

Dear Chaplain and R.E. Teacher,

## Education Secretariat

Archdiocese of Dublin

### Post - Primary Diocesan Advisers Blog - January 2025

The start of a new year is a good time to reflect on the God who is always doing new things in our lives. He is always willing to give us a fresh start. He is there to lead us into a future ripe with possibilities. As scripture says, God knows the plans he has for us, plans to prosper us and not harm us. As believers in Jesus, we commit ourselves to the notion that hope springs eternal. We can reflect on the year gone by and draw lessons from it. Where has God brought you from? Where were you at the beginning of the year? How has God worked to continue to conform you to the image of Christ?

Together we will continue to care for our school communities and if there are specific resources you would like to share with us, we will gladly act as the conduit to pass them on to others. Here in Education Secretariat, we are updating the School Contact Record Sheet, every Post Primary school will receive a form to complete and return this January, to assist us in the delivery of information to as many Teachers and Chaplains as possible.

January is a very busy month, and we hope that the resources we share with you will benefit you in your interactions with your school and parish communities. If you would like us to arrange a call for any reason, please contact us and we will be more than happy to organise this with you.

May the Lord bless all your endeavours in this new term.

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## Prayer of Thanks for 2025

God, thank you for a new year.

May everyone in our class/school community  
be willing to begin anew with a clean slate.

We know that you are always ready to forgive us.

Help us to be willing to forgive ourselves  
and to forgive one another.

As we begin a new year, remind us  
of our truest values and our deepest desires.

Help us to live in the goodness that comes from  
doing what you want us to do.

Help us to put aside anxiety about the future  
and the past, so that we might live  
in peace with you now, one day at a time.

Amen.



## A New Year, A New You

As the New Year dawns, it brings with it a sense of renewal and the opportunity for personal growth. For teenagers in Ireland who practice their faith, this time of year is especially significant. It's a chance to reflect on the past, set new goals, and deepen their spiritual journey. Embracing the theme "A New Year, A New Me" can be a powerful way to integrate faith into everyday life and foster a sense of purpose and direction.

### Reflecting on the Past Year

The first step in this journey is reflection. Looking back on the past year, teenagers can consider their spiritual highs and lows. What moments brought them closer to God? Were there times when they felt distant from their faith?

Reflecting on these experiences can provide valuable insights and help identify areas for growth. This process is not about dwelling on mistakes but learning from them and moving forward with a renewed sense of purpose.

### **Setting Faith-Based Goals**

With reflection comes the opportunity to set new goals. These goals can be both spiritual and practical. For instance, a teenager might decide to dedicate more time to prayer, attend Mass more regularly, or get involved in community service. Setting specific, achievable goals can make the abstract idea of spiritual growth more tangible. It's important to remember that these goals should be personal and meaningful, reflecting each individual's unique journey of faith.

### **Deepening Spiritual Practices**

A new year is an excellent time to explore and deepen spiritual practices. This might include reading the Bible or other religious texts, participating in youth groups, or finding new ways to incorporate faith into daily routines. For example, starting each day with a short prayer or meditation can set a positive tone and keep faith at the forefront of one's mind. Engaging with the broader faith community can also provide support and encouragement, making the journey less solitary.

### **Embracing Community and Service**

Faith is not just a personal journey but also a communal one. Teenagers can look for ways to serve others and make a positive impact in their communities. Volunteering, participating in church activities, and supporting charitable causes are all ways to live out one's faith in practical terms. These actions not only help others but also reinforce the values of compassion, kindness, and service that are central to many religious teachings.

As teenagers in Ireland embrace the New Year, they have a unique opportunity to renew their commitment to their faith. By reflecting on the past, setting meaningful goals, deepening spiritual practices, and engaging with their communities, they can embark on a journey of personal and spiritual growth. **"A New Year, A New Me"** is more than just a slogan; **it's a call to action, inviting young people to live their faith more fully and authentically in the year ahead.**

## January 1st the Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God

This is the greatest title given to Our Lady.

The Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God is a liturgical celebration observed on January 1. In the past it was a holy day of obligation for Catholics, meaning that Mass attendance was required. The use of the word “solemnity” here is not a statement about Mary’s personality. It is a designation used for certain days within the liturgical (church-based) calendar of the Church. Solemnities are the highest rank of liturgical celebration, higher than feast days or memorials. By celebrating a solemnity dedicated to Mary’s motherhood, the Church highlights the significance of her role in the life of Christ.



[What Does the Solemnity of Mary Mean? - Busted Halo](#)

## January 1<sup>st</sup> Pope’s World Day of Peace message: ‘We are all in debt to God’



In his message for the 58<sup>th</sup> World Day of Peace marked on 1 January, Pope Francis reflects on the central theme of the upcoming Jubilee of Hope and reiterates his pressing appeal for debt forgiveness, reminding us that we are all “debtors” to God and one another.

[January 1st : World Day of Peace](#)

[LVIII World Day of Peace 2025 - “Forgive us our trespasses: grant us your peace” | Francis](#)

## The Magi

They brought their gifts

They brought their gifts: gold, frankincense and  
myrrh.

Fit for a king and welcomed by parents.

And what do we bring?

If we think that Jesus later in life valued the gifts  
more than the journey, then we don't know Jesus.

