



Catholic Schools Week 2014

Catholic Schools – Centres of Faith and Learning

(26 January-2 February)

Theme: *Catholic Schools: Places of Faith & Learning*

Music/Hymn: School Hymn/Song

*This assembly is designed to be accompanied with a power-point presentation containing school photographs/images to illustrate the five key words: **Welcome; Word; Wisdom; Worship; and Witness.** For example the word 'Welcome' could be accompanied with images showing how school is a welcoming place: e.g. photographs of Induction Days for new students, Year 8 Welcome Mass, Open Nights/Days, the word 'Welcome' in different languages, etc. Word could be illustrated by images such as a variety of everyday words in different languages like 'Love', 'Compassion', 'Respect' and perhaps an image of the Bible. Wisdom could be illustrated with images of all the different subjects which develop students' talents and abilities – the school prospectus will have lots of these. I suspect that each school will have a great many photographs and images to illustrate Worship and Witness.*

Sign of the Cross

Leader: Welcome to our assembly to mark the beginning of Catholic Schools Week. We recognise that our school is not just an organisation or a pile of bricks and mortar. Our school is a community where each person is valued, respected and encouraged. It is a community which has at its heart the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ. It is an inclusive and respectful community which welcomes students from all denominations and of none. It is a place that seeks educational excellence and encourages all students to achieve their full potential. It is a community where we learn and work together in partnership with parents and the parish community to keep the light of faith burning brightly. It is a place where we spend time as a school community in prayer and reflection in order to develop the spiritual life of each person. Catholic schools are places where we share, live and grow our faith, as well as work together to achieve high educational standards in order to realise our potential in a holistic way. The theme

for this year's Catholic Schools Week is: *Catholic Schools: Places of Faith & Learning.* During this week we have been asked to reflect on how our school is a place of Faith and Learning. We will do this under five key headings: Welcome; Word; Wisdom; Worship; and Witness. Listen and watch the following reflective presentation on these five key words. *(It might be helpful to have 5 different voices reading the reflection on each word.)*

WELCOME:

Is our school a Welcoming place? Is our school a place where every person's human dignity is respected? Is each person, staff, student, parent or visitor shown politeness, patience, kindness and care? Is everyone always included or are people sometimes forgotten and left out? Is everyone helped to feel part of the school community? Is everyone valued regardless of how small or big their contribution?

In a Catholic school Jesus is at the centre of all we do. Think of the Welcome that Jesus had for everyone. Think of him standing with his arms outstretched, welcoming the children, the poor, the sinner, the sick, the disabled, the foreigner, the stranger. No-one was left out with Jesus. No-one was excluded or made to feel that they did not matter. Everyone was welcomed and received with great kindness and respect. Everyone mattered, everyone was important, everyone had a part to play. Think for a moment: How do I welcome others in this school?

WORD:

Thousands of words are spoken and written in our schools every day. We speak them, we write them, we even sing them, we listen to them, read them, reflect on them. We use them to write poems, tell stories, share ideas, text or tweet our friends. We share thoughts, ideas, feelings and facts. Stop for a moment and try to imagine a world without words (Pause). Too difficult! One of the most important things about words is that they help us to relate to one another, to

make known our feelings and thoughts so we can come to know one another. They help us to reveal ourselves. In the Christian Faith we believe that God reveals himself to us. One of the ways God does this is through the Bible which is also known as the Word of God. Through the stories in the Bible and in particular the Gospels we come to know that God loves us and wants to be our friend. That is why the Bible plays a big part in all our religious services and our Religious Education classes here in school. God's Word nourishes and entices us to really be places where love is at the centre of all we do. God's Word helps us to know that God is with us always and acts as a light to show us the way to live. Listening to God's Word will lead us to choose to use only helpful and kind words, ones that build up, lend support or offer help. Think for a moment about the Words you have used so far today. What have your words, written, texted, typed, sung or spoken revealed about you? How have your words shown love, respect, kindness or offered help, encouragement or support?

WISDOM:

Catholic Education focuses on the whole person. It seeks the formation of the whole person, intellectually, physically, religiously, culturally, socially, emotionally, creatively, aesthetically and spiritually. Catholic schools are not just creating employees for the future workforce, but rather there is a strong emphasis on assisting the total development of the person so that they can move beyond mere facts and information to true knowledge, wisdom and fullness of life. Being wise is not on our school timetable, but it is something we all can aspire to. Think for a moment about how in this school you are encouraged to use all your talents. In this school in what ways are you given opportunities to be creative, to develop physically, to challenge yourself intellectually, to become more culturally and socially aware, to express your emotions and to nurture your religious and spiritual life? Think for a moment: In what ways are you using your gifts and talents?

