



Catholic Schools Week 2012

Seachtain na Scoileanna Caitliceacha 2012

Theme: Christ's Living Body Active in Our World

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

29 January–4 February 2012

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Céad Fáilte / Welcome

This year, 2012, marks the year when the International Eucharistic Congress takes place in Dublin. It is eighty years since the Congress was last hosted by Ireland in 1932. 2012 also marks the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council in 1962.

The theme of the Eucharistic Congress this year is 'The Eucharist: Communion with Christ and With One Another.' This theme carries us back very much to one of the major concerns of the Vatican Council: the Church as Communion. To celebrate the Eucharist and to receive the Body of Christ is the source of that Communion. It is also the summit of what we are called to be, anticipating the eternal banquet which is our hope and destiny.

Catholic Schools Week 2012 wants very much to be in tune with the Eucharistic Congress. And so the chosen theme for this year is 'Catholic Schools: Christ's Living Body Active in Our World'.

To receive the Eucharist is to say 'yes' to Jesus as Saviour in a deeply personal way, but also as a community. It is to acknowledge my own need of being saved, and to acknowledge every man and woman as brother and sister and to say 'yes' to our need of each other. Attending Mass means accepting the invitation of Jesus to become a member of his body. It is a commitment to the body of Christ now in 2012. Beyond that, it is to say 'yes' to the world of 2012, to its Creator and its Redeemer, Jesus Christ. To love one another and to love God remains the fundamental call for all of us who truly want to be human. And it's the call and the challenge above all calls and challenges.

Catholic schools exist in order that we might learn and be inspired to follow this fundamental commandment written deep in our hearts: in the heart of every child and in the heart of every adult.

During Catholic Schools Week this year, we are encouraging school communities to celebrate Christ's living presence by celebrating the Eucharist together. Good preparation and prayerful participation in the Mass as a school community has the potential to be a powerfully affirming and hope-filled experience for all.

Agus nach shin atá uainn dár ndaoine óga – go mbeidh dóchas ina gcroíthe atá daingean agus nach feidir le deacracht ar bith a mhúchadh. Is chuige sin a d'fhág Íosa an Eocairist againn mar oidhreacht an oíche sular céasadh é.

Bishop Brendan Kelly
Chairperson
Council for Education of the Irish Episcopal Conference

Planning for Catholic Schools Week 2012

This book provides resources to help celebrate Catholic Schools Week 2012. 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 2012: Catholic Schools: Christ's Living Body Active in Our World.

The Parish and the Catholic Schools Week 2012

Consider marking the beginning of Catholic Schools Week within one of the parish Masses on Sunday, 29 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 the way in which Catholic schools in the parish help make Christ's living body active in their community and in the world.
- hosting a discussion on the importance of Catholic education during Catholic Schools Week.



The School and the Catholic Schools Week 2012

Each day of Catholic Schools Week 2012 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 2012

- 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 all events planned for Catholic Schools Week 2012.

Resources

It is our hope that you find the material included in this year's resource pack helpful as you celebrate Catholic Schools Week 2012. Copies of this resource are available to download *as Gaeilge* on www.catholicbishops.ie/catholicschoolsweek. Some elements of the resources have been translated into Polish and are also available on the website. This resource pack has been prepared by Orla Walsh, Tom Ryan, Karen O'Donovan, Gary Abrahamian and Sean Goan in consultation with the Steering Committee for Catholic Schools Week 2012. Father Maurice Harmon prepared the material for school boards.

How to Celebrate Catholic Schools Week in Your Parish

Catholic Schools Week 2012 begins on Sunday, 29 January, the Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time. Over the past three 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. 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, 29 January

Celebration of the Eucharist for the Fourth 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 and 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 Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time can be found in the December/January edition of *Intercom*. There are also homily notes for the Fourth 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? Some of the children might sing the psalm and Alleluia. Encourage the children preparing for Confirmation to write and read a Prayer of the Faithful.
- The theme for this year's Catholic Schools Week, '**Catholic Schools: Christ's Living Body Active in our World**', is taken from 'Though We Are Many', the hymn specially written for the 50th International Eucharistic Congress which takes place in Dublin from 10 – 17 June, 2012. The hymn could be learned by the children and sung at Mass on this Sunday. A child from the school could be invited to light the International Eucharistic Congress candle before Mass begins.



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, 29 January marks the beginning of Catholic Schools Week 2012. 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: Christ's Living Body Active in our World**. 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 '**Christ's Living Body Active in Our World**'. 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

Boards of Management in the Republic of Ireland will be very 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 Resource will help you to find a focus for your visit as it offers a theme for each day's work. You might bless the throats of the children on the Feast of St Blaise in some of the classrooms.
- Encourage schools to participate in Grandparents' day on 1 February.
- 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 their 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 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 and ritual, celebrating the Eucharist and other sacraments, 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 2012

Seachtain na Scoileanna Caitliceacha 2012



Thoughts for the Day

Monday

The theme for Catholic Schools Week 2012 is **Christ's Living Body Active in our World**. It is an invitation to us to think about the difference our faith can make to our personal lives and to our school community. Christianity is not primarily about the past, nor is it a religion of rules – rather it is a response to the presence of Jesus Christ, risen from the dead and calling us to live life to the full. It was St Paul writing in the New Testament who first described the community of believers as the 'body of Christ'. He understood that the faith we share really forms a bond between us and invites us to always act in the best interests of the other, just as Jesus himself did. This is the way that Jesus chose to continue his presence in the world: through the care that we show, the forgiveness we share, and the community that we build at home, in school and in our parish, we become a living sign of Christ in the world. So this week let us ask Jesus to make us more aware of his presence in one another and more willing to reach out to those in need.

Tuesday

Our lives are busy with lots going on – in our families, in class, with our friends. We have homework and study to do, sport and recreation. Our days are so full it can be difficult to make time to pray or even to know how to pray. Pope John Paul II said 'Pray any way you like as long as you do pray.' We can make time to say a prayer we have been taught, or just take a moment to give thanks. It is good to pray together, for Jesus said that where two or three gather in his name he would be with them. It is also good to pray alone, to use the Bible for inspiration and rediscover how close God is to us through his word. If, in our school, we are Christ's living body in the world, then let us not forget to make time for prayer just as he did. As Mother Teresa of Calcutta said: 'Prayer enlarges the heart and makes room for God's love.'

Wednesday

Today is the feast of St Brigid and in Ireland traditionally the first day of spring. The days are slowly lengthening, and flowers are beginning to push their way up from the cold earth. It is a time for hope and for realising that the amazing world we live in points in so many ways to the presence of God. The miracle of life invites us to be grateful and to recognise that despite the problems we may have to deal with, we are very blessed. So let us take a little time today to name the blessings in our lives and in our school community and to give thanks for them.

Thursday

Some Christians think that religion is a very private affair, just between the individual and God. This is surprising when we consider that Jesus only ever told one story about the judgement of peoples at the end of the world (Matt 25:31-46). In that story he said our entry into the Kingdom would be based on only one thing: the extent to which we recognised him in the poor, the hungry, the sick, the homeless, the naked, people in prison, and came to his aid. We want the Good News of Jesus' love to guide all that we do in our school, to help us as individuals and as a community to respond to the suffering of others, knowing that in so doing we are responding to Jesus himself.

Friday

What is a Catholic school? It is not simply a school for Catholics, it is a community of teaching and learning that believes in the dignity of every person as a child of God. We believe that each one of us is called to work with others in creating an inclusive community in the service of the common good where knowledge is sought and respected while faith is nurtured and challenged. This week we have reflected on and celebrated our identity as a Catholic school. May this vision always encourage us to enjoy what we do and to give of our best, trusting that the Spirit of God will continue to guide us through all the challenges that come our way.