What he saw was more the way they travelled than what they carried.

A search for God's way, following a star,  
keeping faith. Was it not a journey of love?

We bring our love to God. Love with all its flaws and delights,  
its successes and failures.

The love that remained true in difficulties and the love that once strong grew  
weak.

The efforts to love are our gift as well as the love that worked out well.

The love that died in marriage and divorce, the love gone wrong in a family,  
the love that waned in friendship.

God sees the love of the past as well as the love of the present.

He looks on our journey of life, and sees in it the footsteps of love,  
the stars that guided us to love and which guided others through love.

He sees the faithfulness to others which was a star of the journey.

And the stars of love in our lives were stars of his making,

for he is the child of love – the love of Mary, the love of God:

and he is the source of love for through him all things were made,  
through him all love was created and in him all love is kept in being.

Donal Neary SJ



## The Feast of the Epiphany, January 6th

The Feast of the Epiphany, celebrated on January 6<sup>th</sup>, holds significant meaning for Catholic teenagers in Ireland today. This feast day commemorates the visit of the Magi to the infant Jesus, symbolizing the revelation of Christ to the Gentiles. For Irish teens, Epiphany can be a time of reflection and spiritual growth.

In Ireland, Epiphany is also known as "Nollaig na mBan" or "Women's Christmas," a day when women traditionally take a break from household duties and celebrate together. This tradition can inspire teenagers to appreciate and honour the contributions of women in their lives and communities.

Epiphany encourages inclusivity and acceptance, as the Magi were non-Jews, highlighting that Jesus came for all people. This message is particularly relevant in today's diverse society, urging teens to embrace and respect different cultures and backgrounds.

The gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh brought by the Magi symbolize different aspects of Jesus' identity. Reflecting on these gifts can inspire teenagers to consider their own talents and how they can use them to serve others and their community.

Participating in Epiphany traditions, such as attending Mass, sharing special meals, and engaging in acts of kindness, can help Irish teenagers deepen their faith and connect with their heritage. Epiphany offers a meaningful opportunity for spiritual renewal and community bonding, fostering a sense of belonging and purpose in their lives.



**Prayer Service to mark the**

## Feast of the Epiphany

January 6, 2025

### GATHERING AS A SCHOOL COMMUNITY TO PRAY

**Leader:** Welcome everyone, we gather today to celebrate the feast of the Epiphany. This feast commemorates the final guests who travelled many miles to greet the baby Jesus in the stable in Bethlehem. The Gospel describes these visitors as the Magi or the wise men, who followed a star across the desert to pay homage to the baby Jesus. Tradition tells us that their names were Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar. The men were astrologers who were looking for the star that would lead them to the promised Messiah as prophesied in the Book of Micah.



\*You will see the open boxes in our sacred space; these three boxes symbolise the gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh which the wise men brought with them to offer to Jesus in Bethlehem; according to the Gospel story, these gifts were very meaningful.

**Reader One:** Gold was a precious and expensive gift; the wise men offered this in homage to the Kingship of Jesus, as a symbol of their *hearts* offering love.

**Reader Two:** Frankincense was a sweet perfume, often burned in the temple to worship God. The wise men offered this in homage to the Divinity of Jesus and as a symbol of their *minds* offering wonder and awe.

**Reader Three:** Myrrh was used to keep things fresh and would later be used by the women to anoint Jesus' body when he died. The wise men offered this in homage to the Humanity of Jesus and as a symbol of their *bodies* offering to worship and serve.

**Leader:** Let us look at these open boxes in our sacred space and reflect for a moment as we gather here today. What gifts can we offer to Jesus? [Pause] We pray that God will open our hearts to love, worship and serve His Son, as the

Magi once did. Let us listen to the story of how they found the Holy Family by following a star:

*Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East and have come to worship him." Matthew 2:1-2, RSV*



**Gospel Reading: Matthew 2:1-12 [Good News Bible]**  
Visitors from the East

Jesus was born in the town of Bethlehem in Judea, during the time when Herod was king. Soon afterwards, some men who studied the stars came from the east to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the baby born to be the king of the Jews? We saw his star when it came up in the east, and we have come to worship him."

When King Herod heard about this, he was very upset, and so was everyone else in Jerusalem. He called together all the chief priests and the teachers of the Law and asked them, "Where will the Messiah be born?"

"In the town of Bethlehem in Judea," they answered. "For this is what the prophet wrote: 'Bethlehem in the land of Judah, you are by no means the least of the leading cities of Judah; for from you will come a leader who will guide my people Israel.'"

Herod called the visitors from the east to a secret meeting and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem with these instructions: "Go and make a careful search for the child, and when you find him, let me know, so that I too may go and worship him."

And so they left, and on their way they saw the same star they had seen in the east. When they saw it, how happy they were, what joy was theirs! It went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was.

They went into the house, and when they saw the child with his mother Mary, they knelt down and worshipped him. They brought out their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh and presented them to him.



Then they returned to their own country by another road, since God had warned them in a dream not to go back to Herod.

The Gospel of the Lord

**All:** Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

**Reader 1:** The wise men were brave. They left their home and their families without being sure of the way. [Pause]

Let us consider those who have embarked on journeys in more recent times; the people who have left their homes in Syria, like the Magi, uncertain of what the road ahead may bring. May God guide them and bring them to a place where they know lasting peace and safe lodgings.

