



Archdiocese of Dublin
Education Secretariat

Post Primary Diocesan Advisers R.E. News Blog – February 2024

Dear Chaplain and R.E. Teacher,

Welcome to the February issue of the R.E. blog. Contained within is a calendar of events for February. This month we are celebrating the 1500th anniversary of St Brigid's death and on Sunday last the relic of St Brigid was handed over to Bishop Nulty at a ceremony in Kildare Town, to be placed on permanent display for people to visit and pray.

This month also sees the celebration of Lent with Ash Wednesday falling on the Feast of St Valentine. We have provided some resources for you to use in your work this term.

As you are aware, we have been actively promoting Pope Francis' monthly intentions which we encourage you to introduce and use with your students. We will continue to highlight the Holy Father's request for prayers for a specific intention each month and invite you to answer the request and join with many people worldwide in praying for this intention each month. For February the Pope's intention is that we pray for the terminally ill, "We pray that those with a terminal illness, and their families, receive the necessary physical and spiritual care they need. For further resources see <http://popesprayerusa.net/popese-intentions/>

School visits have begun again for this term, and Sr. Bernadette and I want to thank all those schools we visited last term for their warm welcome. We look forward to meeting many more of you in the coming months. If you would like us to visit for any reason, please contact us and we will be more than happy to arrange this with you. We look forward to continued collaboration with you all as we work to promote the faith of the young people in our care.

Le gach dea-ghuí,

Sr. Bernadette Carron
Post-Primary Diocesan Adviser
bernadette.carron@dublindiocese.ie

Sr. Concepta Foley
Post-Primary Diocesan Adviser
concepta.foley@dublindiocese.ie

February 2024



What is Lent?

- one of the five seasons of the church year
- a time when people who want to follow Christ reflect on Jesus' journey to the cross
- an invitation to renew baptismal promises: to reject evil and turn to Christ as Saviour and Lord
- the three pillars of Lent are traditionally prayer, fasting (self-denial as a spiritual exercise to express repentance) and charity/works of love (self-denial to free us from attachment to material goods)
- 'Lent is about becoming, doing and changing whatever it is that is blocking the fullness of life in us right now. Lent is a summons to live anew.' *Henri J. M. Nouwen*



February 1st Feast Day of St Brigid 1500th Anniversary

Scéal Naomh Bríd

Rugadh Naomh Bríd sa bhliain 450 AD i bhFochaird, cóngarach do Dhún Dealgan i gCo. Lú. Ba phágánach é a hathair Dubhthach, a bhí ina thaoiseach ar Chúige Laighean. Ba Chríostaí í a máthair Broicsech. Meastar gur rugadh máthair Bhríde sa Phortaingéil ach gur fhuadaigh foghlaithe mara Éireannacha í agus gur thug siad go hÉirinn í le bheith ina sclábháí, cosúil le Naomh Pádraig. Chaith Bríd a hóige ag cócaireacht, ag glanadh, ag ní agus ag cothú na n-ainmhithe ar fheirm a hathar.



Bhí sí beo le linn Naomh Pádraig agus ba é a theagasc a spreag í le hiompú ina Críostaí. Nuair a bhí ocht mbliana déag slánaithe ag Bríd, d'éirigh sí as a bheith ag obair dá hathair. Bhí athair Bhríde ag iarraidh go mbeadh fear céile aici ach bhí cinneadh déanta ag Bríd go gcaithfeadh sí a saol ag obair ar son Dé agus í ag tabhairt aire do dhaoine a bhí bocht, tinn nó sean. Chuir flaithiúlacht Bhríde fearg ar a hathair mar gur mheas sé go raibh sí ag tabhairt an iomarca do na daoine bochta. Ar deireadh, nuair a thug sí a chlaíomh, a raibh seoda timpeall air, do lobhar, thuig a hathair gurbh í an bheatha chrábhaí ab fhearr a d'fheilfeadh di. Fuair Bríd cead a cinn ar deireadh agus chuaigh sí isteach i gclochar. Chuir Naomh Macaille an fial uirthi agus thug sí a cuid móideanna go dtabharfadh sí a saol do Dhia. Scaip an scéal faoi dhea-obair Bhríde agus ba ghearr go ndeachaigh a lán mná óga ó gach cuid den tír isteach sa chlochar léi. Bhunaigh Bríd a lán clochar ar fud na hÉireann; ba é an ceann i Co. Chill Dara an ceann ba cháiliúla. Deirtear gur tógadh an clochar sin in aice le crann dara san áit a bhfuil baile Chill Dara anois. Chomh maith leis sin, bhunaigh sí mainistir dhúbailte, do mhná rialta agus do mhanaigh, i gCill Dara. Mar bhan-Ab ar an áit sin bhí an-chumhacht aici, ach bhí sí ina hUachtarán an-eagnaí agus an-stuama. Bhí Mainistir Chill Dara ar cheann de na mainistreacha ba mhó meas in Éirinn, agus bhí clú agus cáil uirthi ar fud na hEorpa Críostaí.

Bhunaigh Naomh Bríd scoil ealaíne freisin agus i measc na hoibre a bhíodh ar siúl inti bhí miotalóireacht agus maisiú. Ba é Naomh Connlaodh a bhí i gceannas ar an scoil sin. Ba i dteach screaptra na mainistreach a cruthaíodh an lámhscríbhinn mhaisithe cháiliúil, Leabhar Chill Dara.

Cros Naomh Bríd

Is ceann de na deasghnátha traidisiúnta in Éirinn é cros Naomh Bríd a dhéanamh chun tús an earraigh a cheiliúradh, an chéad lá de mhí Feabhra. Is as luachair a dhéantar na crosa agus is amhlaidh go dtarraingítear an luachair in áit í a ghearradh. Tá scéal ann a nascann Naomh Bríd agus a cros le chéile – gur fhigh sí an cineál sin croise ag leaba bháis a hathar nó tiarna phágánaigh, agus gur iarr sé go mbaistfí é nuair a chuala sé céard a chiallaigh an chros. Seo leagan amháin den scéal: “Bhí taoiseach págánach ó chomharsanacht Chill Dara ag fáil bháis. Bhí Críostaithe i dteaghlach an taoisigh agus chuir siad



teachtair uathu chun Bríd a chuardach ionas go dtiocfadh sí chun labhairt faoi Chríost leis an taoiseach. Nuair a tháinig Bríd, bhí an taoiseach ar mire. Ós rud é nach raibh aon dul go bhféadfaí an fear mire seo a theagasc, bhí na daoine i láthair in amhras go mbeadh sí in ann é a iompú ina Chríostaí. Shuigh Bríd síos le cois a leapa agus thosaigh sí ag tabhairt sólais dó. Mar ba ghnách, bhí luachair ar fud an smúiturláir le go mbeadh an áit te agus glan. Chrom Bríd síos agus thosaigh sí ag fí na luachra ina cros, ag greamú na bpointí dá chéile. D'fhiafraigh an fear tinn di céard a bhí sí a dhéanamh. Thosaigh sí ag míniú na croise agus, de réir mar a lean sí uirthi ag caint, tháinig maolú ar a mhíre agus chuir sé níos mó ceisteanna uirthi le teann spéise. Mar thoradh ar a cuid fíodóireachta, d'iompaigh sé ina Chríostaí agus baisteadh é díreach roimh a bhás.”