Catholic Schools Week 2012

One Journey – Two Possible Directions!

Jerusalem



Monday, 30 January

People of Hope
& Disillusionment

Tuesday, 31 January

The Word of God

Wednesday, 1 February

The Breaking of Bread

Thursday, 2 February

Recognising the Lord
in our Midst

Friday, 3 February

People being sent
on a Mission



Emmaus

OR

Fourth Week in Ordinary Time



Irish Martyrs/St Aidan

Don John Bosco

St Brigid

Presentation of the Lord

St Blaise



Fifth Week in Ordinary Time

OR



The resources for use in school this week are grouped around the Emmaus story and the liturgical calendar for the week. In planning for the week teachers are invited to select and adapt the material most appropriate to their class. The themes relating to the Emmaus story are obviously connected but they may also be used in a stand-alone manner. The text is provided below to assist teachers in making their students familiar with the story.



The Road to Emmaus: Luke 24:13-35

¹³Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem,¹⁴and talking with each other about all these things that had happened.¹⁵While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them,¹⁶but their eyes were kept from recognising him.¹⁷And he said to them, 'What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?' They stood still, looking sad.¹⁸Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him,

'Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?'¹⁹He asked them, 'What things?' They replied, 'The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people,²⁰and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him.²¹But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place.²²Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning,²³and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive.²⁴Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.'

²⁵Then he said to them, 'Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! ²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?'²⁷Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on.²⁹But they urged him strongly, saying, 'Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.' So he went in to stay with them.³⁰When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them.

³¹Then their eyes were opened, and they recognised him; and he vanished from their sight.³²They said to each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?'

³³That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together.³⁴They were saying, 'The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!'³⁵Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

IMAGE Altobello Melone (1490–1543)
The Road to Emmaus
Oil on wood, National Gallery, London
Found on Wikimedia Commons

Monday, 30 January **Day 1: People of Hope & Disillusionment** (Luke 24:13-24)

Some of the saddest words in the English language begin with the letter 'D'. For example: disappointment, doubt, disillusionment, defeat, discouragement, despondency, depression, dejection, despair and death. Woody Allen once said:

Our civilisation stands at the crossroads. Down one road is despondency and despair. Down the other road is total annihilation. I hope we'll take the right road.

While the statement was intended to be humorous, it does reflect the presence of despair and pessimism in our world today.

FOR YOU TO DO 1

Using newspapers or brainstorming, make a list of world events that could reflect the negative view of the world as outlined by Woody Allen above, things that make the class disillusioned.

Disappointment, doubt, disillusionment, defeat, discouragement, dejection, despair and death – all these words sum up how Cleopas and his companion were feeling as they trudged along towards Emmaus, a town located seven miles northwest of Jerusalem.

They had made a choice at some stage in the past three years to follow Jesus of Nazareth and only a week before, their hopes that this man might be the promised Messiah had reached fever pitch when the excited crowds had welcomed their Master to Jerusalem by waving palm branches and shouting 'Hosanna'.

Now they are sad and disillusioned. Jesus lies dead in a sealed tomb. Disbelief has overpowered them. They are leaving Jerusalem because, for them, Jesus' death was a disaster – an unmitigated tragedy. The dream is over, their hopes are dashed.

FOR YOU TO DO 2

Revisit the list of events drawn up in exercise 1. In any of these events has anything good/positive been done to bring HOPE into that situation?

DISILLUSIONMENT

|

HOPE

As the two men walked along, a stranger joined them. We know that the stranger was Jesus – they didn't. As the three men walk together, Cleopas and his friend tell the stranger of their hopes and their disappointments. The stranger provides a listening, sympathetic ear.

It's a wonderful image – Jesus walking along the road with his sad and confused disciples sharing their troubles. This story from 2000 years ago is still relevant for followers of Jesus today. When our lives are affected by either disappointment, doubt, disillusionment, defeat, discouragement, despondency, depression, dejection, despair or death, Jesus is the unseen 'stranger' walking alongside us, listening to our troubles. And if we are open to his voice, we come to understand where and when the Lord is present and this can give us hope.



FOR YOU TO DO 3

Read the reflection below and write about a challenging time in your life when you felt God helped you keep going ...

Footprints

One night a man had a dream. He dreamed he was walking along the beach with the Lord. Across the sky flashed scenes from his life. For each scene he noticed two sets of footprints in the sand. One belonging to him and the other to the Lord.

When the last scene of his life flashed before him, he looked back at the footprints in the sand. He noticed that many times along the path of his life there was only one set of footprints. He also noticed that it happened at the very lowest and saddest times of his life. This really bothered him and he questioned the Lord about it. 'Lord, you said that once I decided to follow you, you'd walk with me all the way. But I have noticed that during the most difficult times in my life there is only one set of footprints. I don't understand why when I needed you most you would leave me.'

The Lord replied, 'My precious, precious child, I love you and I would never leave you. During your times of trial and suffering when you see only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you.'

In the Emmaus story, we see that we do not walk the journey of life alone. Jesus is with us at all times and in all situations. However, the story highlights two ways in particular that Jesus is with us ...

1. The Word of God

Through his word Jesus helps us keep on the right path. On the Road to Emmaus he explains the full meaning of the Scriptures for the disciples' lives and we will look at how Jesus speaks to us in our lives and is truly present in the Scriptures in our journey of life on **Tuesday of Catholic Schools Week**.

2. Eucharist

It was in the Breaking of the Bread that the disciples truly recognised the risen Jesus. Today Jesus is especially present to us in the Eucharist, where he shares himself with us and becomes our food and drink to sustain us on the journey of life. On **Wednesday of Catholic Schools Week**, we will look at how celebrating the Eucharist, particularly on Sunday, helps continue the work and mission of Jesus in the world today.

Conclusion

The road to Emmaus is a symbol of the Christian life. This story is about ordinary despair and disillusionment. It is a story about meeting a stranger, hearing his words of comfort, sitting down at a table and sharing a meal. For Christians, this is a story about **HOPE**. It enables us to see that the risen Lord brings support when we feel discouraged, joy when we feel disappointment, and hope when we feel disillusioned.

FOR YOU TO DO 4

Research positive words that are the opposite to the following negatives ...

_____ is the opposite of Disappointment.

_____ is the opposite of Doubt.

_____ is the opposite of Disillusionment.

_____ is the opposite of Defeat.

_____ is the opposite of Discouragement.

_____ is the opposite of Despondency.

_____ is the opposite of Depression.

_____ is the opposite of Dejection.

_____ is the opposite of Despair.

_____ is the opposite of Death.

Reflection on theme of 'Hope and Disillusionment'

We cannot merely pray to You, O God, to end **war**,
For we know that You have made the world in a way
That man must find his own path to peace,
Within himself and with his neighbour.

We cannot merely pray to You, O God, to end **starvation**,
For You have already given us the resources
With which to feed the entire world,
If we would only use them wisely.

We cannot merely pray to You, O God, to root out **prejudice**,
For You have already given us eyes
With which to see the good in all people
If we would only use them rightly.

We cannot merely pray to You, O God, to end **despair**,
For You have already given us the power
To clear away slums and to give us hope
If we would only use our power justly.

We cannot merely pray to You, O God, to end **disease**,
For You have already given us great minds
With which to search out cures and healing,
If we would only use them constructively.

Therefore we pray to You instead, O God,
For strength, determination and willpower,
To do instead of just pray,
To become instead of merely to wish.

