



# Prayer Service to Celebrate the Ministry of Teachers During Catholic Schools Week 2014

## You Will Need

A large candle with the words Live, Learn, Share, Celebrate and Serve (*cf. final page of this document*)

A prayer space containing:

A holder for the Catholic Schools Week candle (*see candle wrapper at end of this document*)

A holder for an icon of Christ the Teacher with enough tea lights placed around it for each participant to light

A copy of the icon of Christ the Teacher for each person present (*can be downloaded from [www.catholicschools.ie](http://www.catholicschools.ie)*)

One person to carry the lighted candle and place it in the prayer space

One person to carry the icon of Christ the Teacher and place it in the prayer space

One or two people to read the reflection on Christ the Teacher

Six people to read the Prayer of Intercessions

**Leader** Good evening and welcome to our gathering, which takes place during Catholic Schools Week to celebrate and honour the unique and valued ministry of teachers in the Catholic Schools in our diocese.

To begin our time of prayer and reflection together let us mark ourselves with the sign of our faith: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Let us stand to welcome the light of Christ among us while we sing:

## Opening Song 'Christ Be Near at Either Hand'

*While the opening song is being sung the lighted candle is carried in and placed in the sacred space.*

Christ be near at either hand,  
Christ behind, before me stand,  
Christ with me where e'er I go,  
Christ around, above, below.

Christ be in my head and mind,  
Christ within my soul enshrined,  
Christ control my wayward heart;  
Christ abide and ne'er depart.

Christ my life and only way,  
Christ my lantern night and day,  
Christ be my unchanging friend,  
Guide and shepherd to the end.

*After the opening song invite people to be seated:*

We are gathered from schools all across the diocese, coming from our smallest of schools to our largest ones. Some of you have only very recently begun this work and yet more have been doing it for more years than they care to remember. Wherever you are in your teaching journey you all have one thing in common: you are teachers in Catholic schools, faith schools, schools with a distinct and definite ethos, schools where Gospel values underlie everything that we do, say, teach and ultimately are. In the cultural context in which we live there are many challenges to who we are and some who believe that we have no right to do what we do. But, we do this work because we believe. We are people of faith, whose faith permeates our life and our work and that is how it should be. In the words of Pope Benedict, faith is the 'driving force behind every activity in our schools'<sup>1</sup> and it is you as teachers who provide the faith force needed to make this happen. Tonight we take time to reflect on the ministry of teaching and how if it is to be authentic it must have Christ at its centre and heart.

*The icon of Christ the Teacher is carried in and placed so that it can be seen by all:*

**Leader** Christ himself was the great teacher and he began his ministry of teaching with those wonderful words at the beginning of the Gospel of St John, 'come and see'. This is the teacher on whom we as teachers in Catholic schools are called to imitate, to model our ministry on. But who is Christ the Teacher and what does he have to say to us as we teach in our schools today? The following five characteristics of Christ the Teacher might help us to reflect on these questions.

*Two voices might read the following reflection. Leave some space between each characteristic:*

**1 Christ came to love unconditionally those he taught.**

After Jesus invites his first disciples to 'come and see', the very next line reads: 'So they all went and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him all that day.' The very first act that Jesus performed with his disciples was not an explicit act of teaching, but an invitation to them to spend all day with him. What happened that day? We do not know exactly, but clearly a deep and abiding friendship began between Jesus and these first disciples. Later, in each of the Gospels, Jesus names his twelve closest friends, sometimes even giving them new names. Anyone who has taught, or has been a student, knows the power and the enthusiasm of the moment when a teacher calls a student by her or his name for the first time:

'My teacher knows my name!' A whole sacred and sacramental relationship has begun to unfold.

Students become most open to education when they are in the presence of those who truly care for them. Jesus models this throughout his teaching ministry in the Gospels.

**2 Jesus taught with a definite and unmistakable passion.**

Jesus spoke to his disciples in such a way that they not only spent the rest of the first day with him, but eventually dedicated the rest of their lives to him as his co-workers in the teaching ministry. Jesus' teaching was so compelling because there existed no gap between his teaching and his actions. If he taught about the importance of prayer, then he prayed. If he taught about the importance of sharing, then he shared. If he taught that the greatest love was to lay down

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<sup>1</sup> Address of the Holy Father to Teachers and Religious, London 2010.



one's life, then he hung from a cross. Christ the Teacher captured his disciples by teaching, and by living, in a challenging and deeply compelling way. He taught with authority.

**3 Jesus' teaching ministry was not primarily about transmitting information,** but about changing lives. When Jesus was ready to transfer his ministry over to Peter before his Ascension, he appeared to Peter on the shore of Lake Tiberias. During this encounter, Jesus asked Peter one question, and he asked it three times. The question does not look for a recitation of facts about Jesus' teachings (important as they are!), but is, simply, 'Peter, do you love me? Do you love me? Do you love me?' The heart of Jesus' teaching mission, and so the heart of our mission, is to transform our students' lives into lives of love, love of God and of one another.

