



Archdiocese of Dublin
Education Secretariat

Post Primary Diocesan Advisers R.E. News Blog – January 2023

Dear Chaplain and R.E. Teachers,

“May the Lord bless you and keep you.

May the Lord let His face shine on you.

May the Lord be gracious to you.

*May the Lord look upon you kindly and give you
peace.”*

Numbers 6:22



This blessing from the first reading on New Year’s Day is our prayer and our heartfelt wish for you as we begin this New Year.

Each New Year is a time of Promise, of renewed Hope, of new resolutions, of returning home while dreaming of new horizons.

The theme of Wonder echoes through many of the readings at this time of year. Helping to awaken wonder in our students is perhaps our ultimate challenge as teachers. The truly great teacher moves beyond imparting knowledge and nurtures the student’s capacity for amazement and joy. The great English writer GK Chesterton wrote that *“the world will never starve for want of wonders but only for want of wonder.”*

Our students are besieged by noise, by superficial communication, by virtual realities unknown to their grandparents. But like us all, they long for depth and for meaning. Developing the capacity for wonder requires attentiveness, discipline, compassion. It invites us to try new ways of seeing, of listening, of serving. Its reward is happiness. Like the wise men who experienced the Epiphany which we celebrate on January 6, we remember that salvation and hope are open to all, rich and poor, young and old, the invitation to come, to find and to wonder is for all.

The discovery of God in our midst will certainly change us. The wise men “went home by a different way.” St. Paul whom we celebrate on January 25 was knocked from his horse on the road to Damascus and his journey changed.

As we move through this month of January, the beginning of another year, let us be attentive to the beauty, love and hope that speaks to us from unlikely places and let us allow it to rest and work within us so that we too are filled with awe and wonder.

May our journey be more authentic because of the wonder of discovering God among us and may it lead us to ever deeper happiness and true wisdom.

A happy, blessed and wondrous New Year!



A Blessing for the New Year

May the light of your soul guide you.
May the light of your soul bless the work you do
with the secret love and warmth of your heart.
May you see in what you do the beauty of your own soul.
May the sacredness of your work bring healing, light and renewal to those
who work with you and those who see and receive your work.
May your work never weary you.
May it release within you wellsprings of refreshment, inspiration and excitement.
May you be present in what you do.
May you never become lost in the bland absences.
May the day never burden.
May dawn find you awake and alert, approaching your new day with dreams,
possibilities and promises.
May evening find you gracious and fulfilled.
May you go into the night blessed, sheltered and protected.
May your soul calm, console and renew you.

John O'Donohue, Anam Cara – Book of Celtic Wisdom

Beannacht Dé ort,

Sr. Bernadette Carron

Post - Primary Diocesan Adviser

bernadette.carron@dublindiocese.ie

Sr. Concepta Foley

Post - Primary Diocesan Adviser

concepta.foley@dublindiocese.ie



“In every generation we are asked to be ready, recognising the salvation offered in Christ Jesus, on fire with his Spirit, proclaiming the Gospel in every season, finding new ways to witness to the presence and power of Christ in our own lives and to the people of our time.

Over the past year and more, our parishes have been asked for their thoughts on the future direction of the Church in the Archdiocese. We have much to do: supporting people to deepen their faith and relationship with God; creating the structures that support vibrant communities of faith; advocating for those who are on the margins (see Statement of Mission, February 2022). <https://dublindiocese.ie/category/statement-of-mission/>

The synodal discussions that took place last spring have taught us something new from the heart of the Church. We have rediscovered the value of prayerful reflection, listening to the variety of voices available to us, and discerning together the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

The first phase of Building Hope implementation was an invitation to dialogue in parishes, reflecting on the four dimensions of the ‘Framework for Pastoral Renewal’ drawn from the Building Hope Task Force Report. Parishes responded generously with the fruits of that initial conversation, including their proposals for partnership with neighbouring parishes. In September, I published my initial response to that parish material in a document entitled Feedback on Easter 2022 Strategic Planning Process, which I ask parishes to reflect on deeply.

I am now making a further response to you, having listened carefully to your proposals for partnerships. Following careful analysis and further dialogue, I am writing to each parish to confirm the partnership arrangements through which I am asking you to realign your efforts and energies to suit the times in which we live.

Within each partnership of parishes, Parish Pastoral Councils, all active parishioners, priests, deacons, parish pastoral workers and voluntary parish leaders, including catechists into the future, are encouraged to renew the missionary aspect of parish life and contribute energetically towards the partnership of local parishes. In this way we can reach out beyond what any one parish might be able to facilitate or imagine. A set of pastoral aids will be provided to help with conversation and action locally. You know the time has come.”

Archbishop Dermot Farrell
Excerpt- Advent Pastoral Letter, 2022



The Credible Catholic Programme

<https://www.thehookoffaith.com/single-post/launch-of-credible-catholic-catechetical-programme>

Credible Catholic is a Religious Education programme made available for senior cycle non-exam RE by the Council for Catechetics of the Irish Episcopal Conference.

The *Credible Catholic* programme is free and the multi-media materials can be downloaded from www.catholicschools.ie/crediblecatholic

Credible Catholic aims to stimulate dialogue, encourage reflection and critical reasoning, foster religious literacy, build community, and nurture faith, and in doing all of these things, to promote student wellbeing. It is an optional resource which will be very helpful to teachers of religious education. The programme speaks to, and is built around, very important questions young people of all beliefs (religious and non-religious) have about themselves, their world, God and others.

The Irish Credible Catholic programme consists of the 7 Essential Modules, re-developed for the Irish context.

A unique feature of the Irish version of *Credible Catholic* is a helpful introductory lesson for teachers which prepares students for engagement with the programme modules. This introductory lesson reminds students that ultimately, in the Christian tradition faith is a gift and God is mystery.

However, similar to the American modules, the Irish modules explore:

- Do we have souls?
 - Is there a spiritual dimension to reality?
- What is the relationship between science and religion?
- What can philosophy say about the existence of God?
 - What is happiness and how can it be pursued?
- Did Jesus really exist and is there any reason to think that he is divine?
 - How is the Church relevant or even credible today?
 - Why would an all-loving God allow suffering?
 - Can meaning be found in life's struggles?