(JACK RIEMER, LIKRAT SHABBAT)



Feastdays of the Week

Feastday of Blessed Margaret Ball

- In 1536, Henry VIII became head of the Church and ruled that anyone who followed Rome would be put to death.
- In 1530, Margaret Ball moved to Dublin and married a **Catholic** who became Mayor of Dublin.
- Margaret Ball held masses in her house and had her own chaplain to study **catechetics** with.
- While her husband was alive, Margaret was safe, but once her husband died she was at risk.
- In the 1570s she was arrested, along with a priest, for celebrating Mass and both were imprisoned for a short time.
- Once she was released, she immediately returned to practicing her **faith**.
- Because she came from a wealthy family, and because she was a woman, she was relatively safe.
- Her son, Walter, wanted to become a politician and in order to do so he would have to **renounce** his faith.
- This is exactly what he did and when Margaret found out she gathered priests and bishops together to try to **reconvert** him.
- His mother became his enemy but she still invited him to dinner to try to reconvert him. Through these dinners he found out information about priests which lead to their arrest or even death.
- Walter became Mayor of Dublin in 1580 and both his mother and her chaplain were arrested.
- Before she was imprisoned, Margaret was paraded through the streets of Dublin on a cart and insults were shouted by the crowds.
- She was imprisoned in Dublin Castle. She could have been released if she had renounced

her faith, but her faith was too important to her and so she died in her cell in 1584, age 70.

- She was beatified by Pope John Paul II in September 1992.

FOR YOU TO DO

Explain the words which have been highlighted in the above information. Once you have done this in your copy, put each word on a coloured card with its explanation and put it on the 'concept' wall or noticeboard.

Describe the significance of Henry VIII declaring himself the head of the Church in a place like Ireland.

Can you draw parallels between Blessed Margaret Ball and the person of Jesus Christ?

Blessed Francis Taylor

- Born into a wealthy family in Swords, Co. Dublin in 1550.
- In 1595, he was elected as Mayor of Dublin.
- However, he rejected the '**Acts of Supremacy**' and '**Uniformity**'.
- He was refused a seat in Parliament because he was a Catholic.
- Under the reign of King James I, he was arrested and imprisoned in 1614.
- He died in prison in 1621.
- Blessed Margaret Ball was his grandmother-in-law.

FOR YOU TO DO

Explain the highlighted terms. In your own words, explain the effects that these acts had on the Catholic people of Ireland. Evidence of research must be shown and sources acknowledged.

St Aidan of Ferns

- Born in Connaught.
- Also known as St Moedec.
- His name comes from the words for 'fire' or 'light'.
- Founded a monastery in Ferns, Co. Wexford.
- Founded a monastery in Drumlane and Rossinver.
- Fasted on barley bread and water for 7 years and recited 500 psalms every day.
- He became the first bishop of Ferns.
- People dressed up as beggars and asked St Aidan for help. Knowing what they had done, he gave their clothes to deserving beggars.
- One day, while out studying and praying, a deer ran in his direction, wanting protection from a dog. He put the tablet on which he was writing on the head of the animal and it became invisible until the dog had passed.
- He pulled two young men, feared dead, from the water alive.
- His followers complained that there was no water at the site of his monastery. He ordered them to cut down a tree. They did this, and a spring poured out of the tree. It became known as the fountain of St Aidan.
- When he wanted to build the monastery, he blessed the hands of an untrained man and he became a great builder and decorator for St Aidan's monastery.

FOR YOU TO DO

Research St Aidan of Ferns and try to find another story or miracle associated with him. You must write at least a paragraph giving details of the story or miracle and state the sources where you got your material.

Tuesday, 31 January

Day 2: The Word of God (Luke 24:25-27)

The Scriptures and You

Catholics believe that the Bible is the Word of God, but what does that mean in today's world? The Emmaus story gives us some very important pointers about understanding the central role the Bible plays in the life of faith and why it is still at the heart of what we do as believers.

The Scriptures and Jesus

In the Emmaus story the risen Jesus meets his sad and depressed disciples and wants to know why they are so down. They begin to tell him how their hopes had been dashed and why they are going home as deeply disappointed former followers of Jesus. He comes straight back at them by saying that while the events they have described may be true – i.e. the rejection by the authorities of Jesus and his cruel death – their understanding of those events is very wide of the mark. In order to do this he goes back over stories from their Bible (namely the Old Testament). These stories show how God is faithful, has always wanted to heal, forgive and save his people. They also show that God has been with them even in the worst moments of their long and difficult history. Slowly it begins to dawn on the disciples that there is another way to look at the situation, they begin to make a connection between their lives today and the stories they had been reared with. They now see things in a very different light as the Scriptures become the living Word of God and not just a book about somebody else's past. Later on they will sum up this experience by saying: 'did not our hearts burn within us as he explained the Scriptures to us on the road'.

The Scriptures and the Church

Just as the disciples on the road listened to the Scriptures being explained to them, followers of Jesus have looked to the Scriptures to give them inspiration, hope and guidance ever since. This is why the Church offers us readings every time we gather for the Eucharist. We call this part of the mass the liturgy of the Word, and it contains readings from the different parts of the Bible, both Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament is made up of the sacred writings of the Jewish people from before the time of Jesus and includes the Torah or Law, the writings of the prophets and reflections on their history, as well as prayers and wisdom writings. As we saw in the Emmaus story, these are the very writings that can help us understand all that happened to Jesus. The New Testament contains writings from the first generations of Christians who reflected on the story of Jesus' life and the meaning of his death and resurrection. It contains the Four Gospels, letters sent to the earliest Christian communities and an overview of the growth and spread of the Church, which is called the Acts of the Apostles. Catholics believe that the Scriptures came about through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and we also believe that the same Spirit that inspired the writing of them should also inspire our reading of them.

The Scriptures and You

Can we have an experience like the disciples on the road to Emmaus and come to an awareness of God's presence with us today? Yes, by praying with the Scriptures and allowing the words speak to our hearts.



For many centuries a method of prayer known as *Lectio Divina* has helped ordinary Christians to experience God's Word in a similar way to the disciples in the Emmaus Story.

Follow these simple steps.

Lectio Divina: Using the Bible to help you to pray

Step 1: Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you.

Invite the Holy Spirit to guide you and give you the grace to hear the words of Scripture in all their richness:

God our Father, you sent your only Son, Jesus, into the world.
He revealed you to us.
We ask you to send your Holy Spirit to us now
so that we may meet Jesus Christ in the Word that comes from you.
We ask your help in recognising the presence of Jesus in our lives. Amen.

Step 2: *Lectio* – Choose a story from the Bible to read.

To begin try Matthew 14:22–33. This is the story of Jesus walking on the water as he approaches his disciples who are in the boat. Begin to read the words very slowly, making sure to give this time with God your full attention. Listen to the words with your whole heart and mind.

Step 3: *Meditatio* – Meditate.

Take time to meditate and reflect on the words you have read. Remember that all of the stories and books in the Bible sit together to make a whole. Try to understand the meaning of the words. Meditate on them for a while and see if you can apply them to your own life. Does the story encourage, or challenge you, is it asking you to look at some part of your life and to make changes? Listen to what God is saying to you today through these words.

Step 4: *Oratio* – Respond to God.

Take time to respond to what you have read. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you and the risen Jesus to walk with you. What comes into your mind in response to this piece of scripture? Thank God for any insight that has come to you and any awareness of God's presence with you and ask God's help with any changes you wish to make in your life.

Step 6: Promise!

Promise to act on your thoughts and remember your conversation with God today.



Feastday of Don Bosco

Don Bosco was born on 16 August 1815, son of a poor farmer in a small Italian Village. His father died when he was just two years old and as a young boy he worked as a shepherd.