Clóca Naomh Bríd

Thug Naomh Bríd cuairt ar Rí Laighean chun talamh a iarraidh le clochar a thógáil. Dúirt sí leis an rí go mbeadh an áit a raibh sí ina seasamh foirfe le haghaidh clochair. Bhí sí in aice le



foraois, áit a mbeidís in ann admhad a bhailiú le haghaidh na tine. Bhí loch in aice láimhe freisin, rud a chuirfeadh uisce ar fáil, agus bhí an talamh torthúil. Ní dhearna an rí ach magadh fúithi agus dhiúltaigh sé aon talamh a thabhairt di. Ghuigh Bríd chun Dé agus d'iarr air croí an rí a bhogadh. Ansin rinne sí meangadh gáire leis an rí agus dúirt “an dtabharfaidh tú dom a oiread talún is a bheidh mo chlóca in ann a chlúdach?” Cheap an rí nach raibh sí ach ag magadh agus, toisc go raibh clóca Bhríde chomh beag sin, bhí a fhios aige nach gclúdódh sé ach fíorbheagán talún. Ghlac an rí mar sin le hiarratas Bhríde agus scaip sí a clóca ar an talamh. D'iarr sí ar cheathrar cairde cúinne den chlóca an duine a thógáil agus siúl i dtreonna éagsúla. Shiúil an ceathrar cairde ó thuaidh, ó dheas, soir agus siar. D'fhás an clóca ar an toirt agus thosaigh sé ag clúdach méid an-mhór talún. Bhí iontas an domhain ar an rí agus thuig sé go raibh Dia tar éis Bríd a bheannú. Chrom an rí síos go dtí an talamh; chuaigh sé ar a ghlúine os comhair Bhríde agus gheall di agus dá cairde airgead, bia agus soláthairtí. Go gairid ina dhiaidh sin, d'iompaigh an rí ina Chríostaí agus thosaigh sé ag cabhrú leis na daoine bochta freisin. Ba í míorúilt an chlóca an chéad cheann de na míorúiltí iomadúla a rinne Bríd ar son mhuintir na hÉireann.

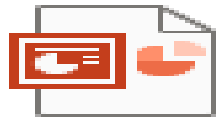
Fuair Naomh Bríd bás sa bhliain 524 AD agus í 75 bliain d'aois. Cuireadh í i dtuama os comhair Ard-Altóir a séipéil mhainistreach. Tar éis tamaill, tugadh aníos a corp arís agus aistríodh go Dún Pádraig é, áit ar cuireadh í le beirt éarlamh eile na hÉireann, Naomh Pádraig agus Naomh Colm Cille. Baineadh a cloigeann agus thug beirt fhear uasal as Éirinn go dtí Liospóin é, áit a bhfuil sé fós inniu.

Is í Naomh Bríd banéarlamh na hÉireann. Tugtar Muire na nGael uirthi freisin. Is é an chéad lá de mhí Feabhra a lá féile, is é sin an chéad lá den earrach in Éirinn.

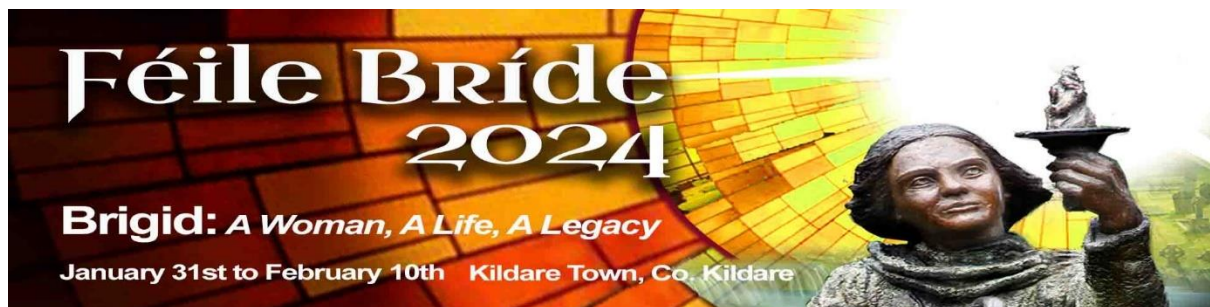


Curtha in oiriúint ó: <http://www.stbrigid.ie/content/story-st-brigid>

This PowerPoint on the life of St Brigid was gifted to us for you to use or adapt in your classroom.



Celtic Saints - Brigid.ppt



Pilgrimage on St. Brigid Eve

Jan 31, 2024 7:15 pm - 8:30 pm

Join us for a candlelight pilgrimage at the dawn of springtime and the eve of St. Brigid's Day. *Pilgrimage is a gentle invitation to spend time in reflection, .. to slow the pace and feed the spirit.* R Minehan – Rekindling the Flame. We join in a long tradition of pilgrims who have come to Kildare down through the centuries to honour Brigid of Kildare.



St Brigid - A Woman, A Life, A Legacy

2024 is a special year as we commemorate the 1500th anniversary of this remarkable 5th century woman, her life and legacy.

Starting at the Japanese Gardens car park the pilgrimage will wind its way past St. Brigid's wayside well and conclude at St. Brigid's Garden well.

As pilgrims we are on an outer journey to St. Brigid's well, but the invitation tonight is also to

make an inner journey, a journey of heart, soul, mind and body. Assemble at the Japanese Gardens car park at 7.15 p.m.

Car parking facilities also available at Solas Bhride Centre, Tully Road.

St Brigid's crosses are the most common and enduring tradition associated with Brigid. Traditionally woven on St. Brigid's Eve the crosses are placed in the home, usually over the door, to bless all who come and to gain protection for the household from fire and disease.

Pause for Peace Feb 01, 2024 12:00 pm - 12:01 pm

Join us in a global Pause for Peace. Time: 12.00 local time - St. Brigid's day, February 1st. The Pause for Peace movement invites people from around the world to stop and pause for 1 minute's silence/reflection at 12 o'clock local time on St. Brigid's day, February 1st. The global Pause for Peace movement was launched jointly by Solas Bhride Centre and Into Kildare – Kildare Tourism Board, at Solas Bhride Centre on January 12th 2023.

“By pausing for peace, we send out a message that we actively oppose warfare and the proliferation of arms, which wreak havoc on human beings as well as on the natural world. This movement aims to awaken and build a spirit of global solidarity in our search for peace. It would be a fitting tribute to Saint Brigid and to all our ancestors if it were marked with a Pause for Peace on her feast-day, February 1st each year.”

“This new Pause for Peace movement is a unique event which breaks new ground in recognising the cultural and historical importance of St. Brigid beyond boundaries and aims to form a spirit of solidarity and peace in societies all over the globe.”

President Michael D. Higgins, February 2023

February 2nd Feast of the Presentation of the Child Jesus in the Temple

Traditionally, the Church has set aside Feb. 2 in observance of the Presentation of the Lord – or the day in which Joseph and Mary presented Jesus to the priests and elders in the Temple.



For years, this feast marked the end of the Christmas season. In old days, the Presentation was often referred to as “Candlemas” and was celebrated by a candle-lit procession into the church, signifying Christ as the “light of nations.”

Known originally as the Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin, the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord is a relatively ancient celebration. We know that the Church at Jerusalem was observing the feast as early as the first half of the fourth century, and likely earlier.

According to Jewish law, the firstborn male child belonged to God, and the parents had to “buy him back” on the 40th day after his birth, by offering a sacrifice of “a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons” (Luke 2:24) in the temple — thus the “presentation” of the child. On that same day, the mother would be ritually purified — thus the “purification.” Mary and Joseph kept this law, even though, since Mary remained a virgin after the birth of Christ, she would not have had to go through ritual purification. In his Gospel, Luke (2:22-39) recounts the story.

Originally, the feast was celebrated on Feb. 14, the 40th day after Epiphany (Jan. 6), because Christmas wasn’t yet celebrated as its own feast, and so the Nativity, Epiphany, the Baptism of the Lord (Theophany), and the feast celebrating Christ’s first miracle at the wedding in Cana were all celebrated on the same day. By the last quarter of the fourth century, however, the Church at Rome had begun to celebrate the Nativity on Dec. 25, so the Feast of the Presentation was moved to Feb. 2, 40 days later.

When Christ was presented in the temple, “there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel.” When St. Mary and Joseph brought Christ to the temple, Simeon embraced the Child and prayed the Cantic of Simeon: “Now thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word in peace; because my eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples: a light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel” (Luke 2:29-32).

Because of the words of the canticle — “a light to the revelation of the Gentiles” — by the 11th century, the custom had developed in the West of blessing candles on the Feast of the Presentation. The candles were then lit, and a procession took place through the darkened church while the Cantic of Simeon was sung. Because of this, the feast also became known as Candlemas. The procession and blessing of the candles, Candlemas is still an important feast in many European countries.