The Irish version of the Modules also includes an added introductory lesson. According to their **teacher's guide**, "This introductory lesson reminds students that ultimately, in the Christian tradition faith is a gift and God is mystery. While we can of course engage in a serious way with questions relating to faith, faith itself is a free response to God who gently reaches out in love to us first."

The guide goes on to say:

"In this context, *Credible Catholic* might be understood as a support to the wider mission of the Catholic school which lies ultimately in helping students know how much they are loved by God. The 'heart' of Catholic education is first an experience. Perhaps the 'head' of Catholic education also involves experience: the experience that there are credible answers to the vitally important questions students have about faith."

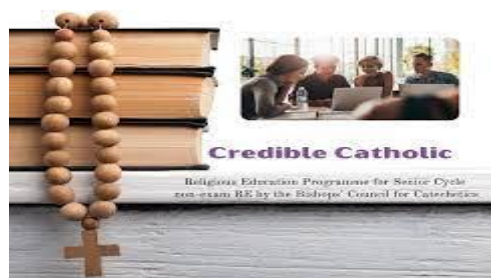
Highlighting the benefits of the programme, Dr Tom Finnegan said, "*Credible Catholic* is a new approach to RE that is exciting and intellectually stimulating. It encourages students to critically reflect on and debate a wide range of fascinating topics. The *Credible Catholic* programme supports both faith and reasoning in the lives of adolescents by engaging with many of the most important questions in theology, philosophy and science."

The programme speaks to, and is built around, very important questions young people of all beliefs (religious and non-religious) have about themselves, their world, God and others. The programme features seven modules. A unique feature of the Irish version of *Credible Catholic* is a helpful introductory lesson for teachers which prepares students for engagement with the seven modules.

The programme is free and the multi-media materials can be downloaded from www.catholicschools.ie/crediblecatholic

Commenting ahead of the launch Bishop Brendan Leahy said, "Pope Francis often reminds us that education involves learning three languages - the language of the mind, of the heart and of our hands. *Credible Catholic* is a wonderful programme that quenches the thirst of the mind, expands the outreach of the heart and points in the direction of doing many good actions. I think teachers and students alike will value this programme that responds to Jesus' call to love not just with our heart but also with our *mind*."

An earlier version of *Credible Catholic* was written and produced by Fr Robert Spitzer SJ and the Magis Centre (California, USA) in 2018 and has been almost entirely re-developed for the Irish context, in line with feedback from RE teachers and theological advisors in Ireland.

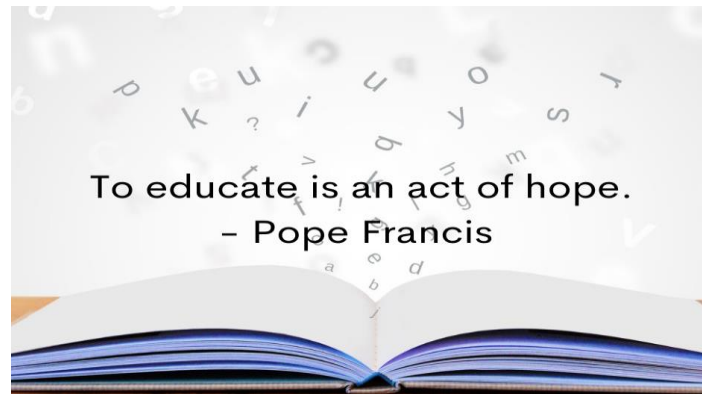


January 2023, Prayer Intention



For educators:

We pray that educators may be credible witnesses, teaching fraternity rather than competition and helping the youngest and most vulnerable above all.



Pope Francis has entrusted his 2023 prayer intentions to the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network. They represent a wide array of **challenges facing humanity** and are the result of much prayer and discernment over the past several months. Areas in need of prayer in **2023** will include: **educators, non-violence, victims of abuse, World Youth Day** and for **the Synod** to name a few.

What is the process in the preparation of the prepared prayer intentions?

People from around the world suggest papal prayer intentions in each country to their national office, which selects some of them and sends those to the international office of the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network in Vatican City. Through prayerful discernment the international office selects a large number of them and submits them to the Pope to help his discernment. After his prayer and discernment, he entrusts to the International Director of the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network the official set of monthly prayer intentions, which are then translated into the major world languages and published in print and digital formats.

January 2023, Calendar

January 1, Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God



We celebrate the liturgical feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary on January 1st, which is the Octave of Christmas. Glory to God in the heavens and peace on earth to all people of good will, sang the angels over Bethlehem and all who heard it were amazed. The Shepherds returned praising God and Mary kept all these things in her heart. It was an ordinary night or so the shepherds thought as they set out to mind their sheep. A cold wind, a starry sky, a warming fire and within that ordinary scene an epiphany so glorious that it would transform human history and gladden every heart open to receive the good news which those angels came to announce.

The Shepherds returned to their familiar lives to their homes and villages. Nothing had changed and yet everything had changed.

Mary kept all these things in her heart... savouring, remembering, thanking and wondering.

On this day, we are reminded of the role that Mary played in the plan of our salvation. Christ's birth was made possible by Mary's fiat. *"Be it done to me according to thy word."* Mary said "Yes" to a future that was as yet unclear to her. It was announced to her that her son would be the Son of God. She was not told that he would suffer, be crucified, put to death and rise again.

After Gabriel appeared to Mary and asked her to be the Mother of God, we meet her only fleetingly in the New Testament. We find her going to visit her cousin Elizabeth and then at Bethlehem. She is there when the Magi arrive and she presents her son in the temple. We find her travelling to Egypt and when Jesus is older returning to the great temple in Jerusalem.

Mary is also there at the wedding in Cana and is among the crowd struggling to see Jesus after he has begun his public ministry. She stands at the foot of the cross and she is with her son's disciples after His resurrection.