Don Bosco was **ordained** on June 5, 1841 and soon began working in Turin where he was shocked at the number of homeless children. He tried to help one, but six of his friends followed for help also. Don Bosco played football and did cookery with the children, as well as teaching them carpentry and tailoring.

He built **orphanages** but needed more help so he founded the Salesian Brothers in 1859. His **superiors** tried to put obstacles in his way but he didn't give in, even though they thought he was insane. He received help from his mum – 'Mama Margaret'.

The city authorities were very happy with the work he was doing with the children. He saw beyond the dirt and the rags that the children wore – he saw them as human beings. He felt that there were three things that sustained an education: **Confession, Regular Communion and Daily Mass**.

While knowledge was important, something that touched the heart was even more so, and so he tried to give the children a taste for music. He instilled the values of **virtue** and **duty** in the children. When asked if he punished the children in school he replied: 'As far as possible avoid punishing ... try to gain love before inspiring fear.'

Don Bosco died on 31 January, 1888 and at the time of his death there were 250 Salesian Society houses throughout the world with 130,000 children in these houses. Don Bosco succeeded in establishing a network of organisations and centres to carry on his work. He was canonised by Pope Pius XI in 1934.

For You to Do:

- Explain the words which have been highlighted in the above information. Once you have done this in your copy, put each word on a coloured card, with its explanation and put it on the 'concept' wall or noticeboard.
- Pretend you are a child being cared for by Don Bosco. Write a diary entry for a typical day in his orphanage and how you felt about the day.



Wednesday, 1 February

Day 3: The Breaking of Bread (Luke 24:28-30)

Sunday – a different day!

The third commandment tells us to 'Keep holy the Sabbath Day'. In the Hebrew language, the word 'holy' means 'different', 'separate' or 'set apart'. One day in the week is to be a special day; one day in the week is to be kept different from the others.

For Christians this special day is **Sunday** because it was on a Sunday, the 'first day' of the Jewish week, that Jesus rose from the dead. It was also on Sunday, the day of resurrection, that Jesus appeared to the two disciples on the Road to Emmaus.

From the very beginning of the Church, followers of Jesus have assembled on Sunday to celebrate the **Eucharist**...

'On that day which is named after the sun, all who are in the towns and in the country gather together for a communal celebration. And then the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as

long as time permits. After the reader has finished, the one presiding gives an address, urgently exhorting his hearers to practise these beautiful readings in their lives. Then all stand up together and recite prayers. After the prayers are over, the bread and wine mixed with water are brought forward, and the president offers up prayers and thanksgivings, as much as in him lies. The people join in with an 'Amen'. Then takes place the distribution to all those present of the things over which the thanksgiving had been spoken.

The deacons bring a portion to those who are absent. Moreover, those who are well-off give whatever they will; what is collected is left with then president, who uses it to help orphans and widows, those in want owing to sickness or any other cause, prisoners, travellers, and in short anyone who is in any need.'

(ST JUSTIN MARTYR, 150AD)



FOR YOU TO DO 1

- Read St Justin Martyr's account of Sunday Mass in the second century and identify as many similarities to Sunday Mass in the twenty-first century as you can (written or spoken).
- Write/talk about a Mass that holds a special memory for you.

Catholic Schools Week 2012 offers students the opportunity to rediscover the meaning of the Christian Sunday, to celebrate Sunday once again as a 'holy' day, the first day of the week, the day of the Resurrection of Jesus, the Lord's Day.

Christians are those who keep the Lord's Day, not the Sabbath.

ST IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH

We can make Sunday a special day of joy and thanksgiving by making it ...

1. A Day of Prayer & Worship

Recommit ourselves to meet Jesus in the Eucharist each Sunday, reflect on the Gospel reading of the day (www.sacredspace.ie, there are numerous apps available to download)

2. A Day for Family

Be with the rest of our families for a meal on Sunday, enjoy a family outing together?

3. A Day for Others

Visit relatives, those who are old and alone. Give some time to meeting friends? Visit family graves etc.

For You to Do 2

- Draw up the 'perfect' or 'ideal' Sunday where you could spend time in Church, with your family and with others.
- What factors in your life prevent you from spending every Sunday like this?

Prophet, not profit, is what Sunday is all about: Des Kelly

The owner of a chain of carpet and home furnishing stores in Ireland has taken a strong stand against Sunday trading and decided to close all of his thirteen outlets each Sunday, so as to keep the Sabbath holy. Des Kelly is the owner of Des Kelly Carpets, with 13 shops around Ireland and up to 200 employees. He himself pioneered Sunday shopping back in 1971, but since he began to visit Medjugorje in 1998, he has begun to think more seriously about his faith. 'I got great healing there,' he said on popular radio phone-in programme *Liveline* on Tuesday. 'I have been going twice a year ever since. I got to know God and our Blessed Lady better. The closer you get to God, the more you realise when you're committing sin.'

Mr Kelly said the decision to close on Sundays was taken in the last six months, following consultation with his staff. He stands to lose about €600,000 in trade, but is adamant that he is happy about the decision and he will 'make the money up in other ways.'

A caller, Helen, said the ruse was a 'publicity stunt'. She herself was a shop owner and found that people didn't buy on Sunday, but merely browsed.

Mr Kelly replied that Sunday was their best day. 'It is not a publicity stunt. I'm glad with what I've done. With the help of God I'll set a trend.'

Helen ended up agreeing with him. 'I hope it works and we all follow suit,' she said.

James, a caller from Tipperary, spoke of how he had commiserated with a shop keeper on Easter Sunday for having to work. 'If people didn't come in we wouldn't have to be in here on Sunday,' was her

reply. Her words had made him re-evaluate his own attitude and since then he has tried not to shop on Sunday.

Another caller, Seán, also commended Mr Kelly, saying that shopping does not have to be done on Sunday. He pointed out that banks are closed on Sundays and people still manage to get to the bank during the week. He himself brought his children to Mass on Sundays, and then to the shops, which were 'heaving'. Mr Kelly's stand 'would make me change my habits,' he concluded.

Another caller, Bernadette, said if others followed suit, 'it might give a young family time to reflect instead of just thinking materialism, to think, Yes, Sunday is for something else'. She had opened her shop on Sundays over Christmas, but 'I will not open this coming Christmas,' she added.

However other callers were opposed to the move. John, from Carlow, said that it would deprive young people of an income to help cover their studies, and Derek from Kildare said that many couples, who were both working, were too exhausted to do anything on Saturday except sleep and potter around the house, and all the shopping was done on Sunday.

Mr Kelly answered he was sticking to his decision. 'It is against our principles to trade on Sunday. It is unnecessary servile work. We open late on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.

My workers won't work Sunday. They are happy, my family is happy and my grandchildren are happy. Sunday is a day of rest.'

SOURCE: CATHOLICIRELAND.NET, *Thursday, 10 January, 2008.*

For You to Do 3

- What is your initial reaction to this article?
- What has prompted Mr Kelly's change of trading times?
- Do you agree with the suggestion that if banks are closed on Sundays so too can shops? Explain your answer.
- What do you think people who shop on Sundays would do if the shops were closed? Is it reasonable to suggest that people would spend more times with their families and/or friends?
- 'Sunday is a day of rest'. What does this statement mean to you?
- Ask a grandparent/senior citizen to describe what he or she used to do on Sundays in Ireland in the days when shops were all closed.
- In groups of four, name three things that you could do on a Sunday (not in shopping centres) that would give you more quality time with family and/or friends.