Things to Do: Hold your own candlelight procession, teaching Students the significance of the light as a symbol of Christ. Ask a priest to bless the candles you hope to use this year. Read the Gospel account of the Presentation, found in the Gospel of Luke 2: 22 -35. Pray a decade of the Rosary, focusing upon the Presentation of the Lord, the fourth Joyful Mystery.

February 3rd Feast of St Blaise

There are few facts known about St. Blaise except that he was a fourth-century bishop in the city of Sebaste, Western Armenia, and died as a martyr. A physician, he was regarded as a righteous man and, at an early age, elected bishop by the citizens of Sebaste. Beyond those few



facts, much of what we know of Blaise comes from legends. He became, during the Middle Ages, one of the most popular of all the saints and today remains highly esteemed. He is the patron saint of Dubrovnik, Croatia. His relationship with Dubrovnik is unique in that he never visited the city. In 971, he appeared in a vision to a local man warning that a Venetian force was about to invade the town. The townspeople responded with defensive measures and the Venetians, having lost the element of surprise, departed.

During the fourth century, the Roman Empire was separated between Emperor Constantine in the West and Emperor Licinius in the East. While frequently at odds, they came together in February 313 at Milan, Italy, to sign the Edict of Milan, intended to end all religious persecution. While this document always has been heralded as essential to Christian history, it did not end a long-simmering tension between the two emperors. There would be repeated conflicts between the East and West, mostly caused by Licinius, who was quick to continue the persecutions of Christ's followers despite signing the Edict of Milan. In the year 316, St. Blaise would become a victim of Licinius's hostility against Christians.

At first, Blaise avoided being arrested by escaping into the hill country near Sebaste, where he hid in a cave. His only visitors were said to be wild animals that seemed drawn to Blaise, and a special relationship allegedly developed between man and beast. Eventually, Bishop Blaise was arrested and brought before Agricolaus, the local Roman governor. He was scourged for his Christian beliefs and thrown into prison. Legend holds that either en route to prison or after he was incarcerated, two miracles attributed to Blaise occurred. A woman came to the bishop upset that a wolf had carried off her pig. Blaise offered up prayers, and the wolf returned the pig. Another incident, one for which he is most known, occurred when a mother pleaded for Blaise to cure her son who was dying from a fish bone lodged in his throat. Blaise prayed over the boy, and the child was healed.

Agricolaus soon confronted Blaise, demanding he deny Jesus or be tortured. Blaise refused, and one of the instruments of torture was an iron comb used to painfully scrape his skin. No amount of torture brought a denial of Christ, so in 316 Blaise was beheaded. The circumstance of Blaise reminds us of another holy man, St. John the Baptist, who was likewise jailed and eventually beheaded for his faith. Every three years, the Gospel read on St. Blaise's optional memorial is from Mark 6:14-29, which tells of John's martyrdom. Both John the Baptist and Blaise gave up their lives rather than deny Christ; Blaise was tortured and then beheaded, and John was beheaded in return for a dance.

Cult of St. Blaise. The miraculous cure of the boy suffering from the fish bone — and because Blaise had been a physician — created the belief that St. Blaise could cure most illnesses but especially those of the throat. As early as the ninth century in the Western Church, he was invoked for throat ailments, and by the 15th century, the blessing of the throat ritual had begun. The candles used in the blessing of throats may be those blessed on Candlemas, Feb. 2. Most often as part of the Mass, all parishioners desiring a blessing of their throats typically proceed to the front of the church where the priest with the two blessed candles, tied with a red ribbon, holds them in the form of an X. He touches the candles to each side of the person's neck and says: "Through the intercession of St. Blaise, bishop and martyr, may God deliver you free from every disease of the throat, and from every other disease. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." The red ribbon represents the blood of martyrs, and the candles held in the shape of an "X" represent the martyrdom of another saint, St. Andrew, who according to tradition was crucified on an X-shaped cross. Not only are we freed from disease but from everything keeping us from God.

February 8th St Josephine Bakhita



On February 8, the Church commemorates the life of St. Josephine Bakhita, a Canossian Sister who was kidnapped and sold into slavery in Sudan.

Josephine Bakhita was born in 1869, in a small village in the Darfur region of Sudan. She was

kidnapped while working in the fields with her family and subsequently sold into slavery. Her captors asked for her name, but she was too terrified to remember so they named her “Bakhita,” which means “fortunate” in Arabic.

Retrospectively, Bakhita was very fortunate, but the first years of her life do not necessarily attest to it. She was tortured by her various owners who branded her, beat and cut her.

In her biography she notes one particularly terrifying moment when one of her masters cut her 114 times and poured salt in her wounds to ensure that the scars remained.

“I felt I was going to die any moment, especially when they rubbed me in with the salt,” Bakhita wrote.

She bore her suffering valiantly though she did not know Christ or the redemptive nature of suffering. She also had a certain awe for the world and its creator.

“Seeing the sun, the moon and the stars, I said to myself: 'Who could be the Master of these beautiful things?' And I felt a great desire to see Him, to know Him and to pay Him homage.”

After being sold a total of five times, Bakhita was purchased by Callisto Legnani, the Italian consul in Khartoum, the capital of Sudan.

Two years later, he took Bakhita to Italy to work as a nanny for his colleague, Augusto Michieli.

He, in turn, sent Bakhita to accompany his daughter to a school in Venice run by the Canossian Sisters.

Bakhita felt called to learn more about the Church and was baptized with the name “Josephine Margaret.” In the meantime, Michieli wanted to take Josephine and his daughter back to Sudan, but Josephine refused to return.

The disagreement escalated and was taken to the Italian courts where it was ruled that Josephine could stay in Italy because she was a free woman.

Slavery was not recognized in Italy and it had also been illegal in Sudan since before Josephine had been born.

Josephine remained in Italy and decided to enter Canossians in 1893. She made her profession in 1896 and was sent to Northern Italy, where she dedicated her life to assisting her community and teaching others to love God.

She was known for her smile, gentleness and holiness.

She even went on record saying, “If I were to meet the slave-traders who kidnapped me and even those who tortured me, I would kneel and kiss their hands, for if that did not happen, I would not be a Christian and Religious today.”

St. Josephine was beatified in 1992 and canonized shortly after on October 2000 by Pope John Paul II. She is the first person to be canonized from Sudan and is the patron saint of the country.

February 11th Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes

Schools will already have been offered places on the Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes in September 2024. We are very aware of the commitment you are undertaking, the care you extend to the pilgrims whom you will journey with and for some the huge effort that you make to raise the money needed to travel. We thank you in advance for your willingness to go the extra mile for others and look forward to hearing about your pilgrimage on your return.



Prayer to Our Lady of Lourdes

*O ever-Immaculate Virgin, Mother of Mercy,
health of the sick, refuge of sinners,
comforter of the afflicted,
you know my wants, my troubles, my sufferings;
look with mercy on me.*

*By appearing in the Grotto of Lourdes,
you were pleased to make it a privileged sanctuary,
whence you dispense your favours;
and already many sufferers have obtained
the cure of their infirmities, both spiritual and corporal.*

*I come, therefore, with complete confidence
to implore your maternal intercession.*

*Obtain, O loving Mother, the grant of my requests.
Through gratitude for your favours,
I will endeavour to imitate your virtues,
that I may one day share your glory. Amen.*

Lourdes

The *pilgrimage* site of Lourdes is in France, near the Pyrenees mountains.

Every year, it is visited by millions of *pilgrims*, particularly Catholics. They come to Lourdes to see the site of a famous vision experienced by a young girl called **Bernadette Soubirous** and to be healed by its supposedly **miraculous** waters.

Bernadette Soubirous was born in 1844 to a poor miller. One day, while collecting firewood, Bernadette is said to have seen Mary, the mother of Jesus, dressed in white with a blue sash and a yellow rose on each foot. Bernadette is said to have witnessed the same vision many times.

