



Celebrating Catholic Schools Week 2017 in Your Parish

Catholic Schools: Learning with Pope Francis to Care for Our Common Home

Catholic Schools Week 2017 begins on Sunday, 29 January, the Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time. This is the ninth year of celebrating the wonderful contribution that our Catholic schools, both primary and post-primary, make to the mission of the Church in our local faith communities and throughout the wider Church. It is only fitting that we take this opportunity to celebrate that work when we gather as a worshipping community at the beginning or conclusion of Catholic Schools Week, and that we consider other ways in which the parish community can honour and support the school community during this week-long celebration. There are obviously a variety of ways in which parishes might choose to celebrate Catholic Schools Week and the following are just some suggestions that might help.

Sunday, 29 January

Celebration of the Eucharist for the Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

The parish liturgy group will obviously be very useful in helping to prepare for this Mass. Encourage them to make Catholic Schools Week part of the annual life of the parish. It will always begin on the last Sunday in January.

Planning Meeting

Arrange a meeting with the principals and teachers of primary and post-primary schools in the weeks prior to Catholic Schools Week and discuss the various ways that the theme of Catholic Schools Week can be highlighted and celebrated during the liturgy on 29 January. If your parish does not have a Catholic post-primary school, consider how you might best involve students from your parish who attend post-primary schools in neighbouring parishes. Is your parish participating in the Pope John Paul II Awards and could the students preparing for awards or the awards leader be part of this planning meeting? Include a member of your parish liturgy group in this meeting.





The Mass

Word of Welcome and Explanation

This might include a few words about the theme of Catholic Schools Week 2017 **Catholic Schools: Learning with Pope Francis to Care for Our Common Home**. (See introduction to Catholic Schools Week 2017.)

Opening Procession/Prayer Space

It may be appropriate to have an opening procession on this Sunday. This could include symbols that represent the Catholic schools of the parish. A Prayer Space highlighting Catholic Schools Week 2017 could also be created, focusing on the beauty of our world created by God. A symbol for each school could be placed in the Prayer Space as part of the opening procession to highlight the contribution our Catholic schools make to caring for our common home. Other symbols that could be used include a copy of the encyclical *Laudato Si'* or an image of the cover of the encyclical.

Music

Consider involving children/staff in the music during the liturgy. A group of children might sing the Psalm and intone the Gospel Acclamation.

Liturgy of the Word

The readings, prayers of the faithful, etc. for the Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time can be found in the December/January edition of Intercom. Tá siad le fáil as Gaeilge san áit céanna.

As this is the parish celebration of the Sunday Eucharist it is appropriate that the usual minister of the word scheduled to read does so. This gives a visible sign of the Sunday Eucharist as a place where we are all nourished to go back to our communities of home and school and continue to announce the Gospel. Include a prayer of the faithful for Catholic schools as well as one for our responsibility to care for the beautiful world gifted to us from God. Some young people might be invited to compose and read these prayers.

Preparation of the Altar and Presentation of the Gifts

Consider inviting representatives from the three communities of home, school and parish to prepare the altar table and to present the gifts of bread and wine. The bread and wine are symbols of the fruitfulness of the earth which God has given us. This will be a visible reminder of the need for all three groups to work together so that we might all witness to the Gospel values that we profess as members of the Church.

Hospitality

This would be a good time to offer hospitality after Mass. Perhaps the parents' association and other local groups would come together to coordinate this.



Additional Ideas

Parish Newsletter

Ensure that Catholic Schools Week is brought to the attention of the wider community by placing a note in the parish newsletter. Include specific public activities planned in your parish. Sample text might read as follows:

Sunday, 29 January marks the beginning of Catholic Schools Week 2017. During this week we aim to celebrate the unique contribution that Catholic schools, both primary and post-primary, make to the mission of the Church in our local faith communities and throughout the wider church. This year's theme is **Catholic Schools: Learning with Pope Francis to Care for Our Common Home**. We are reminded of the beauty of the world God has created for us and our responsibility to care for the home we share.

Pupils from the parish schools might distribute the newsletter at Mass.

Boards of Management/Governors

Put Catholic Schools Week 2017 on the agenda for your next meeting. Reflect on the theme for this year and consider how it can be celebrated in the school and how boards of management/governors can assist or facilitate this.

Pastoral Council

Bring Catholic Schools Week to the attention of the pastoral council and ask them how the parish might best celebrate it this year. Consider using the extract 'Catholic Schools: Building Community' from *Share the Good News: National Directory for Catechesis* to enable a discussion about the role of Catholic schools and how they might be better supported by the faith community.

Chaplain

This week the chaplain might take the opportunity to visit as many classrooms as possible. The Catholic Schools Week resource will help you to find a focus for your visit as it offers a theme for each day's work. Encourage schools to participate in Grandparents' Day on 2 February.

Prayer in Catholic Schools Week 2017

There is a prayer service for Catholic Schools Week 2017 available to download. The primary and post-primary resource books for Catholic Schools Week 2017 have a Thought for Each Day and a suggestion that children be led in a short meditation following these reflections. Consider how the chaplain can help facilitate some of these events taking place.