"From the moment of the annunciation, Mary began an unknown future. Like Abraham, she set out not knowing where she was going and having nothing to hold onto but the word of God." Anna Hennessey csb

Mary is the “model of faith.” She let go of all her plans in order to let God into her life.
Mary’s response to the angel reveals her own inner spirit.

“I am the handmaid of the Lord,” said Mary, “let what you have said be done to me.” **Luke 1:38**

God is always waiting for us, waiting for us to meet him, especially in the Eucharist and in Scripture.

Mary, Our Mother, Help Us Prayer



“O Mary, our Mother help us, you can’t say you can’t, because you are God’s Mother and you won’t say you won’t because you are my mother.

So you will, won’t you for the sake of the child in your arms take my hand in your hand for the rest of the road.”

(Taken from an old Irish Prayer to the Blessed Virgin Mary)

Mother of God

“Mary bore a son who was God and that ever since, He likes to listen to her petitions – just as any great man would like to please his mother!” **A Thought A Day with Frank Duff**

Calling Mary “Mother of God” is the highest honour we can give to her. New Year’s Day is also designated as the “World day of Peace”, further acknowledging the role of Mary in our hearts and in our world.

Mary in our lives – Marianist

<https://www.marianist.com/mary-in-our-lives#:~:text=Her%20role%20as%20mother%20and,faith%20and%20bearer%20of%20Christ.>

Mary, Woman of Listening, Decision and Action



Mary, Woman of Listening,

*open our ears;
grant us to know how to listen
to the word of your Son Jesus
among the thousands of words of this world;
grant that we may listen to the reality
in which we live,
to every person we encounter,
especially those who are poor,
in need, in hardship.*

Mary, Woman of Decision,

*illuminate our mind and our heart,
so that we may obey,
unhesitating, the word of your Son Jesus;
give us the courage to decide,
not to let ourselves be dragged along,
letting others direct our life.*

Mary, Woman of Action,

*obtain that our hands and feet
move “with haste” toward others,
to bring them the charity and love of your Son Jesus,
to bring the light of the Gospel
to the world, as you did. Amen.*

Pope Francis

Mary, Woman of Listening

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mm-vV97htRg>

Oh Mary, Mother of God – Hymn – You Tube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jSdLG0sHv3g>

January 1, World Day of Peace



1967

A World Day of Peace was announced

Pope Paul VI proposed that January 1 be celebrated as World Day of Peace.

1968

First World Day of Peace

Following the Pope's announcement, the First World Day of Peace was celebrated on January 1, 1968.

World Day of Peace, celebrated on January 1 every year, is primarily a Catholic feast day dedicated to universal peace on the Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God. On this occasion, Popes generally make authoritative declarations on the Catholic Social Teachings (C.S.T.). The theme of the feast has always been about creating a culture of care. The Pope and the Vatican Church stress the need to care and share tolerance for each other, and to create a society that focuses on good moral values and does not yield to the temptation to disregard others. The benefits of a peaceful society have been the emphasis of every year's World Day of Peace.

As the efforts towards peace continue all over the world, we can do our part by raising awareness and observing World Day of Peace. We can all contribute to a culture of peace in our homes, schools and communities through prayer, advocacy, education and respect for others.

We can do our part:

Pray for Peace

Learn about Peace

Act for Peace

Messages, World Day of Peace, Francis - Vatican.va

<http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace.html>

January 6, Epiphany of the Lord

The Epiphany celebrates the adoration of Jesus by the wise men from the East



Christmas is nearly over as the New Year begins. There is something slightly sad about putting away Christmas decorations for another year. We look forward to Christmas for so long and then suddenly it is all over. No sooner has the last of the crackers been pulled and boxes of chocolates emptied than the Crib and the decorations seem strangely out of place.

It is natural to feel unenthusiastic about returning to school after two weeks off. But the New Year brings old and new things to look forward to, including one more celebration of Christmas on the feast of the Epiphany.

The Feast of the Epiphany is just as important as Christmas Day. The word Epiphany means appearance, revelation or manifestation. The young Messiah is revealed as light of the nations. The Feast of the Epiphany goes by various names: Little Christmas, Three Kings Day, or Twelfth Night, which remains the official end of the season, Twelve Days of Christmas counting from Christmas evening on December 25 to the Epiphany on January 6. It is also called "Little Christmas" or "Nollaig Bheag." It is known as the day when the three Magi followed a star to Bethlehem bearing gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to the baby Jesus.

Journey of the Magi – Matthew 2:2-12

The wise men set out on a *"life-changing journey because they knew intuitively that there was more to life than what they were experiencing. They were sensitive to the Spirit calling them, and they responded by putting their trust in that inner voice and setting out on a journey of faith to adore Jesus."*

The Magi: Men for All Seasons

Bishop Fintan Monahan – The Sacred Heart Messenger, Dec. 2022

The wise men were seekers of truth, of beauty, of meaning and of life in its fullness. They were familiar with the scriptures and the promises which they held and their hearts were full of yearning, of hoping and of trust. They were astrologists and they recognised the star which would lead them on that long journey to Bethlehem. There they recognised in the poverty of that stable, the Messiah who would bring deliverance to all people open to receive it and kneeling down they worshiped Him and offered Him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Their hearts full of wonder, they went home a different way. Sometimes we too must choose to travel a different way, not all roads will lead us to where we need to go.

May we, like those wise men, choose our way home to God with true discernment knowing that we do not travel on our own. God's spirit will journey with us and point our way home.

“Star of wonder star of night, Star with royal beauty bright

Westward leading still proceeding, Guide us to thy perfect light.....”

One of my favourite songs to listen to on the Feast of the Epiphany is from James Taylor, “Home By Another Way.” In this simple pop song, James Taylor retells the story of the Magi visiting Jesus in Bethlehem. He points out how this is a story about the ongoing journey of conversion we all are on.

Sometimes we become so set in our ways, set in our beliefs, set in our opinions of others, set in how we see the world, that we can't imagine seeing or living differently. The birth of Jesus calls us to live in a new way.