**4 Jesus as Teacher enjoyed great success and persevered through great failure in his teaching ministry.** He touched some of his listeners so deeply that they spent the rest of their lives following him. Others routinely tried to have him killed. One thing, however, remains clear throughout the Gospels – regardless of the reception his teaching received, Jesus never stopped teaching. Every teacher experiences both the utter elation of realising they have reached a student's mind and soul in some way, and the paralysing shock of failing to reach students in the very same classroom. Sometimes, surely, the failures even seem to outweigh the successes. The spirituality of Christ the Teacher – who through the consolation of prayer and friendship, and a single-minded perseverance in his mission through both successes and failures – is a compelling model to us who follow in his teaching ministry.

**5 Jesus prayed constantly.** He prayed alone, he prayed with his friends, and he prayed with those he taught. He prayed in petition; he prayed for discernment; he prayed in desolation; he prayed for consolation; he prayed in thanksgiving. As always, he taught others to do the same. This fifth characteristic of Christ the Teacher sheds a revealing light on our unique ministry, leading our students to transform their lives into lives of love. In order to do this we are utterly dependent on God.

*Allow for time for some silent reflection when the reading is finished. Invite those present to come forward and light a candle for their ministry and for those to whom they minister.*

**Leader** Christ the Teacher is the light that illumines our path and guides the work we do as teachers. As we light our candles this evening we take a moment to pray for ourselves in our ministry as teachers and we also ask God's blessing for those whom we teach that we may always enable them to be the best that they can be.

*When they have lit their candle, those present can also be given a copy of the icon of Christ the Teacher if it is available. These could be presented framed as people are leaving, or may be omitted altogether.*

*Some suitable instrumental music might be played as this is happening.*

**Leader** As we come to the end of our time together let us take a moment to place our prayers as a community before our God.



**Prayers of Intercession** The response is, 'Lord, hear our prayer'.

**Reader 1** We pray for Pope Francis, for our bishop [insert name], for all priests and for all who bear the light of Christ to the world, may they always have the courage to be the people that Jesus calls them to be.

*We pray to the Lord.* Response.

**Reader 2** We pray for parents who are the first of teachers and who entrust the ongoing education and faith development of their children to our care. May we always support the work that they do and be deserving of that trust.

*We pray to the Lord.* Response.

**Reader 3** We pray for teachers and all who work in our schools that they will always choose Christ the Teacher as their model and endeavour to transform the lives of those they teach into lives of love, love of God and of one another.

*We pray to the Lord.* Response.

**Reader 4** We pray for children in our diocesan schools and in schools all over Ireland. May we enable them to live as children of God, fully alive and faith-filled people.

*We pray to the Lord.* Response.

**Reader 5** We pray for our priests, parish sisters and parish workers and all in our parish faith community, that together we can continue to learn to live as Jesus wants us to.

*We pray to the Lord.* Response.

**Reader 6** We pray for those who are worried, sick or who have not enough to eat. We pray that the community of faith will always do their best to support and help them in their time of need. We remember all who have died, especially former teachers; may they see the face of God.

*We pray to the Lord.* Response.

**Leader** Let us now pray together the prayer that Jesus, the teacher, taught us:

**Our Father**

## Closing Prayer

**Leader** Loving God, we are your people created in your love. We thank you for your presence with us throughout all time. Free us from all that keeps us from you. Awaken us to the sacred. Strengthen our relationships. Enliven our schools and parishes. Unite our families. Fill us with joy to celebrate the fullness of life. Be with us as we continue to minister to and with one another, teaching, proclaiming and breaking open the word, sharing the bread of life and the cup of salvation, bringing your light and love to those who are ill. Make us a community of love growing ever more in your likeness by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. **Amen.**



## Final Blessing

Loving God,  
Creator of the universe,  
we thank you  
for calling us to be members  
of your holy people.  
May we always  
walk in your ways  
and be faithful to your word.

**Amen**

May we carry the  
Christ light in our hearts,  
in our minds  
and in our deeds  
as we go from this place  
to continue our walk  
with God and with each other.

**Amen**

Go now from this holy place,  
treasure in your hearts  
the wonder of who you are  
and may the words you have  
heard here ever echo in your heart.

**Amen**

And may the peace of God,  
Creator of us all,  
Jesus Christ, the living God among us  
and the Spirit, which dwells and works  
in each and every one of us,  
be with us now and always.

**Amen**

**Closing Song** 'Faithful Is The Lord', Liam Lawton

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**LIVE**

**LEARN**

**CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK 2014**

**SHARE**

**CELEBRATE**

**SERVE**

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