Feastday of St Brigid



St Brigid's Cross

A St Brigid's Cross would be hung in a house, and perhaps in a stable, to ensure the protection of the saint over the people of the house and the livestock. But where did the St Brigid's Cross come from? When Brigid was with a dying pagan chieftain, she picked some rushes off the floor and began to weave a cross. When he asked her what she was doing she explained the story of Christ to him and the significance of the cross. She told him that there was no need to be afraid of death because Jesus loved us so much. After much explanation, the pagan chieftain was baptised and became a member of the Christian community. Each year newly woven crosses are blessed with holy water and the following words of blessing accompany it: 'May the Father, Son, Holy Spirit and St Brigid bless this cross and all who look upon it.'

The Brídeog

The Brídeog was taken from house to house. It was a symbol of St Brigid herself. Sometimes this was a regular doll with a pretty dress, but sometimes it was a sheaf of straw made into the shape of a doll and dressed appropriately. Children often carried these dolls to a few houses close by. But in other cases it was unmarried girls who carried the Brídeog. It was normally the most beautiful of the girls that would carry it dressed in white. The custom differed from place to place. In some places these dolls became known as Biddy dolls. Dressed-up boys would bring instruments and the group would play and dance at each household. It might have appeared scary to younger children. Money or food was given to the boys. Sometimes the woman of the house would place a pin in the Brídeog's clothing.

Brat Bríde

This was a piece of ribbon that was placed on the windowsill outside a person's house. It was thought that the ribbon got longer during the night. During the night, the saint passed through the land and

so gave some of her healing powers to the ribbons. It was thought that the longer the piece of ribbon, the more healing power it had. This piece of ribbon was then kept as a cure for headaches. The following ritual was performed: 'First, it is rubbed or drawn around the patient's head three times, saying each time the vocation, "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen" after which it is knotted about the head.' (Danaher, K, *The Year in Ireland*). It was also used for toothache, earache, sore throat and pains. Sometimes it was thought to help people have children or to help the woman to give birth safely to their child. At times, the ribbon was worn as a sign of protection.

CriosBríde (St Brigid's Girdle)

Mostly associated with the West of Ireland, this was a piece of rope made of straw and eight or ten feet long, woven into a loop with crosses attached to it. Sometimes a boy carried the Crios and the girl carried the Brídeog, sometimes the boy carried both, but at other times only the Crios was carried. A group of young people carried the Crios from house to house on the Eve of Brigid and the people of each household passed through the Crios as a sign of protection and to keep illness at bay, especially 'pains in the bones'. The carriers of the Crios would say a verse while the people of the household passed through it three times each. Each time the pattern for passing through the Crios was men first – right leg, right arm and shoulder, the head, left shoulder and arm, and then the left leg. Then women – the Crios was put on over the head, shoulders and body and then stepped out of. The sign of the cross was made by the person passing through the Crios. Sometimes cows would pass through the Crios but at the very least the herd of cattle would pass by it on St Brigid's Day. (Adapted from Danaher, K, *The Year in Ireland*)

FOR YOU TO DO

- Research other customs associated with St Brigid.
- List at least three and explain them in detail.

Thursday, 2 February

Day 4: Recognising the Lord (Luke 24: 31-32)

Being 'Eucharist' for Others

In the Eucharist, Catholics celebrate Jesus' real presence among them. Jesus offers us the Eucharist as a life vision, a way to live our lives. In fact, to be truly a Christian, we must try to become Eucharist and empower others. There are many people who have lived, or are living, their lives in this way, for example, Mother Teresa, Ghandi, or our own Fr Peter McVerry, Bob Geldof. Through their work for justice and peace, through their care of the sick and the hungry, the lonely and the isolated, they have in a sense turned the word 'eucharist' into a verb, by bringing the love of Jesus to the world through their own giving of themselves for others. We too can be 'eucharist' for others by giving of ourselves in order to help and support our fellow human beings.

Jesus was eucharist for others long before he was ever Eucharist sacramentally. In his earthly life, he lived in a way that empowered others to live deeper, and so more fulfilling, lives. During the Last Supper, Jesus showed us how to offer ourselves to each other in order to build our entire community. This is certainly a big ask! Nonetheless, we are invited to try and join Jesus in becoming eucharist for our sisters and brothers, receiving one another as blessed and broken for all.

On 10 June 2004, Pope John Paul II announced the dedication of an entire year to the Blessed Sacrament and invited the entire Church to reflect upon the Eucharist. He stressed that, despite our busy occupations and increasing pressures in life, the Eucharist must be manifest in the truth of our lives today, in our actions, in our sense of values, in our lifestyle, and in our relationships with others.

FOR YOU TO DO 1

- In groups of three discuss how you could be 'eucharist' for others. Together, write up one example and share them with the rest of your class.

The following quotes are from Mother Teresa

1. Choose the one that means the most to you and explain why.
2. How do these words help us to articulate that Jesus is here present and active in our world?

'Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless.'

'Do not think that love in order to be genuine has to be extraordinary. What we need is to love without getting tired. Be faithful in small things because it is in them that your strength lies.'

'Every time you smile at someone, it is an action of love, a gift to that person, a beautiful thing.'

'The hunger for love is much more difficult to remove than the hunger for bread.'

'Let no one ever come to you without leaving better and happier. Be the living expression of God's kindness: kindness in your face, kindness in your eyes, kindness in your smile.'

'It's not how much we give but how much love we put into giving.'

'At the end of life we will not be judged by how many diplomas we have received, how much money we have made, how many great things we have done. We will be judged by "I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat, I was naked and you clothed me. I was homeless, and you took me in."'

'What can you do to promote world peace? Go home and love your family.'

'I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples.'

'A life not lived for others is not a life.'

'If you can't feed a hundred people, feed just one.'



Who was Eucharist for Jesus?

There is a scene in all of the Gospels where a woman, in the days just prior to Jesus' death, anoints his feet with an expensive perfume. The onlookers complain about her actions and cannot understand why Jesus would let this woman, a sinner, have anything to do with him. But Jesus told them to leave her alone because she has done something 'beautiful' for him – she had, without knowing it, anointed him before his death. Jesus found comfort in the woman's actions and felt comforted by her care for him. This woman was 'eucharist' for Jesus, she empowered him and gave him strength for his journey to the cross. This is what being eucharist for each other is all about, caring enough to give strength to the other. It does not have to be a major act that gets everyone's attention, it can be a small but genuine act of support for a pal, a helping hand at home, a push to do your best, a word of praise for a younger sibling or fellow student ... the list is endless.

To be truly Christian we are called to work each day toward this vision of life, to become eucharist – empowerers of others.

FOR YOU TO DO 2

- Read the following passage from the Bible.
- What one word or phrase strikes you about this passage? Write about your choice and why you chose a particular word or phrase.
- What do you think of the way Jesus interpreted the woman's actions?
- How can you be 'eucharist' for another today? Do you think it is worth the effort? Why? Why not?

Luke 7:36-50

One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and took his place at the table. A woman in the city, who was a sinner, having learned that he was eating in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster jar of ointment. She stood behind him at his feet, weeping, and began to bathe his feet with her tears and to dry them with her hair. Then she continued kissing his feet and anointing them with the ointment. When the Pharisee who had invited him saw it, he said to himself, 'If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what kind of woman this is who is touching him – that she is a sinner.' Jesus spoke up and said to him, 'Simon, I have something to say to you.' 'Teacher,' he replied, 'Speak.' 'A certain creditor had two debtors; one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he cancelled the debts for both of them. Now, which of them will love him more?' Simon answered, 'I suppose the one for whom he cancelled the greater debt.' And Jesus said to him, 'You have judged rightly.' Then turning toward the woman, he said to Simon, 'Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has bathed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which were many, have been forgiven; hence she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little.' Then he said to her, 'Your sins are forgiven.' But those who were at the table with him began to say among themselves, 'Who is this who even forgives sins?' And he said to the woman, 'Your faith has saved you; go in peace.'

