



Resources for the School Community





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,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Leo O'Reilly".

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

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elizabeth Maxwell, PVBM".

SR ELIZABETH MAXWELL PVBM
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:

Fr Gareth Byrne, Monsignor Jim Cassin, Fr Martin Delaney,
Fr Paul Farren, Ms Eileen Flynn, Ms Tonya Hanly, Ms Maura Hyland,
Mr Ferdia Kelly, Mr Martin Long, Ms Maeve Mahon, Ms Bernie Martin,
Mr Tony McCann, Ms Joan McCombe, Fr Declan O'Loughlin,
Ms Betty O'Riordan, Mr Tomás Ó Séaghdha, Mr Ned Prendergast,
Ms Marie Purcell, Fr PJ Sexton, Rev Marc Whelan CSSP and
Sr Eithne Woulfe.





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

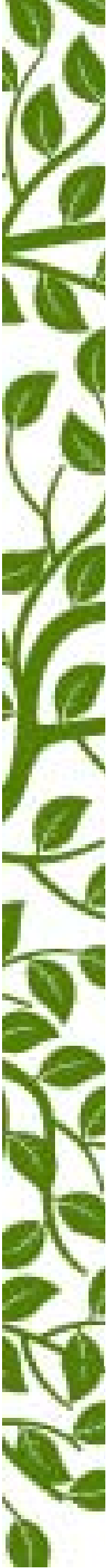




WHAT IS A CATHOLIC SCHOOL?

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





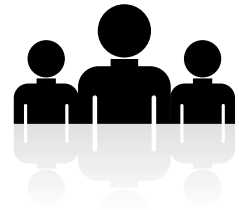
REFLECTIONS FOR STAFF

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.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR STAFF

- * Have you read the mission statement of the school?
- * Do you think that it is an accurate reflection of the type of work that you do or do you think that it needs to be changed?
- * Why are you working in a Catholic school?
- * Do you take up opportunities for ongoing personal and faith development?
- * What do you do as a staff member to create good relationships and a sense of community in the school?
- * What kind of a working atmosphere exists in your school?
- * Does this atmosphere reflect the mission statement of the school?
- * A Catholic school participates in the mission of the Church in the wider community. How involved are you in issues of social justice, globally as well as in your immediate community?
- * How important do you think it is to have a good Pastoral Care System in a school?
- * How effective is Pastoral Care in your school?
- * Do you feel that you are part of a faith community?
- * Are you aware of the presence of God in your life?



REFLECTIONS FOR STUDENTS FOR YOU AT HOME

STUDENT'S PRAYER

Help me as a student of this school to see you as friend and guide. Help me to remember always that you have called me by my name and that I am yours. May I never lose sight of the wonders of your creation and may I always look for the good in the people I meet every day. When I find life challenging may I seek your healing presence. May my words and actions support the ethos of this school so that it is a place where people feel respected and where there is a strong sense of inclusion and belonging. May I always stand up for what I believe in and be a good witness to my faith. Amen.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS

- * Why do you attend a Catholic school?
- * Do you think that attending a Catholic school is a different experience to attending any other type of school?
- * A Catholic school should be a place where people feel included and where they feel a sense of belonging. How do you personally contribute to making this happen in your school?
- * Do you ever do things which cause people to feel rejected or excluded?
- * Do you feel that the life of Jesus is present and real in your school?
- * We have been given a beautiful world and God asked us to care for it. How well do you carry out his request? Are you wasteful?
- * How are liturgies and the sacraments celebrated in your school? How do you contribute to these celebrations? Could you contribute more actively?
- * Do you take part in activities both in your school and in your local community which promote social justice?
- * Are you aware of the presence of God in your life?