**Reader 2:** Having met Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus, the wise men returned home. They returned to tell the good news about the new leader to their families and friends. [Pause]



The story of the birth of Jesus reminds us of the Good News that God is always with us. Let us remember this in a very special way today as we begin a new year and a new term together. The response to each prayer is, 'God is with us.'

**Reader 3:** As we return after our Christmas celebrations.

**All:** God is with us.

**Reader 4:** As we begin a new year.

**All:** God is with us.

**Reader 5:** As we keep the spirit of Christmas alive in our heart.

**All:** God is with us.

**Reader 6:** We remember those for whom Christmas has not been a happy time. For those who have been affected by the recent flooding, for those who are homeless, for those who are suffering bereavement and those who are worried for whatever reason, we ask God to be with them as we pray:

**All:** Our Father/Ár nÁthair

### Closing Prayer

**Leader:**

**Lord our God,** we thank you that you have come to this earth, born in a humble stable in Bethlehem. Allow your light to shine out again and again, among those who hear your Gospel, among those with sincere hearts, whether they are Christians. May they come to know your light and peace in Jesus Christ. May your light shine for us and may you appear to us ever more clearly. Remember all who call to you. Remember your people. May your people gather and become a light in your name, serving you wherever they go. We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

**Amen**



This prayer service is an adaptation of The Feast of the Epiphany Resources shared on the Irish Conference of Catholic Bishops website. You can view the full and original document by downloading the following PDF:

<http://www.catholicbishops.ie/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Feast-of-the-Epiphany.pdf>



**Commentary for the Readings on the Feast of the Epiphany: (Optional)** "There came Magi from the East to Jerusalem, saying, 'Where is the newly born King of the Jews?...We have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him'" (Gospel).

Epiphany means "an apparition, or manifestation" of

God becoming visible to all the world; Jews & Gentiles (non-Jews) alike. Today Jesus manifests a new “kingdom”, to which the starlight of “faith” guides all wise men & women (Prayer).

The First reading [Isaiah 60:1-6] is a revealing picture of the "darkness" of the Jewish Old Testament; a prophecy also of the "brightness" of Christ shining in a world where men may now "see."

The Gospel tells of the faith of the "Magi" divinely guided by the "star"; how this faith manifested itself in action by their seeking instruction from God's priests, by paying the greatest respect to Jesus by bowing low and offering their best treasures before the baby Jesus in Mary's arms:

A truly great Feast! "Arise, be enlightened."

— Excerpted from *My Sunday Missal*, (Confraternity of the Precious Blood)

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Participating in Epiphany traditions, such as attending Mass, sharing special meals, and engaging in acts of kindness, can help Irish teenagers deepen their faith and connect with their heritage. Epiphany offers a meaningful opportunity for spiritual renewal and community bonding, fostering a sense of belonging and purpose in their lives.

# Pope Francis' 2025 Monthly Intentions

**JANUARY 2025**



## **For The Right To An Education**

Let us pray for migrants, refugees and those affected by war, that their right to an education, which is necessary to build a better world, might always be respected.

**JUBILEE YEAR  
2025**

CHRISTMAS EVE 2024 - 6 JANUARY 2026



## **What is a Jubilee Year?**

A Jubilee Year is celebrated by the Church every 25 years. This Jubilee Year begins on **Christmas Eve 2024** and concludes on **6 January 2026**.

In the Catholic Church, a Jubilee or Holy Year is a special year of **forgiveness** and **reconciliation**, in which people are invited to come back into **right relationship** with **God**, with **one another**, and with **all of creation**.

## **The Jubilee Prayer**

Father in heaven,  
may the *faith* you have given us  
in your son, Jesus Christ, our brother,  
and the flame of *charity* enkindled  
in our hearts by the Holy Spirit,  
reawaken in us the blessed *hope*  
for the coming of your Kingdom.

May your grace transform us  
into tireless cultivators of the seeds of the Gospel.  
May those seeds transform from within both humanity and the  
whole cosmos  
in the sure expectation  
of a new heaven and a new earth,  
when, with the powers of Evil vanquished,  
your glory will shine eternally.

May the grace of the Jubilee  
reawaken in us, *Pilgrims of Hope*,  
a yearning for the treasures of heaven.  
May that same grace spread  
the joy and peace of our Redeemer  
throughout the earth.  
To you our God, eternally blessed,  
be glory and praise for ever.  
Amen.



## GIFT ME WITH YOUR LOVE

Aglow with star – fire and God – light,  
This day is sun – soaked in Your love.

Morning prayer of praise rises,  
In the eternal fountain of my heart.  
Awaken me as You breathe upon me.

Send me a new melody of love.

My spirit longs for nurture.  
Open wide my pilgrim heart.  
In the integrity of my being,  
Gift me with Your blessedness.

Silence the competing voices within.

Let Your Word take root.  
Listening to the dream unfolding,  
Every little gleam of light,  
Becomes a channel of Your peace.

Hearing the inner voice  
Of the God beyond my grasp,  
I stay awake in the darkness,  
Open to the miracle of prayer.  
There in that place, I am alone,  
To pause, to rest, to linger.  
Healed by the touch of God.

He is born in me.

