or friends.

If you want to be like me, we will walk together sharing our life with people living in South American shanty towns, with lepers in India or with so many poor people living in the slums of our cities: people deprived of affection, of meaning in life, poor people who need God and you to go on living. In any case, if you do not feel like living as I did, I still want to remind you of a very important truth: life, this great gift that comes from God, is to be spent well. You will spend it well if you do not hide selfishly in your shell but open yourself to love, committing yourself to the good of the people who are poorer than you.

(Salesians Ireland)

For you to talk about and do

- What are the things that you can give thanks for in your life? Make a list of these things and put them on a poster for the Sacred Space in your classroom.
- * How can you spend your life well?
- * Can you think of something that your class might do this week to help those who are not as lucky as you?
- * Write the life story of Don Bosco and illustrate it.



LITURGICAL NOTES

Sunday February 1st is the conclusion of Catholic Schools Week 2009. Each parish is encouraged to focus on Catholic Schools Week in the Sunday Liturgy. Resources have been provided for each parish to help them in this regard. These resources are printed in the February edition of *Intercom* magazine. The schools in each parish might also get involved in the Sunday parish liturgy. There are many different ways this could happen. Here are some suggestions:

- * Make contact with the local priest or some other member of the parish staff. Invite them to the school to discuss ways in which the school might become involved in the Sunday liturgy on February 1st.
- A visual display in the local church celebrating the Catholic School(s) in the parish and the contribution they make to parish life.
- Prepare the Sunday readings with the students in the school. The References are as follows: First Reading: Deutoronomy 18:15-20, Psalm: Psalm 94, Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 7:32-35, Gospel: Mark 1:21-28.
- Music. Will there be music at the Sunday liturgy in the parish? The school might get involved in providing music for the Sunday liturgy. Communicate with the music coordinator(s) in the parish to discuss how the school community might get involved and enhance the Sunday liturgy.
- If the school is close to the church perhaps it could be opened after the Sunday liturgies. Parishioners might be invited in to view any display or project the school has undertaken to celebrate Catholic Schools Week 2009. Refreshments might also be provided.

These are simple suggestions. The school community will come up with many others which better suit local circumstances. The important thing is good communication between the school and parish personnel at the earliest possible date.