The encounter the Magi have with Jesus changes everything. The encounter we have with Jesus changes everything. Christmas sends each of us on a new path. A new path is set for our way of living and God calls us home by another way.



Home By Another Way
James Taylor

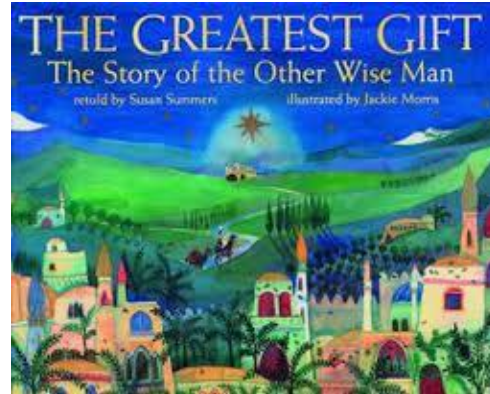
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wMNWOLzRgpl>

There is a custom of blessing homes on the Feast of the Epiphany when the family gather to ask God's blessing on their home and family life.

<https://tomperna.org/2020/01/05/the-epiphany-house-blessing/>



**The Legend
of the
Fourth Wise Man**



Legend has it that there were four wise men who set out on that Journey to find the Messiah. We are familiar with the names, Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar from oral traditions and documents dating back to the 12th Century. But some sources suggest that there may have been one other man in the party, Artaban, the fourth wise man. Who knows if the following story sometimes told of him is true. I like to think it is or that it contains, like all good stories, a universal truth, which like the star, may illumine our way.

Artaban lived in the mountains of ancient Persia. On the basis of his study of the planets and stars, he predicted the birth of a great King. He sold all his possessions in order to buy gifts for the King – a radiant blue sapphire, a perfect ruby and a spectacular pearl. He then began his journey to Jerusalem, where he had agreed to meet with three other wise men to seek out the new-born King.

The journey was difficult, with many hold-ups. One day he saw a man, clearly very ill, lying on the path, and, as Artaban turned away, the man begged for help. Artaban hesitated, because if he stayed to help a dying stranger even for a short while, he might miss his three friends. But if he turned away, the man would surely die. In compassion, he took care of the sick man until he began to get well. “I do not have anything with which to pay you,” said the man, “... accept this: our prophets have told us that the Messiah will be born in Bethlehem, not in Jerusalem. May God guide you there, because you nursed a man who was ill to the point of death.”

When Artaban reached the place where he was to meet his friends, he received a message to the effect that they had decided not to wait any longer, and that he should follow them across the desert. Artaban went back to Babylon and sold the sapphire so that he could buy camels and food for the journey.

He arrived in Bethlehem with his remaining gifts three days after the other wise men had found Jesus, Mary and Joseph, and had honoured the new-born King with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

In a small house, he met a woman with her son. She told him that Joseph had taken Jesus and Mary, fleeing in secret, because Herod feared the King would take his throne, and was killing all male children. Even as the woman spoke, Herod’s soldiers could be heard coming to kill any male children they found. Artaban rushed to the door and held out the ruby to the soldier, who grabbed it, saying to his troop, “March on! There are no children here.” Artaban was sad. “I have spent for man what was meant for God,” he said. “Will I ever be worthy to gaze on the face of the King?” Weeping for joy, the woman said, “You have saved my son’s life. May the Lord bless you, keep you, and give you peace.”

For thirty-three years, Artaban continued searching for the little family from Bethlehem. He was tired, worn out, ill and ready to die, but he kept on looking for the King. He came to Jerusalem. He heard that a great person was to be put to death that day. When people told him of this man’s life and

teachings, Artaban realised that this man was the King. He made his way to Golgotha, hoping that his splendid pearl might purchase his King's release. Then he saw a platoon of soldiers dragging a girl in chains behind them. "Save me; I am to be sold as a slave."

The fourth wise man knew what he must do. He took the pearl from his purse. Never had it seemed so stunningly luminous, radiant; and he gave it for the girl's freedom. He was immensely sad that he now had nothing to give his King, so sad that he collapsed with grief. Then, in his half-conscious state, he recognised the gentle voice of his King: "Take possession of the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world. Insofar as you did it to the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me." (Matthew 25: 34, 40). Artaban's journey was over. His gifts were accepted. He had found his King.

Epiphany blessings to you. May we all be the fourth wise man or wise woman!