## The Jubilee Logo



The logo shows four figures stylised to indicate humanity coming from the four corners of the earth. They are embracing each other to indicate the solidarity and brotherhood which joins the peoples. The figure at the head is holding onto the cross. It is not only the sign of the faith which embraces, but also of the hope which can never be abandoned because we are always in need

of hope, especially in moments of great need. It is helpful to observe the rough waves underneath; this indicates that life's pilgrimage does not always move in calm waters. Life's circumstances and the events of the world often demand a greater call to hope and because of this we see that the lower part of the cross has been turned into an anchor which stands out in the wave. As is well known, the anchor has often been used as a metaphor of hope and as a matter of fact, the anchor of hope is the name used in maritime jargon as the name given to the reserve anchor used by vessels involved in emergency manoeuvres to stabilise the boat during storms. Do not ignore the fact that the image demonstrates that the pilgrim's journey is not individual, but communal and marked by a growing vitality leading one always closer to the cross, which is itself by no means static, but also dynamic. It turns towards humanity, not leaving it alone but going out and meeting it to offer it the certainty of its presence and the sureness of hope. Finally, the motto of the 2025 Jubilee Year: *Pelegrinantes in Spem* (Pilgrims in hope), is very visible in green.

<https://www.iubilaeum2025.va/en/notizie/comunicati/2022/logo-giubileo-2025.html>

## What and Where is the Holy Door?

From a symbolic viewpoint, the Holy Door takes on a special significance: it is the most powerful sign of the Jubilee, since the aim of the pilgrim is to pass through it. The opening of the door by the Pope constitutes the official beginning of the Holy Year. Originally, there was only one door, at the Basilica of St. John Lateran, which is the cathedral of the Bishop of Rome. Later, to allow as many pilgrims as possible to take part in the Jubilee experience, the other Roman Basilicas also opened their own holy doors.



In crossing the threshold of the Holy Door, the pilgrim is reminded of the passage from chapter 10 of St John's gospel: "I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture." Passing through the Holy Door expresses the decision to follow and be guided by Jesus, who is the Good Shepherd. The door is a passageway that ushers the pilgrim into the interior of a church. For the Christian community, a church is not only a sacred space, to be approached with respect, with appropriate behaviour and dress code, but it is a symbol of the communion that binds every believer to Christ: it is a place of encounter and dialogue, of reconciliation and peace which awaits every pilgrim, the Church is essentially the place of the community of the faithful.

In Rome, this experience takes on a special significance because of the special links between the Eternal City and Saints Peter and Paul, the apostles who founded the Christian community in Rome and whose teachings and example are models for the universal Church. The tombs of Saints Peter and Paul are located in Rome, they were martyred here; and together with the catacombs, these sacred sites are places of continuous spiritual inspiration.

<https://www.iubilaeum2025.va/en/giubileo-2025/segni-del-giubileo/porta-santa.html>

## Where will Holy Doors be opened?

Holy Doors will be opened by Pope Francis in:

- St Peter's Basilica (Dec 24th)
- Saint John Lateran (Dec 29th)
- Saint Mary Major (Jan 1st)
- Saint Paul Outside-the-Walls (Jan 5th)
- Rome's Rebibbia Prison (Dec 26th).



- **Where can I find more information?**
- **For more information, check out [www.waterfordlismore.ie/jubilee2025](http://www.waterfordlismore.ie/jubilee2025)**
- Official Vatican site: <https://www.iubilaeum2025.va/en.html>
- [Letter from Pope Francis](#)
- [Calendar of Major Events in Rome](#)

For Jubilee Year 2025, each diocese in Ireland will nominate a local pilgrimage site, and the bishops have designated the following three as national pilgrimage sites:

- **Our Lady's Shrine, Knock, Co Mayo**
  - **Croagh Patrick, Co Mayo**
- **Saint Patrick's Purgatory, Lough Derg, Co Donegal**

Another focus of hope during the Jubilee Year will be the commemoration and appreciation of the great heritage of saints and martyrs we have in Ireland. In 2025, there will be a special commemoration to mark the birth, in 1625, of Saint Oliver Plunkett 400 years ago, and also to mark the one hundredth anniversary of the death of Venerable Matt Talbot.

**January 12<sup>th</sup>**  
**Feast of the Baptism of our Lord**

Today the Church celebrates the Feast of the Baptism of Our Lord. The Baptism of the Lord commemorates the Baptism of Jesus Christ by St. John the Baptist. This brings to an end the season of Christmas. The baptism of Jesus is reported in each of the three Synoptic Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Clearly, Jesus' baptism was an event of great significance for Jesus and for the early Christian community.

Mark and Luke report the story from Jesus' perspective; the voice from heaven is addressed to Jesus. In Matthew's Gospel, the voice from heaven speaks to all

who are present. The descent of the Holy Spirit on Jesus at his baptism shows that something new is beginning through the baptism and ministry of Jesus.

[The Baptism of the Lord, Cycle B | Loyola Press](#)

[Jesus Baptism in Jordan River - YouTube](#)

[Why Jesus Was Baptized | Catholic Answers Magazine](#)

## ***St Anthony of Egypt Feast Day***

*January 17th*



St. Anthony of Egypt, also known as St. Anthony the Great, is celebrated on January 17th. His life and legacy offer profound lessons that are highly relevant to teenagers in Ireland today. Known as the "Father of Monasticism," St. Anthony's journey of faith, discipline, and resilience provides timeless guidance for young people navigating the complexities of modern life.

