



Catholic Schools Week 2024

Catholic Schools: Communities of Service

Celebrating Catholic Schools Week 2024 in your Parish

Catholic Schools Week 2024 will be celebrated from **Sunday, 21 January, to Saturday, 27 January**, on the theme of *Catholic Schools: Communities of Service*. Catholic schools are animated by gospel values, which are lived through active ministry to one another built on a fundamental respect of all people, from all nations and embracing all differences. Every member of our school communities offers their service through the unique gifts and talents they have been given. The service of every single person, regardless of age or role, is of value and contributes to the characteristic spirit of each school within the parish.

Catholic schools are intrinsically connected with the local parish community, and both are actively at the service of one another. It is important to acknowledge and celebrate the living connection that exists between school and parish during Catholic Schools Week. Catholic Schools Week provides an opportunity for both communities to pray for one another and with one another. Some of the ideas below may work for your parish.

Celebration of the Eucharist on Sunday, 21 January – Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

The parish liturgy group, or another nominated parish representative, might consult with the local schools regarding possible ways of participating in the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist, perhaps through music and singing during the celebration, presenting John Paul II awards representing service or reading the prayer of the faithful.

Words of welcome

The theme for Catholic Schools Week 2024 is *Catholic Schools: Communities of Service*. Our Catholic schools are places where faith is lived in service to one another in a spirit of inclusion, hope and belief in one another as gifts from God. We welcome all present who represent our parish schools and thank God for the gift of the schools within our parish community.





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Entrance procession

Set up a receiving space for the symbols presented in procession with a green cloth representing Ordinary Time and the ever growing life in the school community. Symbols representative of service highlighted in Catholic Schools Week 2024 might be:

- A school crest
- A John Paul II award certificate
- A picture of a circle of friends
- A religious education textbook representing learning about gospel values and service
- A Green Schools flag or a plant representing service to the care of the environment
- A collage of priestly ministry or of that of religious brothers and sisters

Music and song

A school group or an individual from the school might sing one of the hymns at the entrance or at the presentation of gifts.

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.

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.

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 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 and other local groups could come together to coordinate this.





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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, 21 January, marks the beginning of Catholic Schools Week 2024. During this week we aim to celebrate the unique contribution that Catholic schools make to their communities. This year's theme is *Catholic Schools: Communities of Service*. 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.