REFLECTIONS FOR BOARD OF MANAGEMENT/ BOARD OF GOVERNORS

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.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR BOARD OF MANAGEMENT/ BOARD OF GOVERNORS

- * Does the mission statement accurately reflect the kind of school you manage?
- * When was the mission statement last reviewed?
- * Do the other policies in the school (admissions, behaviour, staff etc.) reflect the mission statement?
- * Do you feel part of a faith community?
- * Does the board actively support the ongoing faith development of all members of the school community?
- * Are there visible signs of the Catholic faith tradition in your school?
- * 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?
- * Are you aware of the presence of God in your life?



REFLECTIONS FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS

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 QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS

- * Do you see yourself as the primary educator of your child?
- * Do you see the religious education of your child as your responsibility or have you handed this responsibility over to the school?
- * What do you do to actively support the Catholic ethos of the school?
- * Have you read the mission statement of the school?
- * Do you agree with it? And support it?
- * Are you aware of how liturgies and the sacraments are celebrated in the school? Do you attend these celebrations if possible? Could you do more to actively celebrate with your child?
- * Do you think that the spiritual development is as important as the intellectual development of your child?
- * Are you aware of the presence of God in your life?





THOUGHTS FOR EACH DAY

These prayers/thoughts may be read out before class or over the intercom each day.

MONDAY

Lord Jesus, Son of God,

Thank you for the gift of Catholic education. Day after day, week after week, you give us many opportunities to grow and learn.

Help us respond to the gift of faith so that we may be recognised as your disciples.

Amen.

TUESDAY

Thank You, Holy Spirit, for the blessing of our parents, principal and teachers. We are grateful for the grace and wisdom you give them as they teach and guide us. Help us to grow in our understanding of the world around us and grant us the strength to make right choices when the world challenges what is right and holy.

WEDNESDAY

Catholic Schools seek to transform not only the individual lives of pupils but also society. Vision 08

THURSDAY

Catholic schools must be seen as "meeting places for those who wish to express Christian values in education"(19). The Catholic school, far more than any other, must be a community whose aim is the transmission of values for living. The Catholic School, 1970

FRIDAY

I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. John 10:10



GUIDED MEDITATION BASED ON ISAIAH 43:2-4

*'Do not be afraid. I am with you.
I have called you by your name, I love you
and you are mine. I love you with an everlasting love.
You are precious in my sight.'*

Still your body, put your feet firmly on the floor and place your hands on your lap. Listen to your breathing. Feel your breath going in... and out... and in... and out... and in... and out. Clear your mind of all thoughts and distractions and imagine your favourite place. Somewhere you feel happy and safe. Imagine what the place looks like... what sounds can you hear?... what scents can you smell?... are there others there with you?... or are you alone?... as you sit there think of the phrase 'I have called you by your name'... think about your own name... think of the people who gave you this name... did they tell you why they chose your name above other names?... think of all the people who have called you by your name today... friends... family... teachers... Whisper your name to yourself... as you sit there you hear someone calling out your name... you turn and see that Jesus is with you... he sits and again calls you by name... then he asks you how you are today and you tell him... he asks you to tell him what is good about your life... he asks you to tell him if there is anything that you regret doing today... He then asks you what you need for the rest of today... Jesus tells you that he loves you and you chat for a while longer... then Jesus tells you that he has to go but that he is always with you... and you watch him walk away... imagine how you feel... loved?... lonely?... known?... cared for?... you realise then that you have to be somewhere and you get up to leave your favourite place... again feel your breath going in... and out... and in... and out... and in... and out... and when you are ready you can open your eyes.

SACRED SPACE

We suggest that you create a Sacred Space in a prominent position in your school. Some suggestions for this space might include: a cross, the Bible, a candle, holy water, samples of work carried out in class, a copy of your Trust/School Charter, photographs taken of any community projects your school is involved with, a list of all staff members and of the Board of Management/Board of Governors.

Written by Sr Mary O'Connor RSM





ASSEMBLY FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK

OPENING PRAYER

Loving God, as we gather here today during this special **Catholic Schools Week**, we ask you to be present with us as we pray. May we remember today what a privilege it is to be part of this school community and to have the relationships which we have built. May we appreciate these gifts always. Amen.