The Presentation of the Lord or Candlemas

Candlemas is the name given to the day after the Feast of St Brigid. This feast recalls Mary and Joseph bringing the infant Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem to dedicate the child to God in keeping with Jewish tradition. There they meet an old man called Simeon who refers to the child as ‘the light of the nations’. He also looks ahead to Jesus’ adult life and foretells his death. (Luke 2:22-40). In this passage from the story, Simeon predicts that a sword would pierce Mary’s heart.

As the child’s father and mother were wondering at the things that were being said about him, Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, ‘Look, he is destined for the fall and for the rise of many in Israel, destined to be a sign that is opposed – and a sword will pierce your soul too – so that the secret thoughts of many may be laid bare.’

The Eastern Church celebrated this feast first and called it ‘the Encounter’. It was celebrated in the Western Church a little later. This feast finishes the story of the Nativity but, with Simeon’s words, we are pointed towards the Easter event.

FOR YOU TO DO 1 ►

Create a shadow box of the Presentation of the Lord story. After the display begin a procession around the classroom to five stations which will mark the beginning of the each decade of the Glorious Mysteries. These stations could have an icon representing each decade with a candle that could be lit by a student. Each student should also have a candle as they process.

◄ FOR YOU TO DO 2

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Take students to the oratory/local church. Allow students to settle before the Blessed Sacrament. Read Lk 2: 22-40 and allow students to reflect on the story.

Areas of focus:

- (1) The journey that Mary and Joseph made to bring their son to the temple. We also remember the ‘yes’ that Mary gave on the day that the angel Gabriel appeared to her.
- (2) As we are reminded of the awe that Simeon experienced when he met the boy Jesus and his parents, so too we remember the awe that Elizabeth experienced when Mary visited her during her pregnancy.
- (3) We are reminded of the reality of Mary’s ‘yes’ to God and the sorrow and pain she will experience as a mother, so too are we reminded of the joy that Mary would have experienced at the birth of her son.



Friday, 3 February

Day 5: Our Mission (Luke 24:33-35)

‘The universal mission involves all, all things and always. The Gospel is not an exclusive possession of whoever has received it but a gift to share, good news to communicate. And this gift-commitment is not only entrusted to a few but on the contrary to all the baptised, who are “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people’ (1 Pt 2:9), so that they may declare his wonderful deeds”’.

POPE BENEDICT’S MESSAGE FOR WORLD MISSION SUNDAY 2011

What is Mission?

Continuing the mission of Jesus Christ in the world to:

- Share faith
- Care for people in need
- Act for justice and creation.

Someone Who Has Taken Action

Search for Sarah McLachlan’s ‘World on Fire’ music video online and show it to the students. This is an inspiring project by Sarah, who made the decision to make her own music video for \$15, instead of paying her production company \$150,000. She then gave the balance to those in need. The result is a music video identifying what the dollar can buy in developing countries and/or communities.

World On Fire

Hearts are worn in these dark ages
You’re not alone in this story’s pages
The light has fallen amongst the
 living and the dying
And I’ll try to hold it in, yeah I’ll try to
 hold it in
The world’s on fire and
It’s more than I can handle
I’ll tap into the water
(Try and bring my share)
I try to bring more
More than I can handle
(Bring it to the table)
Bring what I am able

Full lyrics can also be found online.

FOR YOU TO DO

- LISTEN and READ the messages Sarah presents in the video twice.
- Work together in pairs to document how Sarah could have spent the money in contrast to how it has the potential to be used for good, eg. \$5,000 = cost of make-up and hair for one day OR one year's schooling for 145 girls in Afghanistan.
- Discuss while categorising her spending, then prioritise according to your own set of values.
- Discuss the priorities of the class. Are there different value systems within the class?
- Can you identify what is valuable in your life? List if possible. Do we need to rethink our priorities?
- Brainstorm ways you can be as creative as Sarah to be an 'Agent for Change' to support the work of Catholic Mission in our world.

St Teresa of Ávila, a sixteenth-century Spanish saint and mystic, was very aware that every Christian has a role to play in making Christ present in the world. She summed this up in the following prayer:

St Teresa's Prayer

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,
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.
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.



Saint Teresa of Ávila

Having read and reflected on St Teresa's prayer, write a paragraph explaining how this prayer relates to the theme of Catholic School's week.



St Blaise

A woman brought her son who was choking on a fishbone to Blaise and the child was healed

Sick cattle are given the blessing of St Blaise and water

In France, there is the blessing of corn seeds. Women carry buckets of seed to be blessed at church. Half of the seeds are left as an offering and the other half are mixed in with the regular seed before it is set

He is also considered to be the protector of cities, protector against wild animals, patron of vegetarians, and patron of the woollen industry

While he was on his way to prison, a woman came to him to say tell him that a wolf had taken her pig. Through the work of Blaise, the wolf returned the pig to the woman

In Germany, St Blaise is the Patron St of wind instruments, bands and players

Near Valencia, Spain, St Blaise became the Patron St of a town where it was thought that prayers to St Blaise ended a diphtheria epidemic

In 971, when present-day Dubrovnik was under threat of attack, story has it that Blaise appeared to the people of the city and saved them

Bonfires are lit during the feast of St Blaise (probably because of Blaise is pronounced *blaze*)

During persecution he hid in a cave and while he was there, blessed sick and wounded animals

Every year in Norwich, England, great celebrations are had in the woollen industry community on the feast of St Blaise

In England, St Blaise is mostly associated with wool. A village in Cornwall is called St Blazey. It is thought that in a town near here, St Blaise taught woollen skills

In Italy, small cakes are baked on the 1st of February, blessed and shared on the 3rd in areas where there are woollen factories. Also in Serra San Bruno, men give cookies called *abbacolo* (walking sticks, like the Bishop's Crozier) to their girlfriends. If the girl breaks the cookie in two and gives half back to the man, then they will get married.

In Spain the feast of St Blaise occurs during a spring festival. Sweet breads called *panellets* are offered to St Blaise and shared with family, friends and pets

In Aubin, a little town in France, St Blaise became the Patron St of the parish church because it was thought that he put a stop to an epidemic that was wiping out cattle

A cathedral in Dubrovnik has the following relics of St Blaise on display: the head of St Blaise, his left and right hand, his throat and his right foot

FOR YOU TO DO

St Blaise is one of the Fourteen Holy Helpers. Who were they and who were the other thirteen?

SweetSaints



Why not celebrate the feast days/the saints with a feast of sweets?

When we are making the sweets we can talk about the saints and the lives they led.

Ingredients

1pkt ginger cake
150g (6oz) milk chocolate
100g (4oz) glacé cherries chopped
50g (2oz) chocolate
Drinking chocolate powder.
Spoonful of jam melted in a little boiling water.

St Thomas Aquinas – Ginger Truffles

On Sunday 28 January, we celebrated the feast day of St Thomas Aquinas. He is the patron Saint of students. Thomas Aquinas was born c. 1225 at the castle of his father, Count Landulph, in Aquino, Naples, Italy. As the son of a wealthy noble family, Thomas lived a wonderfully privileged life and received an excellent education. While he was studying at university, Thomas became influenced by the newer Dominican movement and wanted to follow the Dominican rule. His traditional family strongly objected, but eventually Thomas followed his chosen path. He became a Doctor of Theology, lecturing on theology in major cities including Rome and Paris, and his fame as a scholar led to his distinction of being the patron saint of students and universities. He left the great monument of his learning, the *Summa Theologica*, unfinished, for on his way to the second Council of Lyons, on orders of Gregory X, he fell sick and died at the Cistercian monastery of Fossa Nuova, Italy in 1274. Saint Thomas was one of the greatest and most influential theologians of all time. He was canonised in 1323 and declared Doctor of the Church by Pope Pius V.