During one vision, the figure of Mary asked Bernadette to drink at the spring beneath her feet. Even though this area was muddy, the next day, the ground flowed with clear water. Bernadette was then told to have a chapel built in the exact spot where the vision had taken place.

Christian pilgrims now visit and pray in the **Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes** and *worship* at the *grotto* where the vision is said to have taken place. Pilgrims also take part in a **Torchlight Marian Procession** which occurs every evening before a service of *mass* in the grotto. Pilgrims also confess their *sins* at the **Reconciliation Chapel**.

Nature and importance

Lourdes is considered a special place to visit because prayers and services are believed to bring real *blessings* to the pilgrim.

Pilgrims may visit in the belief that they may be cleansed of their sins, and millions of visitors come to Lourdes each year in the hope of being cured because it is believed that spring water from the grotto can heal people if they are sick.

The opportunity to focus closely on their faith helps pilgrims feel secure in the belief that God will look after them, forgive them for their sins and even cure them of their illnesses.

ASH WEDNESDAY – A REFLECTION

Dust you are, And into dust you will return.
We are stardust, In a state of consciousness,
Come from Heaven.
We cannot be destroyed, Only reborn constantly.
Like the rainbow in the sky – Stardust in the air
shining –
Dancing through the earth.
By God's breath we are made – Made of wonder,
Made of dreams.
We leave a residue everywhere we rest. We are travellers on a cosmic journey.
Stardust dancing in whirlpools of infinity.
Be humble, you are made of earth. Be noble, you are made of Heaven.
You are light, you are wonder. You are life.
Dust and ashes touch your forehead today.
Holy Spirit, come. Breathe your life in us.
How sublime we are. Awaken us to the beauty that enfolds us.
Open our eyes to whom we can become.



FIRST WEEK OF LENT – A REFLECTION

Repent and believe the Good News. Come back to me with all your heart.
Springtime calls us to start afresh. Winter's long cry is over.
New light and warmth fill our world. Come back to me with all your heart.
A new birthing season is at hand. It says 'Now' – Now is the time to cleanse.
To empty out the clutter in our hearts.
New hopes and blessings are at hand. Trust the stirring of Lent,
The spirit of renewal, Echoing in our souls.
The inner self awakens. The sadness, fear and hopelessness,
Drift away. Trust and joy await.
Lent stretches our human spirits. In this season of the soul
Change is taking place. Journey with me, Lord
In the flowering places of my heart. The Gospel of good news calls me.
Lead me through the desert sands of my deepest heart.
I do not live on bread alone, But on the faithful Word of God.
"I am especially glad of the divine gift of laughter; it has made the world human and
lovable, despite all its pain and wrong."

W.E.B. Du Bois



20th February Feast of Saints Jacinta and Francisco Marto



Between May 13 and October 13, 1917, three Portuguese shepherd children from Aljustrel, received apparitions of Our Lady at Cova da Iria, near Fátima, a city 110 miles north of Lisbon. At that time, Europe was involved in an extremely bloody war. Portugal itself was in political turmoil, having overthrown its monarchy in 1910; the government disbanded religious organizations soon after.

At the first appearance, Mary asked the children to return to that spot on the thirteenth of each month for the next six months. She also asked them to learn to read and write and to pray the rosary “to obtain peace for the world and the end of the war.” They were to pray for sinners and for the conversion of Russia, which had recently overthrown Czar Nicholas II and was soon to fall under communism. Up to 90,000 people gathered for Mary’s final apparition on October 13, 1917. Less than two years later, Francisco died of influenza in his family home. He was buried in the parish cemetery and then re-buried in the Fátima basilica in 1952. Jacinta died of influenza in Lisbon in 1920, offering her suffering for the conversion of sinners, peace in the world, and the Holy Father. She was re-buried in the Fátima basilica in 1951. Their cousin Lúcia dos Santos became a Carmelite nun and was still living when Jacinta and Francisco were beatified in 2000; she died five years later.

Pope Francis canonized the younger children on his visit to Fátima to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the first apparition—May 13, 2017. The shrine of Our Lady of Fátima is visited by up to 20 million people a year. The Church is always very cautious about endorsing alleged apparitions, but it has seen benefits from people changing their lives because of the message of Our Lady of Fátima. Prayer for sinners, devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and praying the rosary—all these reinforce the Good News Jesus came to preach.

Lent 2024

The following resources were kindly shared with us for you to engage with during the Holy Season of Lent by the Faith Development Team at CEIST:

Welcome to this year's Lenten Resource. This year, Lent begins on 14th February (Ash Wednesday) and officially ends on Holy Thursday, March the 28th. That is when the "Triduum", the great three Days of Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday occur leading to Easter.

The theme for our Resource this year is 'Baptism'. For Christians, Lent is an opportunity to reflect on our identity, through Baptism, as God's beloved sons and daughters. Thousands of adults preparing to be baptised into the faith look forward to the Easter Vigil at which they will be baptised after many months of preparation. Lent is a particularly important time for them. At Easter, they take on their new identity in faith; as newly baptised Christians. As adults they make that decision for themselves. And in doing so, they show all of us, especially those of us baptised as babies, what it is to step into a new way of looking at ourselves, at God, at one another and at our world. The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (RCIA) is the name given to the process of preparing for adult baptism. It is the model *par excellence* of faith formation for all Christians.

In this Lenten resource from CEIST for your school, there is a short Intercom reflection for each week for you, as the Principal and Faith Leader of your school to lead. Ash Wednesday this year falls during Mid-term break so a short Intercom service is provided for the Friday *before* mid-term as a reminder to the school community of the Lenten Season ahead. Each week's reflection is perhaps best used during the first half of the week; on the Monday or Tuesday as they each connect to the readings of the Sunday before.

There is also a prayer service for the last week of term, inviting your school community on the great mystery that is Holy Week for Christians.

May this Lent be a time of blessing and renewal for you and your school community; an opportunity to enter into the mystery of God's love through praying together, fasting and almsgiving.

All the various parts of this resource can be adapted according to your own school community's needs and context, with your RE team and others' assistance, as necessary.



**Where possible you might try to link these prayer services to your school's own social justice initiatives, including e.g. engagement with Trócaire that might happen for your school community during Lent. It would also be helpful to link your school's work on care of our common home when and where, in these services you feel it is most appropriate to do so.*

Friday 9th

A prayer to reflect in advance on Ash Wednesday (14th February) and the First Week of Lent



Principal: Next week, during our mid-term break, we celebrate Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent. As a CEIST school, in the _____ (tradition), we take this opportunity to pray a blessing on one another as we approach this holy season of preparation for Easter. Joining me for our prayer over the Intercom this morning are _____ and _____. We begin now, as we begin all of our prayers, *In the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Student 1: For Christians, Lent is a time to reflect on our Baptism. For most of us, we were baptised many, many years ago – we don't remember it! But when we were baptised, we were invited on a journey to understand life in a new way. As young people, we can travel this journey in a very serious way, asking ourselves how our faith changes us, moulds us, and helps us to grow.

Principal: In the spirit of the one who calls us to live full and happy lives, our Lord Jesus Christ, we pause to pray now together. The response to our prayer is **Lord graciously hear us.**

Student 2: For ourselves; that through our prayer, especially our weekly Lenten prayers as a school, we would come to know God's deep care and love for us.

Lord hear us. **Lord graciously hear us.**

Student 1: For those in our life who need our help and support, that this Lent would be a time when we would give generously of our time and energy to them. And that we would care, in a particular way, for those who experience the effects of poverty at home and abroad.

Lord hear us. **Lord graciously hear us.**

Student 2: For our planet; that this Lent through our free and conscious decision to consume less and become more aware of our consumption, we would realise the great connection between us and all of the amazing world that God has created and seek always to love and protect it. Whatever we decide to give up for Lent, we pray we will grow in an awareness of what we have and what others don't have.

Lord hear us. **Lord graciously hear us.**

Principal: We take a moment in silence to reflect on what we each intend to do this Lent to come closer to the God who made us and loves us. Prayer, fasting and giving to the poor are the three ways we traditionally do this. What are your own personal Lenten resolutions?

