



The theme of this year's Catholic Schools Week is

Catholic Schools: Communities of Faith and Resilience.

It has been a very challenging year for our students, and we hope to refocus our students' minds to see how strong each and every one of them is.

This year, Catholic Schools Week runs from Sunday, 24 January to Sunday, 31 January.

The theme for each day is as follows:

Monday:

Catholic Schools: Communities of Faith and Resilience – Faith

Tuesday:

Catholic Schools: Communities of Faith and Resilience – Community

Wednesday:

Catholic Schools: Communities of Faith and Resilience – Love

Thursday:

Catholic Schools: Communities of Faith and Resilience – Challenges

Friday:

Catholic Schools: Communities of Faith and Resilience – Hope

No one could have foreseen during Catholic Schools Week 2020 how different life would be just twelve months later. Life for all of us has changed so much that it is not recognisable, comfortable or easy. Our focus on faith and resilience is to remind us of the powerful role our Catholic schools have in the lives of so many young people. It is a source of comfort, care, belonging and strength. It was so important for our students to return to school, not simply to get back into the academic life, but, more importantly, to reconnect with their friends and teachers – to experience community. We have focused the week around the three theological virtues – faith, hope and love – while acknowledging the challenges that

we are all facing at this present time and the need to feel a sense of belonging in our community again. Our prayer for each and every person in our school communities is:

When evil darkens our world, give us light. When despair numbs our souls, give us hope. When we stumble and fall, lift us up. When doubts assail us, give us faith. When nothing seems sure, give us trust. When ideals fade, give us vision. When we lose our way, be our guide! That we may find serenity in your presence, and purpose in doing your will.

John D. Rayner

Again, this year, resources for Catholic Schools Week will be available online. All lessons have resources for both Junior and Senior Cycle. Each lesson contains practices which support the national Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, as well as self-reflective practices as a way of supporting assessment in the classroom. They also provide extension exercises as an option for your students.

Log on to www.catholicschools.ie to download the CSW 2021 resources.

Praise be to you, my Lord.
With every blessing.

The Resource Writing Team



THOUGHTS FOR THE DAY

MONDAY

‘Our humanity, our community response, our faith and our dedication has served as a beacon for many during the darkness and difficulty of the last few months. Let us keep this beacon burning brightly to make sure no one is left alone as we forge a new normal in our lives’ (Deacon Brian Williams).

‘Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen’ (Heb 11:1). For many, their religious faith or their values have guided them like a beacon through the difficult experiences of 2020. Their faith and values have been a comfort through these challenging times. Often their faith and values have spilled over into service of those who are vulnerable, those who are not as resilient as they’d like to be. It hasn’t always been easy, but in faithfulness, creative ways through have been found.

TUESDAY

The Irish government’s plan for reopening our schools safely was based on five principles of wellbeing: (1) A sense of safety; (2) A sense of calm; (3) A sense of belonging and connectedness; (4) A sense of self-efficacy and school-community efficacy; and (5) A sense of hope. This Catholic Schools Week, we aim to support our Catholic schools with these principles of wellbeing. Commenting on the writing of St Paul, Fr Michael Mullins states that ‘The Church is the continuation of Christ’s presence in the world. Paul builds on this insight in his teaching that members of the community should function in mutual dependence and harmony like the parts of a human body’ (https://www.thinkingfaith.org/articles/20081126_1.htm). Therefore, our Catholic schools should reflect this. As a Catholic school community, we are all members of the one body. We work together to love one another. It can be very challenging, but our faith can support us. We remind ourselves that faith, hope and love nourish us – and the greatest of these is love.

WEDNESDAY

‘The glory of the young is their strength; the grey hair of experience is the splendour of the old’ (Prov 20:29). Today we remember that very special relationship between the young and the old. During the last year, younger people were unable to visit older people due to the COVID-19 restrictions. It became painfully obvious the important part that older people play in the lives of younger people. We had to become creative – using technology to video chat or paying a visit to gardens so as to communicate through the door or window. In his address to Italian bishops in 2013, Pope Francis states:

Hope and a future presuppose memory. The memory of our elderly people sustains us as we journey on. The future of society, and precisely of Italian society, is rooted in the elderly and in the young: the latter, because they have the strength and are of the age to carry history ahead; the former, because they are a living memory. A people that does not take care of its elderly, its children and its youth has no future, because it abuses both memory and promise.

The elderly and the youth are complementary and we can only thrive when that balance is considered.



THURSDAY

Challenges are part and parcel of life. However, this year has seen more challenges than usual for each and everyone of us. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus said, ‘Come to me, all who are weary and heavy-burdened and I will give you rest’ (Mt 11:28). It can be very difficult to see beyond our challenges at times. However, in our Catholic schools, we must be a living reminder of this gospel message. We must show our students the way to put our faith in God, even when things seem hopeless. We are all full of anxiety around the challenges that COVID-19 has brought into our lives and the lives of those we love. It may be very difficult to find God at the moment, but our Catholic faith shows us that God is with us. Jesus invites us to come to him and he will take care of us. Composer Bernard Sexton wrote a piece in dedication to the victims of COVID-19 and their families. The text of the refrain is very powerful with a scripture message that could give us all strength at this difficult time:

‘God will wipe away all tears, God will bring you home,
to the place he has prepared for you, you shall never be alone.
Storms may gather, evening fall, daylight turn to shade,
and when your earthly work is done, do not fear, be not afraid.’

FRIDAY

Speaking to an audience gathered in Rome in 2017, Pope Francis offered advice on how to remain hopeful: ‘where God has planted you, hope. Always hope.’ Pope Francis told the audience to ‘believe in the existence of the loftiest and most beautiful truths’ and trust that God, through the Holy Spirit, is ushering everything toward the good, toward the ‘embrace of Christ’. Believers are not alone in their faith; there are others who hope too: ‘The world walks thanks to the gaze of many men and women who have opened up breaches, who have built bridges, who have dreamed and believed, even when they heard derisive words around them.’

‘I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope’ (Ps 130:5). Hope brings all sorts of other good things with it – optimism, positivity, enthusiasm, courage, resilience, motivation. It is the gift that keeps on giving. And we can give that gift to the others in our wider network or community to help them get through challenging times. It’s not always easy, but we can work on it, develop it, pray for it, spread it and show it in the way we relate to others. It can be a light to show us the way, the energy to keep that light burning brightly, a vehicle to carry us on our way, a pit stop where we can refresh. It does not demand repayment – as poet Emily Dickinson wrote of hope: ‘never, in extremity/It asked a thing of me.’