Method Melt the chocolate. In a bowl, break up the ginger cake and sprinkle in the chopped cherries. Mix all together. Add the melted jam to bind the mixture. Roll the mixture into little balls, approx. 1oz /25g. There should be approx. twenty-eight balls. Place them on a plate and first roll the balls in the melted chocolate, then roll them in the drinking chocolate powder.

Ingredients

12 tablespoons of icing sugar
1 egg white,
Green food colouring (optional)
Peppermint flavouring
Cooking chocolate.

St Patrick – Peppermint Sweets

St Patrick is credited with not only bringing Christianity to Ireland, but with founding hundreds of churches to help the people of God live and celebrate their faith. Having been born in Britain at the end of the fourth century, Patrick was captured and brought to Ireland as a slave. During his time of captivity he found God in his life, and his faith not only empowered him to survive in a difficult situation but also gave him the vision and strength to devote his whole life to God. Many years after his escape from Ireland, Patrick felt called by God to go back – this time as a missionary. The people of Ireland supported him and respected him as he shared the Good News of faith. He stayed in Ireland for almost thirty years, until his death on 17 March 461. Patrick became the patron saint of Ireland and the Irish people celebrate his life and great works each year on the anniversary of his death.

Method Add to a bowl the icing sugar, egg white, 4 drops of peppermint flavouring and 12 drops of green food colouring. Mix well and knead the mixture to form a smooth ball. If the mixture is a little too wet add more icing sugar. Roll the ball into a large sausage and slice into individual sweets. Use your hands to shape the sweets and leave them on a chopping board to dry. Melt the chocolate in a dish in the microwave. Dip each sweet into the chocolate half way, and leave it on some tin foil until the chocolate sets.

Ingredients

125g/4oz soft unsalted butter
300g/10oz best-quality dark chocolate, broken into pieces
3 tbsp golden syrup
200g/7oz rich tea biscuits
100g/3oz mini marshmallows
2 tsp icing sugar, to dust

St Brigid – Rocky Road

St Brigid is believed to be a native of Faughart in County Louth. Her father, a local chieftan, wanted her to marry a poet but she told him she wanted to be a nun. She received the nun's veil from St Mel at Ardagh. She later established her principal monastery in Kildare. It became a great centre of prayer and Christian learning which continued to flourish long after her death in 525.

Method Heat the butter, chocolate and golden syrup in a heavy based saucepan over a gentle heat. Remove from the heat, scoop out about 125ml/4fl oz of the melted mixture and set aside in a bowl. Place the biscuits into a plastic freezer bag and crush them with a rolling pin until some have turned to crumbs but there are still pieces of biscuit remaining. Fold the biscuit pieces and crumbs into the melted chocolate mixture in the saucepan and then add the marshmallows. Tip the mixture into a 24cm/9in square baking tin and smooth the top with a wet spatula. Pour over the reserved 125ml/4fl oz of the melted chocolate mixture and smooth the top with a wet spatula. Refrigerate for about two hours or overnight. To serve, cut into twenty-four fingers and dust with icing sugar.

Ingredients

1340g desiccated coconut
340g icing sugar
400g tin of condensed milk
food colouring (optional)

St Francis of Assisi – Sun, Moon and Stars Coconut Ice Sweets

Saint Francis was born around 1181 in Assisi, in Italy. As a young man he loved parties and going out on the town. Francis had no wish to study or to learn his father's business, as he was having too much fun. One day he refused to give alms to a poor beggar but as the man was leaving, he felt sorry for what he had done and ran after him with some money. After he fell ill twice, Francis realised that he was wasting precious time. He realised that he should be serving Jesus and began praying more and making sacrifices to grow strong in spirit. Often he gave his clothes and money to the poor. He served the sick in hospitals. Still he felt he must do more. He fasted and began to go around in rags to humble himself. It is not hard to imagine how his rich friends must have looked at him now! His father was so angry that he beat him and finally threw him out. He had no shelter. His food was what kind people gave him. Francis followed the example of Jesus closely by living a life of simplicity and teaching the Gospel message with great joy. Saint Francis had the power of working miracles. He loved all creatures and the birds and animals happily obeyed his commands! He advised his brothers to love God, to love being poor, and to obey the Gospel. 'I have done my part,' he said. 'May Jesus teach you to do yours.' Francis died on 3 October, 1226.

Method Place the condensed milk into a bowl and add the icing sugar. Beat well then mix in the desiccated coconut. The mixture will get firm and difficult to stir but persevere until everything is all combined. Divide the mixture into two (add optional food colourings to each) and spread into an 8in square tin giving two coloured layers and allow to set overnight. Cut into small cubes and spread on a sheet of greaseproof paper to dry slightly.



Eucharistic Congress 2012

The 50th International Eucharistic Congress (IEC) will be held in Dublin from 10–17 June, 2012. Congresses take place every four years and offer liturgical and cultural events along with lectures and workshops to the faithful. The event will also celebrate the 50th anniversary of the inauguration of the Second Vatican Council. The theme for this 2012 International Eucharistic Congress is 'The Eucharist: Communion with Christ and with one another'.

The logo, entitled 'People in Communion', was designed by Martin Barlow of Portadown, Co. Armagh. The design concept is based on the idea of people 'from every nation, race, tribe and language' [Rev.7:9] being drawn together in Communion as 'One Body' formed by faith in the person of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, and the sacrifice he made upon the cross.

Congress Website

<http://www.iec2012.ie> is the official website of the Congress and already it has impressive comprehensive information and resources which can be downloaded.

Congress Theme Song

Learn this song as part of the preparation for the visit of the bell and Congress 2012. The words and music are available on <http://www.iec2012.ie/index.jsp?p=160&n=170&a=0>

Pray the Congress Prayer with your Class

Lord Jesus,
You were sent by the Father
to gather together those who are scattered.
You came among us, doing good and bringing healing,
announcing the Word of salvation
and giving the Bread which lasts forever.
Be our companion on life's pilgrim way.
May your Holy Spirit inflame our hearts,
enliven our hope and open our minds,
so that together with our sisters and brothers in faith
we may recognise you in the Scriptures
and in the breaking of bread.
May your Holy Spirit transform us into one body
and lead us to walk humbly on the earth,
in justice and love,
as witnesses of your resurrection.
In communion with Mary,
whom you gave to us as our Mother
at the foot of the cross,
through you
may all praise, honour and blessing be to the Father
in the Holy Spirit and in the Church,
Now and forever.

Amen



Prayer Service for Catholic Schools Week

Preparation:

1. Readers for prayers and Gospel story
2. Nine Students to light (nine) candles and offer prayer on behalf of class.
3. One student to light large candle in central space at the beginning of ceremony, same student to offer final prayer 'For Friendship'.
4. Each student remember to bring in a small stone that represents a worry or burden they may have.

Blessings Prayer Service

Invite student to light opening candle in centre sacred space.

Leader: We take some time to gather together. We leave our busy day, all the tasks to be completed and the points to remember. We enter into a space of prayer to share and be at peace together. We ask God's blessing on our school day and on all that we accomplish together.

Reader: Bless each one of us as we work in community to become all that we are called to be.

Reader: Bless our families who champion our hopes and dreams.

Reader: Bless our school community and the energy that it brings to our daily lives.

Leader: Bless the people we are surrounded by for their love and generosity, grace them with peace and gift them with our prayer from the heart.

Amen.