### **Embracing Simplicity and Focus**

St. Anthony's decision to renounce his wealth and live a life of simplicity in the desert is a powerful example of prioritizing spiritual and personal growth over material possessions

For teenagers in Ireland, who are often bombarded with consumerist messages and societal pressures, St. Anthony's life encourages them to focus on what truly matters. Embracing simplicity can help them find clarity and purpose, reducing the distractions that can lead to stress and anxiety.

St. Anthony faced numerous challenges, including temptations and spiritual battles.

His resilience and unwavering faith in overcoming these obstacles are particularly inspiring for teenagers. In a world where mental health issues and societal pressures are prevalent, St. Anthony's story teaches young people the

importance of resilience and the power of faith in overcoming personal struggles. His example encourages them to persevere through difficulties and to seek strength in their spiritual beliefs.

St. Anthony spent significant time in solitude, using it as an opportunity for deep reflection and prayer

For teenagers, who often lead busy and connected lives, the concept of solitude can be a valuable lesson. Taking time for personal reflection and disconnecting from the constant noise of social media and peer pressure can lead to greater self-awareness and inner peace. St. Anthony's practice of solitude highlights the importance of finding moments of quiet to connect with oneself and with God.

St. Anthony's life was marked by his commitment to living with purpose and integrity. He dedicated himself to a life of prayer, fasting, and service to others. For teenagers, this serves as a reminder to live authentically and to align their actions with their values. In a world where they may feel pressured to conform, St. Anthony's example encourages them to stay true to their beliefs and to pursue a life of meaning and virtue.

St. Anthony of Egypt's life offers rich lessons for teenagers in Ireland today. His embrace of simplicity, resilience in the face of challenges, value of solitude, and commitment to living with purpose and integrity are all highly relevant. By reflecting on St. Anthony's legacy, young people can find inspiration and guidance to navigate their own lives with faith, strength, and clarity.

[Into the desert with St Anthony of Egypt - The Irish Catholic](#) an article by Lauretta Brown



## Church Unity Octave January 18<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup>

### **The Importance of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in 2025 for Young People in Ireland**

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, observed annually from January 18 to 25, holds profound significance in 2025, especially for the youth in Ireland. This week is dedicated to fostering unity among Christians of various denominations, promoting a spirit of ecumenism, and encouraging collective reflection on shared faith. For young people in Ireland, this observance is as crucial now as it has ever been, given the contemporary challenges and opportunities they face.

### **Historical Context and Modern Relevance**

Ireland has a rich Christian heritage, with deep-rooted traditions in both Catholicism and Protestantism. Historically, these religious affiliations have sometimes been sources of division. However, in recent decades, there has been a concerted effort towards reconciliation and unity. The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity serves as a reminder of this ongoing journey towards healing and collaboration. For young people, who are often at the forefront of social change, participating in this week can be a powerful act of solidarity and hope.

### **Addressing Contemporary Challenges**

In 2025, young people in Ireland are navigating a complex landscape marked by rapid technological advancements, social media influence, and global interconnectedness. These factors can both unite and divide. The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity offers a counterbalance to the often-fragmented digital world, providing a space for young people to come together in person, share their faith experiences, and build meaningful relationships across denominational lines.

### **Promoting Inclusivity and Understanding**

One of the key messages of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is inclusivity. For the youth, this is particularly resonant as they are growing up in an increasingly diverse society. Engaging in ecumenical activities helps young

people appreciate the richness of different Christian traditions and fosters a culture of mutual respect and understanding. This inclusivity is essential for building a cohesive community where differences are celebrated rather than feared.

### **Encouraging Active Faith and Social Responsibility**

The observance of this week also encourages young people to live out their faith actively. Through prayer, dialogue, and joint community service projects, they can experience the practical implications of Christian unity. This active engagement not only strengthens their faith but also instils a sense of social responsibility. By working together on common goals, such as addressing poverty, promoting peace, and supporting mental health initiatives, young people can make a tangible impact on their communities.

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in 2025 is a vital observance for young people in Ireland. It provides an opportunity to reflect on their shared faith, address contemporary challenges, promote inclusivity, and encourage active social responsibility. As they come together in prayer and action, young people can lead the way in building a more united and compassionate society, embodying the true spirit of Christian unity.

**Teachers play a crucial role in supporting their students during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Here are some ways they can help:**

You could organize lessons and activities that educate students about the history and significance of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. This can include:

- **Guest Speakers:** Invite local clergy or community leaders from different Christian denominations to speak about their traditions and the importance of unity.

Creating a safe space for open dialogue is essential. Teachers can:

Form **small groups** where students can share their thoughts and experiences related to their faith.

Encourage **respectful debates** on topics related to Christian unity and diversity.

Teachers can plan activities that bring students together in meaningful ways:

- **Prayer Services:** Organize ecumenical prayer services where students from different denominations can pray together.
- **Community Service Projects:** Plan joint community service projects that allow students to work together towards a common goal, such as helping the less fortunate.

Teachers should emphasize the importance of inclusivity and respect for all traditions:

- Encourage students to learn about and celebrate the different Christian traditions represented in their school.
- Use language that is inclusive and respectful of all denominations.

