



Celebrating Catholic Schools Week 2023 in your Parish

Catholic Schools: Walking Together in Faith and Love

Catholic Schools Week 2023 begins on Sunday, 22 January, the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time, and the theme is 'Catholic Schools: Walking Together in Faith and Love'. The theme of walking together is especially important this year as the Church engages in a process of synodality. This term, which goes back to the early Church, means 'journeying together'. It means a moment when all of the Catholic communities gather together to listen to what the Holy Spirit wants for the Church. In this context, we can consider how the parish can work with their Catholic schools in journeying together and celebrating Catholic Schools Week this year. Each parish is unique and has its own particular means of working with and supporting their local Catholic school. Below are some suggestions to augment this parish-school support.

Celebration of the Eucharist for the Third 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 takes place on the fourth Sunday in January and gives the parish a unique opportunity to celebrate the rich contribution that Catholic schools make to their community.

Planning Meeting

Arrange a meeting with the principals and/or teachers of primary and post-primary schools in the parish in the weeks prior to Catholic Schools Week to discuss how to highlight and celebrate the work of each individual Catholic school as a community of faith and resilience in the liturgy on 22 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 neighboring parishes. 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 2023 – 'Catholic Schools: Walking Together in Faith and Love'. An explanation of the theme is available online at www.catholicschools.ie. A prayer of thanksgiving for Catholic Schools Week would be appropriate during the Mass, for example:





Loving God,

As we gather as a parish today, we give thanks for the work of our Catholic schools. Help our school communities in their vocation to educate and form our students, that they may learn and develop their gifts and talents and change the world for the better.

May we learn to walk together in faith and love, that we may listen to the Spirit, to guide and inspire your Church on earth until our journey brings us back home to you.

We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Opening Procession

It may be appropriate to have an opening procession on this Sunday including symbols that represent the distinctive identity of each Catholic school in the parish. If the school is named after a particular saint or was founded by a religious order, this could be represented or referenced here also. If a display area has been set up in the church to mark Catholic Schools Week, this is the ideal place to put the symbols presented in the opening procession.

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, prayer of the faithful, etc., for the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time can be found in the December/January edition of *Intercom*. Tá siad le fáil as Gaeilge san áit céanna. There are also homily notes for this Sunday in the January edition of *The Furrow*.

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 and their work. Some young people might be invited to compose and read these prayers. It would also be suitable to make reference to the synodal process in the Church.

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. 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, parish council and other local groups would come together to coordinate this.

Prayer for Grandparents on Wednesday

Given that we are living in a post-Covid-19 world, each parish community is best placed to assess the possibility of hosting a Grandparents Day Mass on the Wednesday of Catholic Schools Week. Where possible, such a Mass should be encouraged, as it is often a highlight of the week, celebrating the immense contribution that grandparents make to the faith lives of their grandchildren. Pope Francis offered this prayer for grandparents:

Dear grandparents,
May our Lord, Jesus Christ be always close to you.
We thank you for all you have contributed to life and
for the gifts you continue to give to your families
and to our community.
We pray that your closeness to God will bring you
The health and the strength you need to continue
Your journey on the road of life.
May you continue to enjoy your life, your work,
and your prayers.
May your memories always be happy and may you
achieve your dreams for the future.
One day we will all be united in God's kingdom,
through Christ Our Lord. Amen.



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, 22 January marks the beginning of Catholic Schools Week 2023. During this week we aim to celebrate the unique contribution that Catholic schools make to their communities. This year's theme is 'Catholic Schools: Walking Together in Faith and Love'. Our parish is joining in the celebrations by ...

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

Display Area

Consider working with the school to create a display showing the unique work and identity of each parish school.

The 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.

Where applicable, the chaplain might take the opportunity this week to visit as many classrooms as possible. The Catholic Schools Week resources will help you to find a focus for your visit as it offers a theme for each day's work.