God, source of life, you know our desires and our weaknesses. Renew our hearts during Lent, which begins next Wednesday that we may live as your people. Help us to reach out to others and to share your love with all people. We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Week beginning Monday 19th February



Principal: Welcome to our reflection and prayer this morning for the first week of Lent. Today I'm joined by _____ and _____. The theme for our reflection is *God loves each of us*. When a person is baptised, that's the mystery - God's love – into which they enter. We begin our prayer, *In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit*.

Student 1: Many of us when we were younger would have learned about Noah's ark and in our religion classes in first year we would have learned about God's Covenant with God's people. The rainbow is a sign of God's promise to love us and take care of us. We are God's people, each of us; and God loves us, each of us. What does it mean to say God has made a covenant with us?

Student 2: Maybe the first thing it means is that we turn to God to help us figure out who we are. We turn to God to help us figure out the meaning of our lives and our purpose. This Lent we pray that we will come into a deeper awareness of God's love for us and God's promise to us to be with us all the days of our lives.

Student 1: A reading from the Gospel of Matthew

The Spirit drove Jesus out into the desert, and he remained in the desert for forty days, tempted by Satan. He was among wild beasts, and the angels ministered to him. After John had been arrested, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God: "This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.**

Principal: Together we pray, and the response to our prayer is **Lord graciously hear us**.

Student 2: For one another, that this Lent we would recognise that the love God has for us, is the same love God has for everyone else, especially those made poor by the effects of injustice. We are all great gifts to one another. Lord hear us. **Lord graciously hear us.**

Student 1: For our planet, that we would realise our responsibility to take care of this great sign of God's creative love for all God's creatures. Lord hear us. **Lord graciously hear us.**

Student 2: For peace in our hearts and in our world. This Lent, we pray that we would realise the great gift that silence is in our lives and take a few short minutes to be mindful of ourselves and who we are in God's eyes. Lord hear us. **Lord graciously hear us.**

Principal: Lord Jesus, you fasted for 40 days and 40 nights. As we celebrate this first week of Lent, help us to be faithful to our Lenten promises so that we can grow in an awareness of the meaning of baptism and our individual faith story for the good of others, ourselves and our world. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**



Principal: Welcome to our reflection and prayer this morning for the second week of Lent. Today I'm joined by _____ and _____. The theme for our reflection is *the light of Christ*. During a baptism, a candle is lit as a symbol of the faith that is being passed on to the child. We remember that light of faith now as we pray, *In the Name of the Father*.

Student 1: In a lot of the Bible stories we heard as children and at Mass, we see the big role light has to play. Just a few short weeks ago we heard about the Star leading the Wise Men to Jesus in Bethlehem. In a few weeks' time, we will read at Easter time of the light of the Resurrection. In the Gospel at Mass yesterday we hear about Jesus being transfigured. We listen now to the words of this gospel.

Student 2: A reading from the Gospel of Mark.

Jesus took Peter, James, and John and led them up a high mountain apart by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white. Then Elijah appeared to them along with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. Then Peter said to Jesus in reply, "Rabbi, it is good that we are here! Let us make three tents: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." He hardly knew what to say, they were so terrified. Then a cloud came, casting a shadow over them; from the cloud came a voice, "This is my beloved Son. Listen to him." Suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone but Jesus alone with them.

The Gospel of the Lord. Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.

Student 1: Transfiguration means "transformed". Jesus was transformed into a glorious image in which his face shone like the sun and his clothes became as white as the light. This image was nothing like Peter, James, and John had ever seen before. It showed them that Jesus truly was from God.

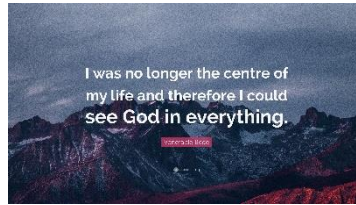
Principal: Together we pray, and the response to our prayer is **Lord graciously hear us**.

Student 2: For our school this Lent, may our school be a place where people can come to know the light of Christ in their lives. Lord hear us. **Lord graciously hear us**.

Student 1: For ourselves. We pray that whatever faith we profess or wherever we are on our faith journey, we will feel a deep sense of security and God's loving presence to guide us in our lives. Lord hear us. **Lord graciously hear us**.

Principal: Lord Jesus, you challenge us to become more like you during Lent. May our own individuality and our own gifts be a light in the lives of others this Lent and always. May we continue to grow in faith and in a knowledge of you as a light for our journey. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. **Amen**.

Week beginning Monday 4th March



Principal: Welcome to our reflection and prayer this morning for the third week of Lent. Today I'm joined by _____ and _____. The theme for our reflection is *living a new way*. Christians, once baptised are called to live in a new way, putting God at the centre of all that they do. We begin our prayer, *In the Name of the Father,*

Student 1: When people think of the 10 Commandments, they often think it's just a set of old-fashioned rules. But first and foremost, the 10 Commandments are a way of living in a new way. And to live in that new way, Christians are called to put God at the centre of all that they do and are. Here are the words from the first reading at Mass yesterday that give the context for the 10 Commandments.

Student 2: A reading from the Book of Exodus

In those days, God delivered all these commandments:

"I, the LORD, am your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that place of slavery.

You shall not have other gods besides me. You shall not carve idols for yourselves in the shape of anything in the sky above or on the earth below or in the waters beneath the earth; you shall not bow down before them or worship them.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Student 1: When God is put at the centre, everything else changes. Your attitude to yourself changes, your attitude to others changes, your attitude to poverty and injustice changes, your attitude to our planet changes. This Lent we pray that Christians everywhere will see the importance of putting God at the centre and living fully together out of that relationship.

Principal: We listen now to the words of Pope Francis who has some advice for us about Lent.

Student 2: Lent is the time, Pope Francis said, "to proclaim that God alone is Lord, to drop the need to put ourselves at the centre of things, to be the top of the class, to think that by our own abilities we can succeed in life and transform the world around us. Lent is a time of truth, a time to drop the masks we put on each day to appear perfect in the eyes of the world. Now is the time to put God at the centre of one's life and pray and dialogue with him from the heart; and to choose the things that truly matter."

Principal: We pause in the silence of our own hearts to turn to God about the things that matter to us most in the world. We pause to pray for our friends, for our families, for anyone who is sick, for anyone going through any challenges financially or socially, for peace in our hearts and in our world. And we bring all these prayers to God, through the Intercession of Mary who is the model of someone who put God at the very centre of her whole life. As we say, *Hail Mary...*



Principal: Welcome to our reflection and prayer this morning for the fourth week of Lent. Today I'm joined by _____ and _____. The theme for our reflection is *being the light in other people's lives*. For Christians, our faith as baptised members of Christ's body, is never just about my relationship with God; it's also about my relationship with others and with the world. We begin our prayer, *In the Name of the Father,*

Student 1: There are lots of ways to feel lonely and unhappy in our world. You can feel lonely even when there are lots and lots of people around you. You can feel lonely when you feel mis-understood. You can feel lonely when you're feeling insecure and you feel there's no one there to help. Christians everywhere are called to make sure no one feels alone, that no one feels isolated, that no one feels they have to struggle on their own in our world. To become this kind of person, you have to be able to see others in a new way. During Lent, through prayer, fasting and giving to the poor we're called to be the light in other people's darkness. We listen now to some of the second reading from yesterday's Mass.

Student 2:

A reading from St Paul's Letter to the Ephesians.

Brothers and sisters: you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.

Live as children of light, for light produces every kind of goodness and righteousness and truth.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Student 1: Here are some more words of advice from Pope Francis about how we can care for ourselves and for one another by fasting in a new way.

Student 2: Fast from hurting words ... and say kind words, Fast from sadness ... and be filled with gratitude, Fast from anger ... and be filled with patience, Fast from pessimism ... and be filled with hope, Fast from worries ... and have trust in God, Fast from complaints ... and contemplate simplicity, Fast from pressures ... and be prayerful, Fast from bitterness ... and fill your hearts with joy, Fast from selfishness ... and be compassionate to others, Fast from grudges ... and be reconciled, Fast from words ... and be silent so you can listen!