January 8, The Baptism of the Lord

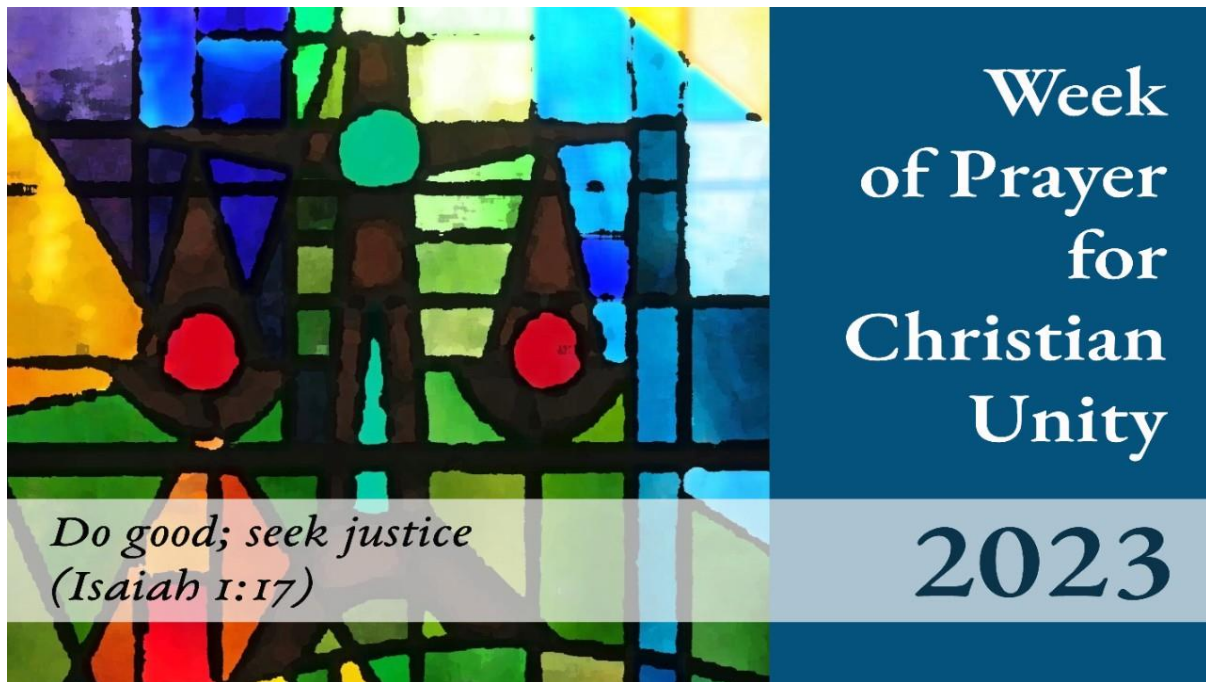


Before sending His Son, God chose and sent John the Baptist to prepare the way – the way that Jesus himself would be. ***“Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.”*** People asked John what they should do to prepare for the coming of the Kingdom of God. John had the courage and vision to prepare the way for Jesus. He touched the hearts of the people; they listened and responded to his message. They were baptised by John.

The Baptism of Jesus marked the beginning of his public ministry and a revelation of his identity. Before Jesus entered into His public ministry, He approached John the Baptist, for Baptism. At this event, the three persons of the Blessed Trinity were present. ***“While Jesus after his own baptism was at prayer, heaven opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily shape, like a dove, and the voice of the Father was heard, saying You are my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you.”*** Luke 3:15-16, 21-22. The Baptism of Jesus was an extraordinary religious experience for him. Something happened that was a major step forward for Jesus in coming to know that he was the beloved Son of God.

In celebrating the Baptism of the Lord, we celebrate our own Baptism too, sharing in the life of God. It reminds us of our identity and who we are as children of God. John's message of repentance is an invitation for us to open ourselves to a new beginning. As God's people by virtue of our Baptism, we are called to be bearers of the Good News.

Week of January 18 - 25



The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is traditionally observed from the 18th - 25th January.

The theme was chosen, and the materials prepared by a group of Christians in USA convened by the Minnesota Council of Churches.

<https://www.ctbi.org.uk/week-of-prayer-for-christian-unity-2023/>

<https://www.oikoumene.org/resources>

The theme for 2023 is from Isaiah 1:17, ***“Do good; seek justice.”*** The entire scriptural passage for the theme is **Isaiah 1:12-18**, lamenting a lack of justice among the People of God. Yet, it also promises redemption by encouraging acts of justice.

Through the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, we stand in solidarity with our sisters and brothers in the United States by reflecting upon racism in our own context. Our world today mirrors the challenges that Isaiah confronted. Justice, righteousness and unity originate from God’s profound love for each of us. They are at the heart of who God is and how God expects us to be with one another. Yet injustice and oppression continue. The sin of racism is evident in practices that set one racial group over and against another. When accompanied or sustained by imbalances of power, racial prejudice moves beyond the individual to take up residence in the structures of society.

As we join with other Christians around the world for the Week of Prayer, ***we pray that our hearts will be open to see and hear the many ways in which racism continues to destroy lives, and to discern the steps we can take as individuals and communities to heal the hurts and build a better future for everyone.***

January 24, St. Francis de Sales



Francis de Sales is known as "The Gentleman Saint" because of his meek and cheerful personality. He strove to attract people through goodness and gentleness.

He is the patron saint of adult education, the deaf and journalists.

His spirituality reflects: **relationship with self, God and one another**. Francis de Sales knew that when we are in right relationship with people, we are building the reign of God in a spirit of love that makes all things new and wonderful.

He used to say, *"A spoonful of honey attracts more flies than a barrel of vinegar!"*

The teachings of Saint Francis de Sales focus on the realization that holiness and sainthood are for all people. He wanted everyone, no matter what their state in life, to know that they could become Saints!

"Have patience with all things, but chiefly have patience with yourself. Do not lose courage in considering your own imperfections, but instantly set about remedying them - very day begin the task anew." Francis de Sales

On January 8, 1661, Pope Alexander VII beatified St. Francis de Sales, and canonized him on April 19, 1665.

St. Francis de Sales - Bishop Fintan Monahan

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jnY3MKSkRSE>

Be at Peace

"Do not look forward in fear to changes of life; rather look to them with full hope that as they arise, God, whose very own you are, will lead you safely through all things; and when you cannot stand it, God will carry you in His arms.

Do not fear what may happen tomorrow; the same everlasting Father who cares for you today will take care of you today and every day. He will either shield you from suffering or will give you unfailing strength to bear it.

Be at peace and put aside all anxious thoughts and imaginations." St. Francis de Sales

January 25, Conversion of St. Paul



Saint Paul is often considered to be one of the most important people in the history of Christianity. He was one of the leaders of the first Christians. His greatest impact on Christian history comes from the letters he wrote. His thoughts on Jesus, Jewish law, and the relationship between God and Jesus were the foundation for the development of Christianity.

Saint Paul's life can be explained in one experience – his meeting with Jesus on the road to Damascus. He was on his way to Damascus to arrest Christians and bring them to Jerusalem.

As he came near to Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, *“Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?”* *“Who are you, Lord?”* Saul asked. *“I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,”* he replied. **Acts 9:3-5**

When Saul rose from the ground, he could not see. He was completely blind. He had to be led to the city by the men he travelled with. A man who lived in the city, Ananias, was told by the Lord to go and see Saul. Ananias went to Saul and told him he had been sent by the Lord. He laid his hands on Saul and told him, *‘Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.’* Immediately, Saul's sight returned. Saul regained his sight, was baptised, and instantly began to preach about Jesus in the synagogues of Damascus.