SUGGESTED OPENING HYMN

Christ Be Our Light Bernardette Farrell

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 SUGGESTION:

Here I am, Lord Dan Shutte sj

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Place five candles in the Sacred Space and light one candle for each prayer read.

Response: *Loving God, hear our prayer.*

God of knowledge, help us to see the truth about you, ourselves, our families and the world that you have created for us. Strengthen those who struggle with the truth which surrounds them. R.

God of Love, help us to be builders of bridges. Help us to be people of forgiveness rather than of anger, love rather than of hate, so that our school community can be a peaceful, respectful place. Heal those who find it hard to put aside their anger and hatred. R.



God of Wisdom, guide me to an understanding of your word. Help me to see how it applies to my life and help me to make good decisions based on this wisdom and knowledge. R.

God of Creation, open our hearts to the beauty of our world. Help us to protect it from the greed and decadence which causes such damage. R.

God our Father, help us to use our gifts and talents courageously and openly in your name so that our school is a place of energy, creativity and joy. R.

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 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.*

CLOSING PRAYER

Thank You, Jesus, for the blessing of all the parishes, priests, and Catholic School supporters that make our school possible. We are grateful for the long tradition of committed people who began our school and preserved it through the years, and also for those who work for its future. Help us to follow their example of service and generosity when it is our turn to preserve our faith. We ask this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.

CLOSING HYMN SUGGESTION

Clouds Veil

Liam Lawton





TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. How many Holy Days of obligation are there in the Church Year?
2. How many Commandments are there? (Name them for 5 bonus points.)
3. What does Emmanuel mean?
4. What prayer did Jesus teach us?
5. How many books are there in the Bible?
6. How many Sacraments are there?
7. The shamrock is the symbol of what?
8. How many oils are used in Baptism?
9. What is the name of the present Pope?
10. Name three places of pilgrimage in Europe.
11. How many Mysteries of the Rosary are there? (Name them for 5 bonus points.)
12. When does the Liturgical year start?
13. When is the Eucharistic Prayer used?
14. Name the members of the Holy Family?
15. What Saint's day is celebrated on December 26th every year?
16. When do you get absolution and penance?
17. What do we call the time of fasting and penance before Easter?
18. Where does the Pope live?
19. Who wrote the four Gospels?
20. On what day did Jesus rise from the dead?



PRAYER JOURNAL

Prayer is a special way of strengthening our relationship with God and therefore with others. Prayer helps us to be confident that God's love is everlasting. 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) You 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 _____

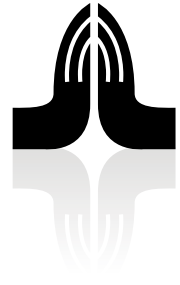
How do I feel today?

What are the things that I am grateful for today?

Is there anything that I am sorry about today?

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

Compose a prayer which expresses your feelings and thoughts about your faith and write it on the next page.





WORD SEARCH

The following word search contains many words which we associate with our ethos and faith.

Use this vocabulary to generate discussion on the characteristic Spirit/Ethos of your school.



faith
prayer
relationship
community
respect
justice
courage
gospel
Jesus
challenged
commitment
truth

authentic
excellence
wisdom
wonder
awe
joy
vision
distinctive
responsibilities
integrity
stimulating
holistic



ST BRIGID

St Brigid's Day is celebrated on the 1st of February every year, the first day of Spring.

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.

The place in Louth where Brigid was born _____

Her mother's name _____

Her father's name _____

She is strongly associated with this county in Leinster _____

Brigid is one of Ireland's most popular _____

There is a story told that Brigid was brought to Ireland as a _____ just like St Patrick but this may be a _____

This famous Irish saint and Bishop gave Brigid her veil.

Brigid loved the _____ and also treated them with great _____





ROLE PLAY

The following are some suggestions for you to try in class

SCENARIO 1

Number of People: Whole Class

Your school is to be amalgamated with a school from down the road. The Department of Education and Science (DES) says that it is no longer viable to run two separate schools. The Principal, teaching staff and Parent Association disagree. A public meeting has been called. At the meeting are representatives from the DES, the Principal, members of the teaching staff, parents, students and interested people from the community.