Principal: We pause now to pray for our intentions.

Student 1: We pray that this Lent we will have the eyes to see the needs of others and to reach out to them to help. We pray that we will, as a school community, be a place of welcome to everyone, where everyone feels at home and never lonely. Lord hear us. **Lord graciously hear us.**

Principal: We make these prayers and all the prayers of our heart, through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**



Introduction

This is the last week before the Easter Holidays so instead of the usual Intercom prayer relating to the Sunday of Lent readings that have just gone, the focus is on preparing for Holy Week.

This Prayer Service could be held towards the end of the week. It is better if the service is prayed in person as opposed to over the Intercom. However, it can obviously be shortened for use over the Intercom if you wish. (If you wish to shorten it, you can omit one of the two symbols for each of the days of Holy Week covered here and most of the scripture readings. It might be good to retain the reading related to the Resurrection.)

The service can be used for a whole school gathering, for year group gatherings or class group gatherings, as you and your team decide. You can of course delegate your role of leading to Year Heads or RE teachers as you wish, particularly if the service is being prayed in year or class group settings. You can, with the RE team, assign teachers, SNAs, and others, along with students to help lead these prayers. Music can be inserted as per the advice of your RE and Music departments.

A sacred space is assembled as part of the service. It might look as simple as the one below. The key colour is purple (red is also often used during Holy Week. White is used for Easter Sunday. Black for Good Friday). Important symbols include a candle, a crucifix, and a bible. The adding of the symbols to the space is what forms the structure of the service.



An alternative to the Prayer Service provided here by CEIST might be that your school would pray the Stations of the Cross together using for example resources from: <https://www.trocaire.org/our-work/working-in-ireland/parishes/lent-2024/>)

Prayer Service



Opening Hymn

Principal:

You are all very welcome to our final prayer together as a community before we break for our Easter Holidays. We have journeyed together each week of Lent, reflecting on what it means to be a baptised Christian preparing during Lent for Easter. Firstly, we have reflected on the importance of prayer; of putting God at the centre of our lives. We have also reflected on the importance of fasting; particularly in terms of fasting from anything that harms you or that harms others. Finally, we have reflected on the importance of sharing; sharing our talents and our gifts, particularly with those most in need. (*You could mention here any Lenten initiatives in terms of fundraising your school has undertaken. Trócaire is obviously deeply associated with the Lenten journey in Ireland. You might have had a speaker from Trócaire or done some fundraising for Trócaire or used Trócaire's Lenten material to explore the images on this year's Trócaire box*).

As a Catholic school, prayer is so important; it sets us on the right path with God; the one who has made us and loves us. For Christians, prayer reminds us of our Baptism and the identity we have that comes from that. Lent is a special time for this remembering so that we can celebrate Easter with new energy, new enthusiasm, and new insights. We thank your RE teachers in particular and all of the rest of the staff who have helped you this Lent, as part of our school community, to prepare for Easter.

Our short service today will focus on what is coming next week – Holy Week. We will use symbols, music, gospel readings and prayers to help us as we journey towards Holy week. So, we begin our prayer as we have done, every week of Lent, “In the Name of the Father...”

Reader 1:

Holy Week is a week that changed the world and Christians all over the world are invited to enter into the mystery of God's love made real to us then, now and always.

We will reflect on Palm Sunday, Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday. For each of these days, we will present two symbols, a short reading and a prayer of the faithful. We invite you now to be still as we prepare to celebrate our service together.

(Moment of prayerful silence)

Reader 2:

We remember Palm Sunday _____ brings to the altar some palms. These palms are a symbol of the welcome Jesus received when he entered Jerusalem. The people were so happy to greet him and to welcome him. But their welcome for him was short lived.

_____ brings a Bible. This Sunday for Palm Sunday we listen to the whole story of Holy Week from when Jesus entered Jerusalem to Jesus's burial after his death on the Cross. Having

the whole story read for us in this way challenges us to understand the importance of the events of the week we are about to celebrate.

We listen now to the Word of God.



Reader 3:

A reading from the Gospel of Matthew

When they had come near Jerusalem, the disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!” When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, “Who is this?” The crowds were saying, “This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.**

Principal: We pause to pray. Our response is **Lord graciously hear us.**

Reader 4:

For one another and for our friendships here in _____ (school’s name); that our school will be a place of welcome and inclusion for everyone. Lord hear us. **Lord graciously hear us.**

Reader 5:

We recall Holy Thursday_____ brings to our sacred space a loaf of bread representing Jesus’s Last Supper. We know that sharing food and conversation was something Jesus liked to do. He liked spending time with his friends. And for the Jewish Festival of Passover, he spent it with his friends, talking about service, about God’s love, about kindness and about, how, when he was gone from them physically, they could remember him every time they broke bread together.

_____ brings a bowl of water and a towel. One of the accounts of the last supper tells how Jesus washed the feet of his disciples. This was to show that the best way you can remember Jesus and bring Jesus to others is by serving them. Every year on Holy Thursday Pope Francis washes the feet of 12 men and women. In previous years, he has washed the feet of young prisoners, of immigrants, of victims of trafficking. In doing this, like Jesus, he shows us how important it is to serve others.

We listen now to the word of God.

Reader 6:

A reading from the Gospel of John

After washing their feet, Jesus said, "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to your Lord Jesus Christ.**

Principal: We pause to pray. Our response is **Lord graciously hear us.**

Reader 7: For justice, and peace in our world. We pray that we will always have the courage here in _____ (school name) to care for others as Jesus teaches us through his example. Lord hear us. **Lord graciously hear us.**



Reader 8:

We pause to pray together about Good Friday_____ brings to our sacred space, a crucifix. This is such an important symbol in Christianity that we can sometimes not see it really or even take it for granted. In Jesus' time, crucifixion was seen as the most humiliating and painful of punishments. If you were crucified, you died in a terrible way and in total disgrace. Why is Jesus's death so important to Christians? One way of understanding it is that Jesus' death frees us from death because in dying and rising he shows us we have nothing to fear; not even the things many people fear most; death, isolation, betrayal, humiliation, loneliness, a fear of being abandoned by God. Because of Jesus' death, we know God is with us in all of our sufferings, and that God will never leave us.

_____ brings to our sacred space, another cloth. When Jesus was carrying the cross to the place he was to be crucified, a woman stopped to help. The scriptures tell us she wiped his face; removing the blood and the tears from his face. But more than the physical help she offered him, she bravely offered her support and comfort.

We listen now to the Word of God.



Reader 9:

A reading from the Gospel of Matthew

Two criminals were crucified with Jesus, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by Jesus on the cross hurled insults at him, “Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!” In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. “He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself!

From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land. About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?”

And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to your Lord Jesus Christ.**

Hymn/ Some time of silence.

Principal: We pause to pray. Our response is **Lord graciously hear us.**

Reader 10:

For those in our world who are carrying crosses in their own lives; crosses of ill-health, of addiction, of loneliness, of feeling broken-hearted. That God will console them in their suffering and that we will, when and where we can reach out in love to help. Lord hear us. **Lord graciously hear us.**

Reader 11:

We reflect on Easter Sunday _____ brings to the altar, a candle. Light is a symbol of resurrection hope. Even the smallest candle can light the darkest of spaces. This simple candle, representing Jesus’ resurrection reminds us that in our darkest times, there is always the hope of resurrection joy.

_____ brings to the altar, a picture of the women rushing from the tomb. The women who realised that Jesus had risen from the dead were the first ones to share this good news. We remember the way the women stood with this as he was crucified and were the first then to experience the joy of the resurrection.

We pause to listen to the word of God.



Reader 12:

A reading from the Gospel of Matthew

After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.

There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples: ‘He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.’ Now I have told you.”

So, the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples.

