



Catholic Schools Week 2018

Moment One: Families of Hope

Boards of Management

Introduction

The incarnation of the Word in a human family transformed the history of the world. Today, the beauty of this mystery continues to fill Christian families with hope and joy. At the heart of the mystery of Jesus' birth one discovers God's infinite love for humankind – a love that endures all things. In *Amoris Laetitia*, Pope Francis invites families to enter into the mystery of Nazareth in a meaningful way. The Catholic school as a 'family of families' is also subject to the Pope's invitation. By taking up this invitation, each of the families that make up our school family can recognise that love does not despair of the future. In fact, by this realisation, we can give authentic witness both at home and at school to a love that 'hopes all things' (90).

When we encounter and respond to God's love in this way our school family becomes a locus of Christian hope. In this context, 'hope' is best understood as 'the hope of one who knows that others can change, mature and radiate unexpected beauty and untold potential' (116). Pope Francis emphasises that 'this does not mean that everything will change in this life' (116). It involves, rather, realising that, though things may not always turn out as we wish, God may well make crooked lines straight and draw some good from the evil we endure in this world' (116). It is within this context that hope, in an authentically Christian way, comes into its own for 'it embraces the certainty of life after death' (117).

In *Amoris Laetitia*, Pope Francis affirms that 'each person, with all his or her failings, is called to the fullness of life in heaven. There, fully transformed by Christ's resurrection, every weakness, darkness and infirmity will pass away. There, the person's true being will shine forth in all its goodness and beauty' (117). This realisation should assist every member of the school family, particularly members of the Board of Management, in the midst of the hardship of this present life and the difficulties and challenges of daily school life, 'to see each person from a supernatural perspective, in the light of hope, and await the fullness that he or she will receive in the heavenly kingdom, even if it is not yet visible' (117).

Reflections

- Are there ways in which the Board of Management could do more to promote authentic Christian hope amongst the school family?
- Can you identify any way in which the Board of Management could better adopt a 'supernatural perspective' when engaging with members of the school family?
- Are there any ways in which the Board of Management could do more for the school by better assisting members of the school family who experience the death of a family member or a close friend?
- In what way can the Board of Management find support and encouragement from Christian hope when faced with difficult and challenging times?



Prayer

Prayer to the Holy Family

Jesus, Mary and Joseph,
in you we contemplate
the splendour of true love;
to you we turn with trust. Holy Family of Nazareth,
grant that our families too
may be places of communion and prayer,
authentic schools of the Gospel
and small domestic churches.
Holy Family of Nazareth,
may families never again experience
violence, rejection and division;
may all who have been hurt or scandalised
find ready comfort and healing.
Holy Family of Nazareth,
make us once more mindful
of the sacredness and inviolability of the family, and its beauty in God's plan.
Jesus, Mary and Joseph,
Graciously hear our prayer.
Amen.

(Prayer taken from Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* [The Joy of Love])

W

Watch

Overview of *Amoris Laetitia* by the Vatican Television Centre (CTV) (2 min 16 sec):
www.youtube.com/watch?v=mZelWQ70wbk

R

Read

Pope Francis, apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* (*The Joy of Love*), 1–3:
w2.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20160319_amoris-laetitia_en.pdf

Pope Francis, encyclical letter *Laudato Si'* (*On Care for our Common Home*), 84–8:
w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.pdf

Pope Francis, apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (*The Joy of the Gospel*), 59, 60, 142, 159:
w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.pdf

John Paul II, apostolic exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* (*The Role of the Christian Family*), 48:
w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_19811122_familiaris-consortio.pdf



Staff to Staff

Introduction

One of the fundamental challenges encountered by families today is undoubtedly that of raising their children amid the complexities and difficulties presented by today's cultural reality as well as the powerful influence of the media. In *Amoris Laetitia*, Pope Francis reaches out to families with reassurance and encouragement by reminding them that, 'Christian communities are called to offer support to the educational mission of families' (279). Parents rely on Catholic schools to ensure the basic instruction of their children, but never completely delegate the moral formation of their children to others. As teachers in Catholic schools, we do not move towards replacing parents but towards complementarity, assisting parents in their duty to raise their children. This complementarity is animated by God's infinite love for humankind and characterised by authentic Christian hope. This hope-filled dimension of our educational mission as teachers working in Catholic schools makes an important contribution not only to the building up of society, but also to the building up of the Kingdom of God. In recognising this reality and by responding to it, teachers create a safe and supportive environment for all members of the school family. From this standpoint, Pope Francis emphasises that 'Catholic schools should be encouraged in their mission to help pupils to grow into mature adults who can view the world with the love of Jesus and who can understand life as a call to serve God' (279). Amidst the challenges of daily school life it is not always easy to uphold this responsibility; therefore, it is important that we, as teachers working in Catholic schools, take this opportunity to reflect and discuss with our colleagues the centrality of Christian hope to our educational mission.

Reflection

'For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.' (Rm 8:24–5)

'So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal.' (2 Cor 4:16–18)

- The above scriptural references are concerned with the concept of Christian hope. Write a diary entry for one day of the week. Try to account for the various ways in which your activity that day expressed authentic Christian hope and how this manifestation impacted your school or your classroom environment. Having completed the diary entry, reflect on the concept of Christian hope and the potential that it embodies to positively affect both our outward and inward lives. Could your daily activity have given richer expression to Christian hope?
- Watch the following video of Pope Francis' general audience (1 February 2017) www.youtube.com/watch?v=tUXlfnLRtik (2 min). Discuss Pope Francis' mediation on Christian hope with other members of staff. From your discussion, discern two ways in which members of staff could give greater expression to Christian hope in the daily life of the school.



Prayer

Prayer for Families

We bless your name, O Lord,
for sending your own incarnate Son,
to become part of a family,
so that, as he lived its life,
he would experience its worries and its joys.

We ask you, Lord,
to protect and watch over this family,
so that in the strength of your grace
its members may enjoy prosperity,
possess the priceless gift of your peace,
and, as the Church alive in the home,
bear witness in this world to your glory.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

(Prayer from United States Conference of Catholic Bishops)