Saul, who was now known as Paul, underwent a dramatic and profound change of heart. It also brought a significant change of direction to his life.

Paul's experience led him to convert disciples to the Lord instead of persecuting them. Paul preached the gospel to everyone he could reach.

We too are called to a change of heart

St. Paul, Conversion and You

<https://lifeteen.com/st-paul-conversion/>

<https://www.catechist.com/share-paul-apostle-christ-teens-adults/>

January 27, St. Angela de Merici



Angela Merici was born in northern Italy in 1474. When she was a teenager she lost both parents. Her vision was to serve the needs of the rich and poor alike.

In 1535, Angela established the Order of Ursulines in Italy, named for its patron saint, Saint Ursula, a martyr. She was the first woman in the history of the Church to draw up a Rule of life for women who wanted to lead a religious life outside the cloister.

Angela de Merici is the patron saint of sickness, disabled and physically challenged people, and those grieving the loss of parents. Her feast day is celebrated on January 27.

She canonized in 1807 by Pope Pius VII.

Schools Resource Packs

The School Resource Packs are prepared by Ursuline Sisters. The Packs contain a variety of material which can be adapted for both primary and secondary students. The Sections in each pack include discussion ideas, activity starters, and text, liturgy and prayer suggestions. There is also a section on The Founding Vision – “Angela’s Dream.”

Sisters of the Irish Ursuline Union

<http://www.ursulines.ie/>

<http://www.ursulines.ie/resources/>

[Saint Angela](#)

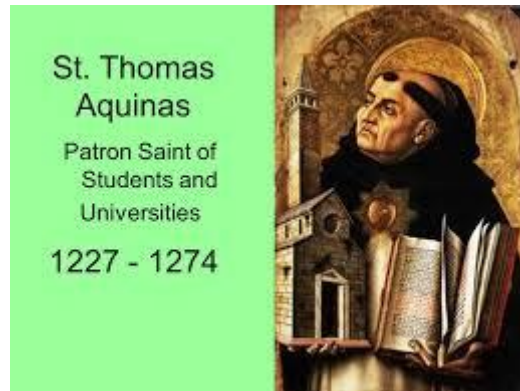
[Junior Cert Religious Education Syllabus](#)

On the Journey by Sr. Karen Kent

This is a resource book for Catechists, Chaplains and all who pray with young people.

It was published by Columba Press and is available via their website: www.columba.ie

January 28, St. Thomas Aquinas



Saint Thomas Aquinas is one of the greatest saints of the Dominican Order. He was one of the greatest thinkers in the history of the Church. Saint Thomas was born in 1226 between Naples and Rome, close to the little town of Aquino, of which his father was Count. Going against the wishes of his parents, who had high hopes that he would join the Benedictine Order and live a very comfortable life, Thomas decided to join the Order of Preachers. Thomas was given the opportunity to think deeply about the world in which he lived and especially about the religious issues of the time. In his work, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, he sought to defend the Catholic faith against attacks from outside the Church. Following this work, Thomas began his monumental *Summa Theologica*, which dealt with a range of theological issues.

We are told he was a quiet man who allowed his companionship with God to deepen his contemplative prayer. Saint Thomas Aquinas was declared a doctor of the Church and the patron saint of Catholic schools, colleges, universities, teachers and students.

Prayer before Study

God our Creator, our beginning and our end.

You are source of light and wisdom and the origin of all that exists.

You are beyond all things and through you all things come into being.

Pour your light into the darkened places of my mind.

Refine my speech and let my words serve as blessing for all.

Grant me keenness of mind, capacity to remember, skill in learning, understanding to interpret and eloquence in speech.

May you guide the beginning of my work, direct its progress and bring it to completion.

You who are true God and true Man, who live and reign world without end. Amen

Adapted - Prayer of St. Thomas Aquinas before Study

St. Thomas Aquinas – Bishop Fintan Monahan

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vRS9ncKYF0k>

Catholic Schools' Week 2023.

National Catholic Schools Week begins on the last Sunday in January and runs for an entire week. This year it is celebrated from **January 29 to February 4**.

Our theme for this year is '**Catholic Schools: Walking Together in Faith and Love**'. During this week, we celebrate how Catholic Schools help all our young people to achieve their full potential and journey together with the Lord in faith and in love.

Daily Themes:

Monday: Walking Together in Faith

Tuesday: Walking Together in Love
(In our school community, themes of inclusion)

Wednesday: Walking Together to Celebrate – Grandparents' Day
(Celebrating those who help us on the journey of faith, themes of inclusion of the elderly in society)

Thursday: Walking Together to Transform our World
(Themes of environment - Laudato Si' – and Mission)

Friday: Walking Together in Hope

Resources available at: <https://catholicschools.ie>

<https://catholiceducation.ie/>

<http://education.dublindiocese.ie/catholic-education/>

Catholic Schools' Week also recognises the great work being carried out in our schools by all members of staff at preparing our young people for life. It celebrates the important role that our schools play in the local community and parish. We pray God's blessing on all who form the school community as students, parents, teachers, ancillary staff, and Boards of Management.

"We are called to encourage and support people who are searching, to present the Gospel and what it offers, to foster authentic experiences of faith, and help people make choices from a place of freedom."

"We need to listen to the world of the young, in all its diversity, with all its problems, including poverty, exclusion, immigration, and ultimate rejection by society."

Arturo Sosa, SJ – Superior General of the Society of Jesus – In conversation with Darío Menor

Accompanying Young People in the Creation of a Hope-Filled Future

Winter 2022, General Meeting of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference

Members of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference gathered in-person during the week of 5 December in Saint Patrick's College, Maynooth, for their Winter 2022 General Meeting. The President of the Conference is Archbishop Eamon Martin of Armagh and the Vice-President is Archbishop Dermot Farrell of Dublin. During the meeting Mass was celebrated in the College Chapel and prayers were offered for the victims and families of the tragedy on 7 October in Creeslough, Co Donegal; for peace in Ukraine, and, for all who have died from or are suffering long-term effects of the coronavirus.