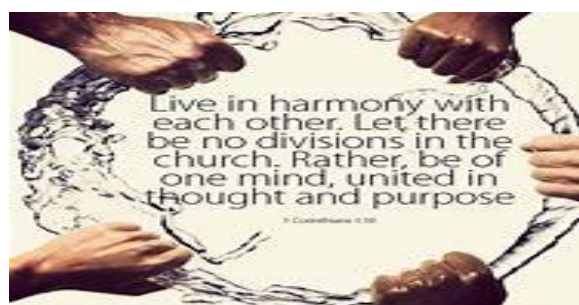
Teachers can guide students in personal reflection on the themes of unity and faith:

- Encourage students to keep a journal during the week to reflect on their experiences and thoughts.
- Provide time for personal meditation and prayer, allowing students to connect with their faith on a deeper level.

Teachers can lead by example by demonstrating unity and respect in their own interactions:

- Work with teachers from different denominations to co-teach lessons or organize events.
- Show respect for all traditions and encourage students to do the same.

By taking these steps, teachers can help their students appreciate the importance of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and inspire them to carry the spirit of unity into their daily lives.



## **Catholic Schools Week 2025 will run from Monday 27th January to Friday 31st January 2025 (Feast of St. John Bosco).**



*Note: Sunday 26th January is not being included in Catholic Schools Week as it is the Sunday of the Word of God.*

Catholic Schools Week 2025, themed "Alive in Christ," is an opportunity for our school community to celebrate and reflect on our **faith**, **values**, and **mission**. This week, running from January 27th to 31st, invites us to explore what it means to live fully in Christ, fostering a sense of unity, purpose, and hope among students, staff, and families. Here's how we can address this important week in our school.

### **Embracing the Theme: "Alive in Christ"**

The theme "Alive in Christ" encourages us to recognize and celebrate the presence of Christ in our lives. It calls us to reflect on how Christ brings youth, vitality, and renewal to our world. To embrace this theme, we can start by integrating it into our daily activities and curriculum. Morning assemblies can include reflections on how Christ's teachings inspire us to live fully and joyfully. Classroom discussions can focus on the ways we can embody Christ's love and compassion in our interactions with others.

### **Engaging Students Through Prayer and Worship**

Prayer and worship are central to Catholic Schools Week. We can organize special prayer services and Masses that highlight the theme. These services can be student-led, giving them a chance to actively participate and express their faith. Incorporating music, readings, and prayers that resonate with the theme will help students connect more deeply with the message of being "Alive in Christ."

### **Promoting Inclusivity and Community**

Catholic Schools Week is also a time to promote inclusivity and strengthen our sense of community. We can organize activities that bring together students from different grades and backgrounds. For example, buddy programs where older students mentor younger ones can foster a sense of belonging and

mutual support. Additionally, we can host interfaith dialogues and invite speakers from various Christian denominations to share their perspectives, promoting a broader understanding and respect for different traditions.

### **Encouraging Acts of Service**

Living "Alive in Christ" means serving others with love and compassion. We can encourage students to participate in community service projects during this week. Whether it's organizing a food drive, visiting a local nursing home, or cleaning up a community park, these acts of service help students put their faith into action. Service projects can be tied to classroom lessons on social justice, teaching students about the importance of helping those in need.

### **Integrating Faith into the Curriculum**

Catholic Schools Week provides an excellent opportunity to integrate faith into various subjects. In religion classes, students can explore the lives of saints who exemplified living fully in Christ. In literature, they can read and discuss stories that highlight themes of faith, hope, and love. Science classes can include discussions on the wonders of creation and our responsibility to care for the environment as stewards of God's creation.

### **Celebrating Grandparents' Day**

A special highlight of Catholic Schools Week is Grandparents' Day, typically celebrated on the Wednesday of the week. This day allows us to honour the wisdom and love of grandparents and their role in passing down the faith. We can invite grandparents to join us for a special Mass, followed by classroom visits where they can share stories and experiences with the students. This intergenerational exchange enriches our community and strengthens family bonds.

### **Reflecting on Our Mission**

Finally, Catholic Schools Week is a time to reflect on our school's mission / ethos and how we are living it out. We can hold workshops and discussions with staff, students, and parents to evaluate our progress and set goals for the future. This reflection helps us stay focused on our commitment to providing a faith-based education that nurtures the whole person—mind, body, and spirit.

Catholic Schools Week 2025 is a valuable opportunity for our school to celebrate our faith, strengthen our community, and inspire our students to live



fully "Alive in Christ." By embracing the theme through prayer, worship, service, and inclusive activities, we can create a vibrant and faith-filled environment that supports the spiritual growth of everyone in our school community.

[Catholic Schools Week 2025 – Alive in Christ! | Catholic Education Partnership](#)

Reflection:

ENTER THE DARK NIGHT

Awaken to the alluring beauty Of your destiny.

Trust in that voice At the centre of your being.

In the silent depths of the Spirit, God speaks.

Deep in your buried heart, Lies the seed of the Divine.

Illumined by the steady Radiance of wonder,

We walk in the fresh Spring sunlight, Of God's healing love.

He is busy seeking us. Become the beauty

In whose image, We are fashioned.