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.**

Principal: We pause to pray. Our response is **Lord graciously hear us.**

Reader 13:

In gratitude we pray for one another and for the gift of life and joy we are to one another. We pray for the whole community here in _____ (school name), that this Easter will be filled with peace and rest. Lord hear us. **Lord graciously hear us.**

Hymn

Principal:

We pause for a moment to reflect on our now-finished sacred space; full of the symbols we have shared during our prayer service.

The Season of Lent will end next week. Thank you to everyone for the way in which you engaged with our prayers, and with our acts of service during the Lenten season. Many of you also gave up things for Lent. Through this fasting you have grown in discipline and in faith. Thank you for your perseverance.

All during our Lenten reflections, we have come back time and time again to one simple truth; that God loves each of us, and calls you to love one another. We thank God today for the many ways you care for one another and we ask God to bless you as you continue to live this truth in your own lives now and into the future.

All that remains for me to do is to thank.....

And to wish you, and your families a very Happy Easter.

Final Hymn

February 22nd Feast of the Chair of St Peter the Apostle

This feast commemorates Christ's choosing Peter to sit in his place as the servant-authority of the whole Church.

After the "lost weekend" of pain, doubt, and self-torment, Peter hears the Good News. Angels at the tomb say to Magdalene, "The Lord has risen! Go, tell his disciples and Peter." John relates that when



he and Peter ran to the tomb, the younger outraced the older, then waited for him. Peter entered, saw the wrappings on the ground, the headpiece rolled up in a place by itself. John saw and believed. But he adds a reminder: "...[T]hey did not yet understand the scripture that he had to rise from the dead" (John 20:9). They went home. There the slowly exploding, impossible idea became reality. Jesus appeared to them as they waited fearfully behind locked doors. "Peace be with you," he said (John 20:21b), and they rejoiced.

The Pentecost event completed Peter's experience of the risen Christ. "...[T]hey were all filled with the holy Spirit" (Acts 2:4a) and began to express themselves in foreign tongues and make bold proclamation as the Spirit prompted them.

Only then can Peter fulfil the task Jesus had given him: "... once you have turned back, you must strengthen your brothers" (Luke 22:32). He at once becomes the spokesman for the Twelve about their experience of the Holy Spirit—before the civil authorities who wished to quash their preaching, before the Council of Jerusalem, for the community in the problem of Ananias and Sapphira. He is the first to preach the Good News to the Gentiles. The healing power of Jesus in him is well attested: the raising of Tabitha from the dead, the cure of the crippled beggar. People carry the sick into the streets so that when Peter passed his shadow might fall on them.

Even a saint experiences difficulty in Christian living. When Peter stopped eating with Gentile converts because he did not want to wound the sensibilities of Jewish Christians, Paul says, "...I opposed him to his face because he clearly was wrong.... [T]hey were not on the right road in line with the truth of the gospel..." (Galatians 2:11b, 14a).

At the end of John's Gospel, Jesus says to Peter, "Amen, amen, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to dress yourself and go where you wanted; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go" (John 21:18). What Jesus said indicated the sort of death by which Peter was to glorify God. On Vatican Hill, in Rome, during the reign of Nero, Peter did glorify his Lord with a martyr's death, probably in the company of many Christians. Second-century Christians built a small memorial over his burial spot. In the fourth century, the Emperor Constantine built a basilica, which was replaced in the 16th century.

Reflection: Like the committee chair, this chair refers to the occupant, not the furniture. Its first occupant stumbled a bit, denying Jesus three times and hesitating to welcome gentiles into the new Church. Some of its later occupants have also stumbled a bit, sometimes even failed scandalously. As individuals, we may sometimes think a particular pope has let us down. Still, the office endures as a sign of the long tradition we cherish and as a focus for the universal Church.

February 25th

Reflection Second Sunday of Lent

Lent calls us to our inner room, To our desert place.

If today you hear God's voice, Soften your heart.

Listen to the voice of God, The still small voice,

That calls you to return. Come back to God.

Be open, be gentle, be still. Let Jesus strengthen you.

Let Jesus challenge you. Let Him lead you.

Choose love, choose life. God will gift you with healing,

With wisdom, with insight. Seek out your desert place.

Your treasure is hidden there.

Pope Francis in his encyclical Fratelli Tutti asks each of us to reflect on how we treat our neighbour.



“May our hearts be open to all the peoples and nations of the earth.

May we recognize the goodness and beauty that you have sown in each of us, and thus forge bonds of unity, common projects, and shared dreams.

Amen. No. 2 B

Called to Meet our Fear Homily of Archbishop Dermot Farrell



January 21, 2024 – 3rd Sunday of
Ordinary Time and the Sunday of the
Word of God

(Also available at <https://dublindiocese.ie/called-to-meet-our-fear/>)

*“Now the word of the Lord was addressed to Jonah,
“Up!” he said, “and go to Nineveh, the great city”*

Since 2020, this Sunday—the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time—has been designated as the Sunday of the Word of God—a day envisaged as “given over entirely to the Word of God, so as to appreciate the inexhaustible riches contained in that *constant dialogue between the Lord and his people*” (Pope Francis, *Misericordia et Misera*, 7). In a spirit of humility, and with simplicity and openness, let us turn to the Scriptures that the Church puts before us this day, and ask where they now call us, and in what direction they might point our lives.

The First Reading puts before us a scene from the Book of Jonah. We all know about Jonah being in the belly of the “whale” for three days, but we mightn’t be so familiar with all the twists and turns of the Jonah story.

The Ninevites are the sworn enemies of the Israelites. God, who is Lord of all and Father of all, wants to bring them back to himself, and in his compassion and mercy, offers them a way back, and so sends Jonah to make this offer. But Jonah will have none of it! For Jonah, the Ninevites who had conquered the Israelites, are beyond God’s mercy. They are the enemy, and the enemy is outside of God’s plan, and beyond God’s kindness and faithfulness. For Jonah, “my enemy should be God’s enemy!” But God does not see things that way! God does not look upon His creation in that way. Deep down, Jonah knows this, and that is why he runs away from God.

But God refuses to let Jonah off the hook! If Jonah runs away from God, God goes after Jonah. It is not that God could not find another prophet. No, God wants Jonah! And here we learn something very important about our vocation: what our call asks of us, and makes of us, is as important as what our call asks us to do. So, God sends the storm, and Jonah is thrown into the sea. Fortuitously, a big fish—often pictured as a whale—swallows the miserable little prophet—and delivers him back to where he came from, and that’s where today’s reading picks up the story.

Jonah begrudgingly preaches, and, of course, to his annoyance, everything goes according to God’s plan: the people of Nineveh repent, and God forgoes his threat of punishment against them. Jonah is furious—furious at the Ninevites’ repentance, and furious at God’s mercy. “Angry enough to die,” as he later tells God. (4:9)

What is the matter with Jonah? Jonah's problem is that the God who calls him to be a prophet, is too generous a God for Jonah. Maybe one could say that the living God is too soft for Jonah, too forgiving, too welcoming.

Jonah lives in a rigid world, a world of clarity, where everybody has their place, and where everybody knows their place, where everybody knows who's in and who's out. That is the world where Jonah is at home. That is the world where Jonah is safe. Not the "wishy-washy" world of God.

Jonah's search for safety and security leads him, in the words of one scholar, "to close off the threatening outside world, with its peoples, friend and foe alike, and its multiplicity of creatures all of which demand his attention and concern."

However, the living God, the Father of Abraham, the Father of Jesus, and the God to whom we pray, whom we call "Our Father," would have him meet the outsider, the other, the stranger. The safety and 'security' that Jonah seeks are an illusion. They are a myth. Not the real world, they offer no solution to the challenges of living.

Jonah's self-made world is mirrored in the enthusiasm of Jesus' first disciples in today's Gospel story! They follow Jesus "at once." In their enthusiasm, they go after Christ, but follow their own agenda. They are on the same road but not on the same journey! They're about themselves: James and John want to be first and second when Jesus comes into his kingdom. The disciples, are constantly annoyed by the crowds surrounding Jesus. In the end, those who so quickly left their nets would equally rapidly abandon Jesus, in his hour of need, in his passion and death.