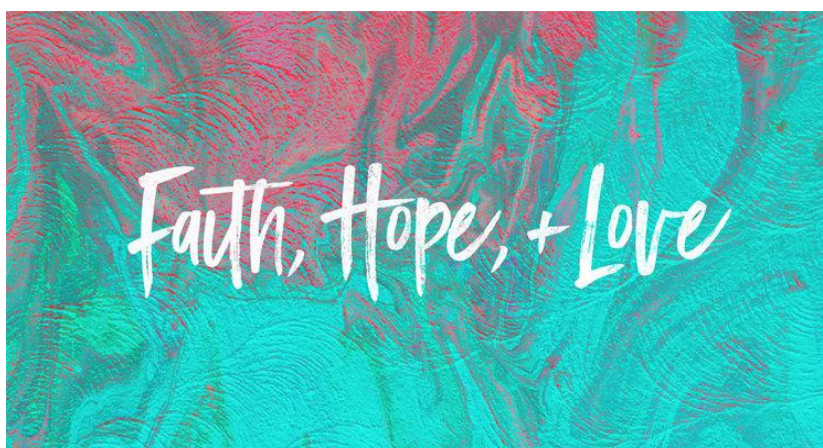
Catholic Schools Week 2023: 'Walking Together in Faith & Love'

The Bishops commended the theme for Catholic Schools Week 2023, 'Walking Together in Faith & Love', which draws on three features of the Synodal Pathway: Communion, Participation and Mission.

Across Ireland, CSW 2023 will be anchored on the *memoria* of Saint John Bosco on 31 January.

CSW resources will reflect the theme of the week 'Walking Together in Faith & Love', which is dedicated to celebrating the gift of Catholic education and recognizing the love and generosity of the entire school community: student, staff and home.

CSW resources will draw on scriptural reflection on journey, prayer, student voice, and (spiritual) wellbeing.



"Let us thank all those who teach in Catholic schools.

Educating is an act of love; it is like giving life."

Pope Francis

The Road to Emmaus



During Catholic Schools Week, we will focus and pray using the story of the Disciples walking together with the Risen Lord on the road to Emmaus. **Luke 24:13-18.**

Christ Appears on the Road to Emmaus

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8YIzWPPiH4A>

The story on the Road to Emmaus reminds us that Jesus meets us while we are on our journey through life. No matter where we are going, what our circumstances are, Jesus encounters us when we are on the road. Jesus meets us in our conversations and interactions with one another. He meets us in our journey as we experience life. The Disciples talked about what had been happening and the events in Jerusalem. They shared the news of the day.

Jesus wants to meet us to share his story with us, as we share our lives with others' just as the Disciples encountered him as they walked and talked on the road to Emmaus.

We are Pilgrims on a Journey – Richard Gillard

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DVmQ-68PguI>

The Disciples did not know it was Christ who walked with them. Something had prevented them from recognising him. There are many reasons for our inability to recognise God's presence.

Questions for Reflection

- If **you** were on the road with your friends, what would you be talking about?
- Can you share your faith story?
- Describe the most satisfying conversations you have had with others?
- What made these conversations memorable?
- How do you seek out others with whom you can share at a deeper level?
- If **Jesus** were walking with you, how would he respond to your news/stories/experiences?
 - What part of your story would Jesus celebrate with you?
 - What would Jesus challenge you on?
 - What would Jesus want to share with you?

Emmaus

Heavy hearts and shaking heads
Proclaim their sadness in Jesus' death.
It was their hope that he would become
Israel's ruler of the new kingdom.

Along the lonely road they travelled
A stranger walked and tried to unravel,
The terrible trauma of recent days
And all the doubts that wouldn't go away.

And when they reached their journey's end
They would not let him part,
But brought him in to eat a meal
And soon they were ready to start.

When he came to break their bread
Eyes were opened: "it's Jesus", they said.
But now he left them they could not believe
That they had been so slow to see.

They wasted no time to journey that night,
To tell the others of their sight.
Jesus was closer that they could realise
Their hearts aflame, He by their side.

So let me shout
And let me sing,
Doesn't my own heart burn
When I let Jesus in?

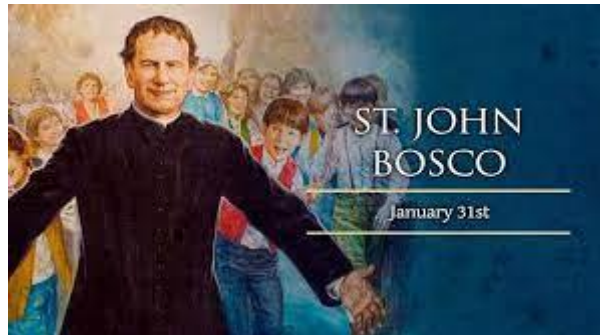
Echoes of the Heart – A Collection of Poetry and Musings - Fr. Liam Lacey



The Kitchen Maid - Supper at Emmaus - Diego Velázquez

What has she seen? What has she heard? What is our Good News for today?

January 31, St. John Bosco



St. John Bosco was born to a poor farming family in the diocese of Turin, Italy in 1815. As a young man in his own village, he delighted other youngsters with acrobatics and magic. Then he would lead them to the church and speak about God to them.

He was ordained in 1841 and a few years later he was appointed chaplain to a hospice for girls. Soon after, he resigned and opened a house for poor neglected boys. In the city of Turin, he set up residences and schools to teach poor boys and train them as shoe makers, tailors and printers. ***“Be at their service. Don’t be over-bearing with them. This was how Jesus was with his apostles.”***

He died on January 31, 1888 and left an immense legacy in the many projects and people he inspired.