Tune into the vibrating energy of God. Let God walk through

The room of your heart. Hear the cry of your inner voice,

A calling voice that we can answer.

Empty your soul, Until nothing is left.

Hide your face in the mystery Of Divine silence.

Merge with the very heart of God. This is the dark night –

To know there is more and more to God.

## The Conversion of St. Paul,

January 25th



The Conversion of St. Paul, celebrated on January 25th, holds profound significance for teenagers today. This event, where Saul of Tarsus transformed from a fierce persecutor of Christians to one of the most influential apostles, offers several valuable lessons and inspirations for young people.

St. Paul's conversion is a powerful testament to the possibility of profound personal change. For teenagers, who are in a critical phase of self-discovery and growth, Paul's story illustrates that no matter their past actions or beliefs, they have the potential to change and grow into better versions of themselves. This message is particularly relevant in a world where young people often face pressure to conform to certain identities or behaviour.

Paul's story is a vivid reminder that everyone deserves a second chance. Teenagers today can sometimes feel overwhelmed by their mistakes or failures. Paul's conversion shows that redemption is always possible, and that past mistakes do not define one's future. This can encourage young people to forgive themselves and others, fostering a culture of compassion and understanding.

After his conversion, Paul became a fervent advocate for Christianity, often facing persecution and hardship. His courage to stand up for his beliefs, despite opposition, is a powerful example for teenagers. In an age where peer pressure and the desire for acceptance can be intense, Paul's story encourages young people to remain steadfast in their values and beliefs, even when it is difficult.

Paul's encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus was a moment of divine intervention that changed his life. For teenagers, this underscores the importance of being open to guidance and seeking a deeper understanding of their faith. It highlights that moments of clarity and direction can come unexpectedly, and being receptive to these moments can lead to significant personal growth.

Paul was a highly educated and passionate individual. After his conversion, he used his talents to spread the message of Christianity far and wide. This teaches teenagers the importance of using their skills and passions for positive purposes. It encourages them to find ways to contribute to their communities and make a difference in the world.

Paul's life after his conversion was not easy; he faced numerous challenges and persecutions. However, his resilience and unwavering faith allowed him to overcome these obstacles. This aspect of his story can inspire teenagers to develop resilience and perseverance in the face of their own challenges, understanding that difficulties can be overcome with faith and determination.

The Conversion of St. Paul is a rich source of inspiration for teenagers today. It teaches them about the power of transformation, the value of second chances, the courage to stand up for their beliefs, the importance of faith, the use of talents for good, and resilience in adversity. By reflecting on Paul's journey, young people can find guidance and motivation to navigate their own paths with faith, courage, and purpose.

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/>

Let us pray for all students in our care undergoing Mock examinations:



Lord, pour out your Spirit of Wisdom on these students: help them to remain calm, to attend carefully to the questions asked, to think clearly, to remember accurately, and to express themselves well. Grant that they may reflect on the best of the work they have done and the best of the teaching they have received. Accept their best efforts in these examinations and in the great test of life on earth. May your love be upon them, O Lord, as they place all their trust in you. We ask this through Christ our Lord. AMEN

## Reflection

(For our "feeling useless moments")

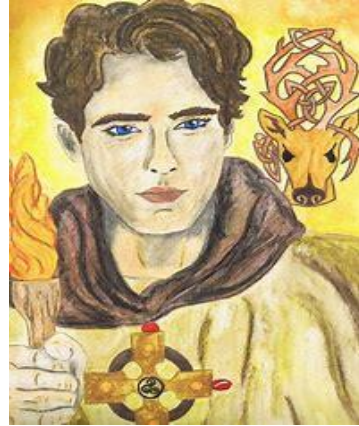


One song can spark a moment  
one flower can wake a dream.  
One tree can start a forest;  
one bird can herald spring.  
One smile begins a friendship;  
one handclap lifts a soul.  
One star can guide a ship at sea;  
one word can frame the goal.  
One vote can change a nation;  
one sunbeam lights a room.  
One candle wipes out darkness;  
one laugh can conquer gloom.  
One step can start a journey;  
one word can start a prayer  
One hope can raise our spirits;  
one touch can show you care.  
One voice can speak with wisdom;  
one heart can know what's true.  
One life can make a difference;  
you see...it's up to you"

St. Aidan of Lindisfarne

January 30th

The life of St. Aidan of Lindisfarne offers several valuable lessons for teenagers today. His dedication to faith, humility, and service provides timeless principles that can guide young people in their own lives.



St. Aidan was known for his humility and simple lifestyle. Despite being a bishop, he chose to travel on foot rather than on horseback, which allowed him to connect more closely with the people he served

For teenagers, this teaches the importance of humility and the value of living simply. In a world often focused on materialism and status, Aidan's example encourages young people to prioritize relationships and service over possessions and prestige.

Aidan established a monastery on Lindisfarne that became a centre of learning and missionary work

He believed in the power of education to transform lives and communities. Teenagers can learn from Aidan's commitment to education by valuing their own learning opportunities and understanding that education is a powerful tool for personal and societal change.

Aidan was a man of deep prayer and spirituality. He often retreated to the Isle of Farne for solitude and prayer. This highlights the importance of spiritual growth and the need for regular reflection and prayer. Teenagers can take from this the importance of setting aside time for personal reflection, prayer, or meditation to nurture their spiritual well-being.