Reader: Gospel Story: (Luke 15: 3-7)

The Pharisees and teachers of the law were criticising Jesus for being friendly with sinners so Jesus told them this parable:

'Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them – what do you do? You leave the other ninety-nine sheep in the wilderness and go looking for the one that got lost until you find it. When you find it, you are so happy that you put it on your shoulders and carry it back home. Then you call your friends and neighbours together and say to them, 'I am so happy I found my lost sheep. Let us celebrate!'

The Gospel of the Lord

Leader: At the time of Jesus, shepherds were not regarded very highly. In fact, they were often laughed at in jokes. Jesus actually describes a pretty strange situation. Surely the last thing you would do if you lost one sheep from among a hundred would be to leave the ninety-nine in the desert to wander off or be attacked by wolves? But, if you look at the story as an example of how much God loves us – it tells us so much. God's love for those who wander off is so strong. Sometimes we can drift away from God's love or shut God out of our lives.

At this time each person is invited to place their stone (which represents a worry or burden) and place it at the foot of the cross. When people have left their stones they are invited to light a candle.

Reader: 1. Lighting a candle is a prayer, a sign of God's presence among us. Light and fire are rich symbols in sacred Scripture and in Church life.

Jesus said:

'I am the light of the world; anyone who follows me will not be walking in the dark, he will have the light of life.' *John 8:12*

Reader: 2. At Baptism we receive a lighted candle as the priest says, 'Receive the Light of Christ.' Lighting a candle symbolises that we are here trying to be honest and true to ourselves, others and God.

Reader: 3. Our lighted candles join with those lit today in many places all over the world. Many small lights together make for a greater brilliance, representing our needs and our care for each other as a community of Catholic schools.

May I Become

Leader: May our candles be a light for all of us to enable and support us.

In turn each student lights their candle on behalf of the entire group and says:

1. May I become a light for those in darkness,
All: Lord hear our prayer.
2. A source for those in despair,
All: Lord hear our prayer.
3. A companion for those who are burdened,
All: Lord hear our prayer.
4. A peacemaker for those gripped with anger,
All: Lord hear our prayer.
5. A selfless giver for those who are without,
All: Lord hear our prayer.
6. A compassionate friend for those who mourn,
All: Lord hear our prayer.
7. A protector for those without protection,
All: Lord hear our prayer.
8. A bridge for those separated from love.
All: Lord hear our prayer.
9. From this day onwards, may we become fully human, fully alive.
All: Lord hear our prayer.

Meditation on a candle

A candle brings light in the darkness.

Lord, each of us is like a candle, with light to give each other.

We live in the light which together we yield, dispelling the darkness around us.

For a candle to light itself from another, it must come close, it must not remain apart.

We receive light from others through our unselfish love for one another, thus lessening the distance between us.

Like the wick within the candle, Your love remains within us always, waiting to be ignited, waiting to be fanned into flame.

As we allow your love for us and our love for each other to take possession of our lives, ignition takes place, your flame of love burns brightly.

Let us also remember that like the candle, if we rush by too quickly the effect of that rushing by causes the flame to blow out.

How can we keep that flame alight if we constantly pass each other by?

The strength of each flame contributes to the light.

The light itself diminishes when one flame is extinguished.

Lord, give us the courage to give time to one another, to acknowledge the contribution each one gives, to resist the temptation of passing by quickly, so that there is no opportunity for darkness to overtake the light.

For, it is only in the absence of light that darkness occurs.

Final Blessing: For Friendship

May you be blessed with good friends,
And learn to be a good friend to yourself,
Journeying to that place in your soul where
There is love, warmth of feeling.

May this change you
May it transfigure what is negative, distant
Or cold within your heart.

May you be brought in to real passion, kindness
And belonging.

May you treasure your friends.
May you be good to them, be there for them
And receiving all the challenges, truth and light
you need.

May you never be isolated but know the embrace
Of your Anam Cara.

John O' Donohue



Board of Management/ Governors and Staff Reflection

The following might form the basis of a short reflection on Catholic Schools with staff and members of the Boards of Management/Governors during Catholic Schools Week 2012.

During the week dedicated to reflection upon Catholic Schools, the following pages invite you, as a staff and Board of Management/Governors, to reflect upon two of the four questions in relation to your own particular situation. It is suggested that you give a period of time on the issues during a board meeting and staff meeting.

This year the theme chosen for Catholic Schools week is '**Catholic Schools, Christ's Living Body Active in our World**'. In the 1960s, the Second Vatican Council gave testimony to the presence of Christ, the light of all nations, within his Church. It reaffirmed the Church's mission to lead people to God, heal human anxieties, uphold human dignity and bear witness as a community united through a bond of love. Recognising that many people see Christ's light only in the lives of Christians, the council called upon the members of the Church to make this light shine more brightly by their word and deeds and so lead others to Christ in their communities, to be Christ's living body active in the world. As we celebrate Catholic Schools week 2012, we take time to reflect on how our school community is Christ's living Body in our community.

To help in your reflection read the following extract from *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School*, 1988.

The special character of the Catholic school and the underlying reason for its existence, the reason why Catholic parents should prefer it, is precisely the quality of the religious instruction integrated into the overall education of the students ... Sometimes there is an uncertainty, a difference of opinion, or an uneasiness about the underlying principles governing religious formation in a Catholic school, and therefore about the concrete approach to be taken in religious instruction. On the one hand, a Catholic school is a 'civic institution'; its aim, methods and characteristics are the same as those of every other school. On the other hand, it is a 'Christian community', whose educational goals are rooted in Christ and his Gospel. It is not always easy to bring these two aspects into harmony; the task requires constant attention, so that the tension between a serious effort to transmit culture and a forceful witness to the Gospel does not turn into a conflict harmful to both. (pp. 66-7)

Questions for Discussion:

1. What do we, as a Board of Management/Governors or staff, see as the primary task of Catholic Education?
2. What are three reasons why parents chose our school – is our religious ethos and religious education programmes a factor?
3. How do we, as a Board of Management/Governors, support our staff and pupils to engage with the whole question of faith and culture in modern-day Ireland, so as it is not harmful to both?
4. How do we encourage our students to bear witness to their faith and cultivate human values in their own legitimate right, in accordance with the particular mission to serve all people?
Does our school have a transformative role in the world?

Staff Prayer:

Jesus, our teacher and our Lord, You taught with authority and compassion. You touched the lives of so many people who sought understanding, healing and most of all someone who would listen. Help us to be that voice of authority and compassion in our school community and the wider world.

May we touch lightly with your grace and your love the lives and spirit of those we teach.

May we always seek to see the best and expect only the best in each other and in our students.

May our hearts be open always to your voice and your love and may we, like all those called to teach unto justice, shine like the stars of heaven as beacons of hope in our school communities.

Amen

**Board of Management/
Governors Members' Prayer:**

Lord Jesus Christ, we gather together in your name to work for the good of our school.

We know that you are with us as we reflect on the issues before us at the meeting.

May we be guided in all that we do by the gifts of wisdom and understanding, of right judgement and courage, bestowed upon us by your Spirit.

May the outcome of our work continue to ensure that our school community is a place of openness, compassion, justice and peace.

Help us to keep you ever at the centre of all that we do. We make this our prayer through Christ our Lord.

Amen

The members of the Steering Committee are:

Gary Abrahamian; Lloyd Bracken; Jim Cassin; Martin Delaney; Colette Dower;
Brenda Drumm; Michael Drumm; Paul Farren; Eileen Flynn; Fiona Gallagher;
Maighread Ní Ghallchobhair; Seán Goan; Maura Hyland; Martin Long;
Maeve Mahon; Bernie Martin; Michael Redmond; Maria Spring; Orla Walsh;
Eithne Woulfe

Christ's Living Body Active in Our World

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

29 January–4 February 2012