Just like Jonah with God, the disciples are also overwhelmed by the reality that Jesus puts before them, and with the way he asks them to engage. Something similar is happening for us in the present time. In the last two years, this country and others have welcomed, vast numbers of people fleeing the cynical war in Ukraine, and other conflicts in so many troubled regions of the world. We are faced with responding to those who have come to seek sanctuary or build a new life among us. This is a challenge. It is a challenge which arises in the context of long-standing shortcomings in the provision of housing and other services for a growing population.

It is precisely in this context, in this concrete situation that God addresses his word to us. We are called today no less than Jonah, or the first disciples—to embrace the way of God.

These are inspiring words, but what do they mean? To what are we called? In the first instance, it is to recognise our common humanity with the refugees and asylum seekers who have arrived in our midst. They are entitled to make their case within the framework that society has created to regulate admission to the country. While doing so, they are not to be targeted or penalised, abused or frightened. As followers of Christ, we are called to speak up for their rights and dignity. We are called to speak up when individuals are targeted, victimised or stigmatised, or used as pawns in disputes which are really about politics and resources.

We are called to speak up for the truth about migration and population change, not to deny that it is a serious challenge, but to rebut the misinformation that is spread to stir up suspicion and hatred.

The heart of our faith is compassion. Remember the Samaritan! (Luke 10:25–37) We are called to solidarity with our least fortunate brothers and sisters, to use our creativity, energy and

resources to make life better. But we are also called to solidarity with those who are asked to accept into their community those who need shelter. It is right that the practical consequences for communities be recognised and addressed. Parish communities have been to the fore in this regard, but it is also a matter for the public authorities: we are all called to play our part, so society as a whole must give practical support to host communities in proportion to the scale of the responsibility they are asked to assume.

Our world is changing, and we find ourselves in a new era of migration. It challenges us in all the dimensions of our life together as a community. History will judge how we respond. God's word brings home to us that we are all brothers and sisters. Our God-given gifts will help us put into practice what this means. The call is urgent.

There was a naivety about the disciples in their initial enthusiastic response to Jesus. That said, they are true disciples as they do follow him, and eventually, by his faithfulness to them, His word, his life makes a home in them, and eventually they follow him to the cross, to their own crosses.

Truth be told, almost all disciples are initially naïve: we all fail to appreciate our own weakness. Does the same not hold for marriage? And yet we begin, we have to begin. If we don't, we go nowhere.

My friends, my sisters and brothers, on the long road of discipleship, it is where the journey goes that is important. Let us entrust ourselves to the Lord's living word: "anyone who wants to be a disciple of mine ..." (Mark 8:34) Let us entrust ourselves to his faithfulness to the little ones, to people in their weakness. Let us take a step on the road *after him* "if anyone wants to be first of all, they must be last of all and servant of all." (Mark 9:35), "Whoever *welcomes* one such child in my name *welcomes* me, and whoever *welcomes* me welcomes, not me, but the one who sent me." (Mark 9:37). That child is at our door—the stranger in our communities. *Can we take Christ at his word? Can we welcome him? Or, will we be like Jonah, led by fear, and turn away?*

The above exhortations from our Church Leaders call into question how we are responding to the daily needs and encounters with our fellow beings on this earthen journey. This Lent may we address the question Who is the stranger in our midst and how can we be Christlike and welcome them?

EMMANUEL 2024



Join us in the Helix on **Tuesday 12 March/Wednesday 13 March/Thursday 14 March** at 8.00 p.m. for Emmanuel 2024. Over 50 second level schools, 2,000 students (650 per day) from around the Diocese will present this year's programme in an engaging and energetic way with a live band of students and professionals. Auditions for soloists have been adjudicated and budding singers are working hard at this

time. Ian Callanan is once again the Music Director with Grainne Clinton as Event Co-Ordinator. Book now from the Helix 01 700 7000 or www.thehelix.ie
Bring your family - your friends - your music group.

YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY

2023 shaped up to be a busy year for the young adults of the Diocese. 52 young adults represented the Archdiocese of Dublin while attending World Youth Day in Lisbon at the beginning of August. It was a tough pilgrimage, having the blistering summer heat coming down on us as we trekked through Lisbon and then the lovely accommodation of the school hall floor... it was a great reminder that we were pilgrims and not tourists! But despite all the difficulty, a great time was had by all and plans are already afoot for the Jubilee Year celebration in the summer of 2025 in Rome, before the next World Youth Day in Seoul, South Korea in the summer of 2027.

While both of those are a fair bit off, we're currently setting our sights to what will happen locally in 2024, but all is inspired by Lisbon. The theme for Lisbon came from Luke 1:39 'Mary arose and went with haste'. Since returning from Lisbon we have been discerning how we, too, can Arise! following in the footsteps of Mary. Youth and Young Adult Ministry in Dublin now comes under the umbrella heading of 'Arise!' and with that, the establishment of local Arise! Youth Hubs, Arise! Prayer Gatherings, Arise! Retreats, Arise! Exploration, and Arise! Pilgrimage.

More detail on these will come about over the first few months of 2024, but a few key items to keep track of is the planned pilgrimage to the **Camino**. This will take place at the end of June into July and will cover the final stage, walking from Sarria to Santiago. **Booking is now open** and you can book by contacting Natalie Doherty.

Second, is the running of Sycamore. Sycamore is a fantastic book that goes through 20 key aspects from the Catechism in a gentle conversation style allowing young people to engage and explore their faith in a new way. You can sign up to join the gatherings online at www.missionministry.ie

There will also be one-off retreat and workshop days in the first half of the year, including a music day for all parish youth choirs, a workshop day on photography and prayer, along with the returning of Friday prayer gatherings. That is to name just a few. Keep an eye here for all the latest news and events from **Arise!**

Contact natalie.doherty@dublindiocese.ie for further information.





Ember Renewal Day 18th January 2024

Senator Ronan Mullin addressed the Ember Teams at their Renewal Day on Thursday last January 18th in St Patricks College DCU. Twenty -two Schools from the Archdiocese were present with their Ember Leaders renewing their commitment as faith leaders in their Schools. Sen. Mullin addressed the question of Faith in our World today and our need to nourish it. God has loved us into existence, we have a duty to live our lives reaching out to one another and the stranger in our midst.

Relationships with friends demands time—it is the same with our relationship with God, faith is a gift, an unfathomable mystery and we have all been chosen by God to spread His message.

We are indebted to the DCU St Patrick's Chaplaincy Team of Fr Ultan and Anne O'Farrell for their support and attendance at the Ember Day. The Prayer Service to conclude the day was a celebration of the work carried out in the schools so far this year with the presentation of a symbol by each school and a blessing by Fr Ultan.

We are looking forward to hearing more from these Teams as the term progresses and their Graduation will be held at the same venue in May where Archbishop Farrell will present the certificates and celebrate Mass with the Ember Teams.

Senator Mullin addressing the Ember Teams and pictured with Sr Bernadette, Erin Brady, Mgr Dan O'Connor and Declan Lawlor.

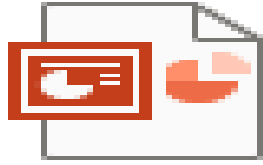


Applications / enquiries to join the Ember Programme can be made by contacting:

Sr Bernadette bernadette.carron@dublindiocese.ie or

Sr Concepta concepta.foley@dublindiocese.ie

Jewish Festivals This PowerPoint may be helpful as you prepare for revision with Third Years.



Jewish_Feasts_and_Festivals.ppt

A Daily Reflection for Students and Teachers

*Is anyone happier because you passed his way?
Does anyone remember that you spoke to him today?
This day is almost over, and its toiling time trough.
Is there anyone to utter now a friendly word for you?
Can you say tonight in passing with the days that slipped so
fast,
That you helped a single person, of the many that you passed?
Is a single heart rejoicing over what you did or said?
Does one whose hopes were fading now with courage look
ahead?
Did you waste the day, or lose it? Was it well or poorly spent?
Did you leave a trail of kindness or a scar of discontent?*