Don Bosco advised teachers to encourage all students to develop their talents beyond the academic. ***“Give them ample liberty to jump, run, make a din as much as they please,” he wrote. Gymnastics, music, declamation (of poems, etc.) theatricals, hikes...”***

Video Series <https://www.salesiansireland.ie/>

Don Bosco, his life, mission, vocation and dedication to the young

Prayer to Saint John Bosco, Patron of Youth

**Friend of the young, teacher in the ways of God.
Your dedication to empowering the needy inspires us still.**

**Help me to work for a better world,
where the young are given the chance to flourish,
where the poor’s dream for justice can come true,
and where God’s compassion is shown to be real.
Intercede for me as I bring my needs to you and to
our heavenly Mother, the Help of Christians.**

Saint John Bosco. Pray for us!

To conclude:

“Thanks” and “Yes”

As we leave the old year, perhaps we could:

- *Look back at all events, big and small of the past year and say “Thanks.”*
- *Look forward with expectation and surrender to all that will come and say “Yes.”*

May the Lord, the Author of Life, bless us as we move through the New Year and give us the courage to “Repeat the Sounding Joy.”

*“Repeat the Sounding Joy” - Adapted from
“Joy to the World.”*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=914Qw4ZNCzk>

The graphic features the words "Repeat the Sounding Joy" in a stylized font. "Repeat the" is in a green cursive script, "SOUNDING" is in a bold red sans-serif font, and "Joy" is in a green cursive script.

A Grace filled New Year

May I be filled with Grace!

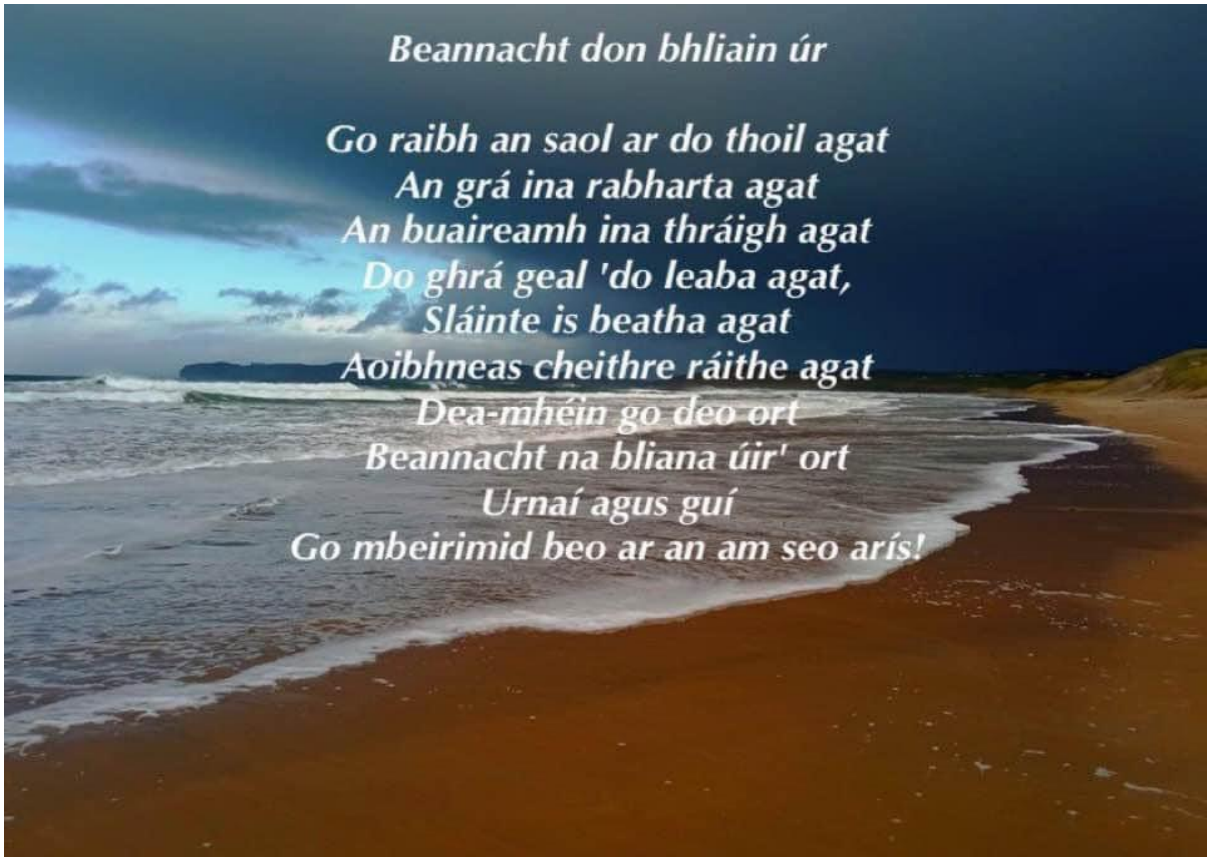
- G.** *May I be Gracious, Generous and Grateful*
- R.** *May I Release Resentment, Respond, Respect and Repair*
- A.** *May I admire, Accept, Allow, Appreciate and Affirm*
- C.** *May I be Caring, Compassionate and Creative*
- E.** *May I Enable, Encourage, Embrace and Empathise*



NEW YEAR PRAYER

*Dear Lord, as I close the door on this old year,
I ponder on the things I've done...
on the things I've said and the joys I've had...
then I wonder, have I lost or won?
I've thought of the new friends I have made,
and of the old ones staunch and true...
the path of the old year was made easier Lord,
because I have walked it with You.
I think of all the many times,
when my burdens were so heavy to bear,
and how my faith slipped away from me...
but somehow You were always standing there.
Now as I open the door to this New Year,
and carefully peep inside,
I wonder what it holds for me...
but I'll throw the door open wide
And whatever it brings to me and mine,
I'll meet it with a heart so true...
I know that, Lord, whate'er it may be
You'll be there to carry me through.*

Merrel Thompson



Let us focus on a Fresh Start.

New Year is a perfect time to Stop,

Reflect and Remember to count our blessings,

Give thanks and Be Grateful for all that we have received.

Life is a Gift

Live it

Enjoy it

Celebrate it

Fulfil it

May the New Year bring you happiness and peace.

Wishing you a joyous 2023!