Aidan was not afraid to share his faith and evangelize, even in challenging circumstances

He approached people with kindness and patience, understanding their needs and meeting them where they were. For teenagers, this teaches the

importance of standing firm in their beliefs and sharing their values with others in a respectful and compassionate manner.

Aidan's life was marked by his service to others. He was known for his generosity, often giving away his possessions to those in need

This selflessness is a powerful lesson for teenagers about the importance of helping others and making a positive impact in their communities. Acts of service, no matter how small, can make a significant difference.

Aidan faced numerous challenges in his mission, including resistance and hardship

However, he remained resilient and committed to his work. Teenagers can learn from his example the importance of perseverance and resilience when facing their own challenges. Difficulties are a part of life, but with determination and faith, they can be overcome.

The life of St. Aidan of Lindisfarne offers rich lessons for teenagers today. His humility, commitment to education, dedication to prayer, courage to share his faith, service to others, and resilience in the face of challenges are all qualities that can inspire and guide young people. By emulating these virtues, teenagers can navigate their own lives with purpose, compassion, and strength.

### **Pope John Paul 11 Awards**



Congratulations to the 19 students at Colaiste Lorcaín in Castledermot, who received their Gold, Silver and Bronze Awards on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> December. We would like to thank each one of them for their contribution to the life of their Community in the past year, and to encourage you to continue the spirit of volunteering at local level. We extend our thanks also to their Award Leaders Ms Marie Murphy and Ms Natasha Geoghegan and Fr Kennedy who supported them on their journey.



Gaisce Award recipients from Coláiste Lorcain with Fr Kennedy PP, Natasha Geoghegan and their Award Leader Ms Marie Murphy.



*Sharing Good News* is the newsletter of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference. If you would like receive this weekly ezine, you can do so at <https://catholicnews.ie/newsletter/>. You are encouraged to invite others to do so too. Send articles and photographs for use in *Sharing Good News* to [info@catholicbishops.ie](mailto:info@catholicbishops.ie).

## **January 19th: World Religion Day**

Our World has hundreds of nations with thousands of cultures that stretch back into pre-

history, and throughout all that time we have had countless religions rise to prominence. Whether you are Hindu, Jewish, Catholic, Shinto, Buddhist, or one of a million other faiths, World Religion Day is your chance to share your culture with others and take an opportunity to learn from others about theirs. The aim of World Religion Day, held on the third Sunday in January every year, is to promote inter-faith understanding and harmony. Through a variety of events held around the globe, followers of every religion are encouraged to acknowledge the similarities that different faiths have.

[WORLD RELIGION DAY - January 19, 2025 - National Today](#)

## **January 20<sup>th</sup> Martin Luther King Day**

Martin Luther King Day is a federal holiday held on the third Monday of January. It celebrates the life and achievements of Martin Luther King Jr., an influential American civil rights leader. The 1968 assassination of civil rights icon Martin Luther King Jr. stunned the nation, but his work continues to inspire the pursuit of racial equality in America.

On August 28, 1963, more than 250,000 people gathered on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., to hear what is now considered one of the most powerful speeches in history. A young Baptist minister named Martin Luther King Jr. addressed the crowd, assembled that day for the March on Washington, a protest rally he helped organise.

“I have a dream, that one day this nation will rise up [and] live out the true meaning of its creed: We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal”.

[I Have a Dream speech by Martin Luther King .Jr HD \(subtitled\)](#)



## January 29<sup>th</sup> Holocaust Memorial Day

Holocaust Education Ireland aims to educate and inform people about the Holocaust. The National Holocaust Memorial Day commemoration takes place in Dublin every year on the Sunday nearest to the 27 of January, in the Mansion House. It is organised under the auspices of Holocaust Education Trust Ireland in association with The Department of Justice and Equality and Dublin City Council.

The Holocaust Memorial Day commemoration cherishes the memory of all who perished in the Holocaust. It recalls six million Jewish men, women and children and millions of others who were persecuted and murdered by the Nazis because of their ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, political affiliations, or their religious beliefs. The ceremony includes readings, survivors' recollections, candle- lighting, and music. It is attended by people from all walks of life and is a moving and dignified event.

For more information and resources on this topic

[Holocaust Education Ireland](#)

[Holocaust Memorial Day Trust | HMD 2025 Theme](#)

### God Counts on Us

Only God can create

But we are called upon to value that creation

Only God can give life

But we are called to transmit it and respect it.

Only God can make growth happen

But we are called to guide it and give it direction.

Only God can give faith

But we are called to be signs of God for one another.

Only God can give love

But we are called to grow in caring for each other.

Only God can give hope

But we are called to enable people to believe in themselves

Only God can give power and energy

But we are called upon to get things going.

Only God can give peace

But we are called to build bonds that bring people together.

Only God can give happiness

But we are invited to laugh.

Only God is the way

But we are called to show it to others.

Only God is the light

But we are called to let it shine forth in the world.

Only God can make miracles happen

But we are invited to offer our five loaves and two fishes.

Only God can do the impossible

But it is up to us to do what is possible

**This Year reach out and choose to be God's hands, eyes, ears, feet, and voice each day on earth.**



*Happy New Year 2025*