WORSHIP:

Catholic schools are places of faith and one of the ways we express our faith is through worship. When we worship we respond to God's love with our whole self, body mind and spirit. Stop for a

moment and think of all the different opportunities throughout the year that we, as a whole school community or as an individual year group or individual class, come together to pray, to take time to reflect, to praise and honour God, to say sorry to God and each other, to ask God for what we need for ourselves and for others, to show our love for God and for each other, to remember loved ones, to celebrate and give thanks. In the last year in what ways have we joined with our local parish community, our parents and guardians, grandparents and families, our school chaplain and/or other local clergy to worship and thank God and to celebrate achievements. In this school in what ways are you encouraged to pray and invite God into your life? Think for a moment: When and where do I make time for prayer?

WITNESS:

The way we live our lives tells us something of who our God is and what our faith means to us. The way we are in the world is an expression of our values, of what we believe in. It is a living out of our faith. Our faith and actions must be connected. How in this school do we bear witness to our faith? How do we show God's love and light in us to the world? How do we help our local and global community? Do we support local and global charities? What opportunities are there through the school year to stand together with our brothers and sisters across the world and help them achieve a better life? In what ways does our school provide opportunities for us to use our talents and abilities to help others? Do we stand together as a school community with those who face poverty and injustice whether at home or abroad? Think for a moment: How am I a living witness to my faith?

Leader: This school is a place of Welcome: It is a place of hospitality following the example of Jesus. This school is a place where God's Word is read and heard, where God's presence is revered and respected. This school is a place where everyone is given the opportunity to grow and reach their full potential and where everyone's unique talents and abilities are celebrated. This school is a place where the whole community comes together to pray and Worship. This school is a place where the values of the Kingdom of God are taught and lived. This is a Catholic

School: a place of Faith and Learning. Now, I invite those who are leading us in the prayers to come forward. The response to the prayers is:

Lord hear us.

Reader 1: Loving God,

We pray in this special week celebrating Catholic Schools, that we may we continue to build good relationships, so that our school is a place of welcome and inclusion, where all feel nurtured, respected and encouraged to achieve. We pray to the Lord.

All: Lord hear us.

Reader 2: Loving God,

We pray that we will always be aware that you are present to us in many ways. Help us to especially appreciate your presence in your Word in the scriptures and to use it as a source to guide and inspire our lives. We pray to the Lord.

All: Lord hear us.

Reader 3: Loving God,

We thank you for the many great gifts and talents that you have given us. Help us to appreciate your goodness and to work together to support each other in everything we do. We pray to the Lord.

All: Lord hear us.

Reader 4: Loving God,

We thank you for giving us the ability to come to know and worship you. Through our worship, help us to grow in relationship with you and with others. We pray to the Lord.

All: Lord hear us.

Reader 5: Loving God,

Help us to try to use our gifts and talents for the common good and commit ourselves to working for a more just and caring society. We pray to the Lord.

All: Lord hear us.

Reader 6: Loving God,

We remember the people in our families and parishes who contributed to this school and who created for us a community of faith and learning. May we always cherish and protect the precious gift of faith and strive to keep it burning brightly for future generations. We pray to the Lord.

All: Lord hear us.

Reader 7: Loving God,

In this special week, we ask God's blessing on all those who work in Catholic Education. May they continue to work faithfully, with hope and enthusiasm to share the Good News. We pray to the Lord.

All: Lord hear us.

Leader: Loving God,

We put before you this morning any special intentions that we may have and we remember now for a moment, anyone who has asked us for our prayers. *(Pause)* We offer these and all our prayers, through Christ, our Lord.

All: Amen.

Leader: I invite you all to stand for the final prayer which takes the form of a pledge where we re-commit ourselves as Catholic Schools: Places of Faith and Learning:

Today we pledge:

To continue to work to ensure that our school is:

A place that honours the faith of the past, as we look forward to the future;

A place that is happy and welcoming;

A place of hard work, faith and friendship;

A place where no-one is lonely or left out;

A place where everyone is treated with respect and dignity;

A place where Jesus is at the centre of all we do;

A place where God's Word is heard and lived;

A place where we pray and worship together in a spirit of love and thanks;

A place that supports and cares for the poor and less fortunate;

A genuine community of faith and learning.

We make this pledge in the presence of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Sign of the Cross

Adapted from the resources provided by the Catholic Schools Partnership, 2014