Each student should choose a role for the drama. There will be a top table with a student, the Principal, the Chairperson of the Board of Management/Board of Governors, the Chairperson of the Parent Association and a DES inspector. The meeting begins...

SCENARIO 2

Number of People: Small groups of three

Characters: Principal and parents/guardians of a prospective student

The Principal is explaining to the parents/guardians what is unique and special about the school and encouraging them to send their child to the school. The parents are not so sure as the school in the next town has a new building and a great science lab. In your group of three take a role. The discussion begins as the Principal welcomes the prospective parents/guardians.

SCENARIO 3

Number of People: Whole Class Group

Characters: The Head Boy and Girl and a group of First Years

The Head Boy and Girl are addressing a meeting of the first years to explain to them some of the school rules and also to give them a better idea of what the school is like. After the two senior students have addressed the group some of the younger students have some questions for them.





2009: THE YEAR OF VOCATION

Have you ever thought what you might do when you leave school? I'm sure you have. It's hard not to. There are so many different careers to choose from. Did you ever feel overwhelmed by the different choices? When you think about what you might do when you leave school I'm sure one of the most important factors that come into play in the decision you might make is: 'What will make me happy?' We all want to live happy and fulfilled lives. We also want to know that whatever we will do will make a difference. We only have one life and we want to know that it will be a life well spent. Have you ever considered becoming a priest or a religious sister or brother? No? Why not? Maybe one of the reasons is because it was never suggested to you or because you never dreamed it would be an option. Maybe you did think about it but thought you might not be worthy or happy or fulfilled being a priest or sister or brother. Well, why not think again? There can be nothing more fulfilling or rewarding than giving your life in the service of God. Priesthood and religious life are fantastic ways of using your gifts, of being with people when they need you most and of sharing the hope and joy you have with others. The world today needs people of hope and people who can bring joy to others. It takes a very generous and brave person to become a priest or religious today. It takes a person of courage to say "Yes" to God and give their lives in service. Are you a brave and courageous person?

Two people who listened to God's call and had a vocation were St John Bosco and Saint Angela Merici. Saint Angela was the foundress of the Ursuline Sisters. Her feast day is January 27th. St John founded the Salesian Brothers and his feast day falls this week on January 31st. The members of both of these orders are still doing great work in Ireland today. The feast day of St Thomas Aquinas also falls during this week on January 28th. St Thomas was an Italian and was a member of the Dominican order. He was a very forward thinking theologian of the 13th century.

– Fr Eamonn Burke, Dublin Archdiocese

ACTIVITY

Write a letter to yourself outlining your hopes and dreams for the future. The letter might include details of what you would like to do career-wise, what kind of a person you are now and how you would like your personality to develop, your relationships, your friendships and how important these are in your life. Express your relationship, if any, with God and your faith etc. Seal the letter and keep it safe as a record for the future. If you feel very brave you might share it with your class!

CLASS DISCUSSION

The Challenges Facing the Catholic Church in an Increasingly Secular Society.

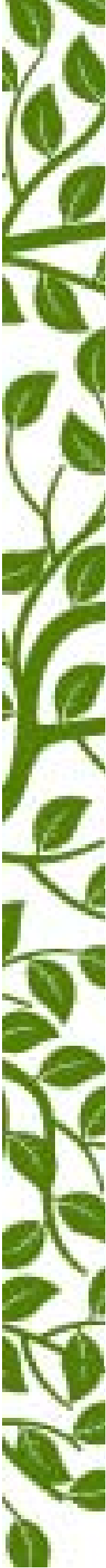


LITURGICAL NOTES

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: Deuteronomy 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.





IRISH CATHOLIC
BISHOPS' CONFERENCE
COMHDHÁIL EASPAID CAITLÍCEACH ÉIREANN



CORI

 **VERITAS**
www.veritas.ie