



The theme of this year's Catholic Schools Week is

Catholic Schools: Living Life to the Full.

The past year has once again been a very challenging year for students and indeed for the whole school community. However, with the roll-out of the vaccination programme, there is light at the end of the tunnel and we have a new sense of hope. This year Catholic Schools Week runs from 23 to 30 January 2022.

Last year our focus was on resilience, on reconnecting and re-engaging students. This year it is on living our lives with the hope of a brighter tomorrow and on reconnecting and re-engaging with the wider community as the country opens up and restrictions are reduced.

One of our chosen pieces of music for the November Moment this year is 'God Will Wipe Away all Tears' by Irish composer Bernard Sexton. Bernard wrote this piece for the victims of COVID-19 and for their families and friends. The chorus offers us reassurance that, even in these dark times, God is with us:

*God will wipe away all tears,
God will bring you home
To the place he has prepared for you,
You shall never be alone.
Storms may gather, evening falls,
Daylight turns to shade,
And when your earthly work is done,
Do not fear, be not afraid.*

Vision 08: A Vision of Catholic Education in Ireland is a pastoral letter from the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference. This letter outlines what the Irish Catholic bishops believe Catholic education to be. We hear echoes of this letter throughout Catholic Schools Week every year, but it underpins this year's events in particular. We will quote from this document for our 'Thoughts for the Day' to show how connected our bishops are to each and every Catholic school in Ireland.

Again this year, resources for Catholic Schools Week will be available online. All lessons have resources for both Junior and Senior Cycle. Each lesson contains practices which support the national Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, as well as self-reflective practices as a way of supporting assessment in the classroom. They also provide extension exercises as an option for your students.

Log on to **www.catholicschools.ie** to download the Catholic Schools Week 2022 resources.

Praise be to you, my Lord.

With every blessing,

The Resource Writing Team.



THOUGHTS FOR THE DAY

The document underpinning this year's Catholic Schools Week is *Vision 08: A Vision of Catholic Education in Ireland*.

MONDAY

'Worship of God through prayer and the celebration of liturgy and the sacraments, "the door to the sacred", belong at the very centre of the Catholic School's life.'
(*Vision 08: A Vision of Catholic Education in Ireland*)

Today we reflect on how, for Catholics, living our life to the full means living our life with God. We have various images of God, and these images can change as we journey through life. Therefore, as the life of the Catholic and the life of God are intertwined, so too are the life of a Catholic school and the life of God.

Walford Davies wrote a hymn called 'God Be in My Head'. On an individual level we pray 'God be in my heart and in my thinking'. We pray that 'God will be in the heart and in the thinking' of all our Catholic schools. We hope to see God's love in action every day, but especially as we gather to celebrate the sacraments.

TUESDAY

'Catholic schools aspire to create an open, happy, stimulating and mutually respectful community environment.'
(*Vision 08: A Vision of Catholic Education in Ireland*)

Today we reflect on how inclusive our Catholic school is. The new Junior Cycle specification underpins every aspect with a call to question, explore, enquire and reflect. These four verbs are critical to creating an environment of inclusion – a place where everyone, of all faiths and none, is accepted and welcomed. Today we reflect on the times that we have been encouraged to question, to explore, to enquire and to reflect. These skills should be fostered to the greatest extent, not just in our Religious Education class, but in every classroom in a Catholic school.

WEDNESDAY

'Education is ... the way in which the various overlapping communities ... initiate us into the richness of a shared life and heritage.'
(*Vision 08: A Vision of Catholic Education in Ireland*)

Today we reflect on the role that older people, and in particular grandparents, play in our lives. As the country opens us, many of us have been reunited with our loved ones.



During the pandemic, older people, and possibly our own grandparents, were placed in the vulnerable category and asked to cocoon in order to stay safe. As our country re-opens and the vaccination programme has rolled out, we are now able to reconnect with our older and vulnerable loved ones. And yet, while they were placed in the 'vulnerable' category, our love and bond with them was stronger than ever. We learned to appreciate any connection with them. Now the 'cloud has been lifted' and in our Catholic school we identify the ways in which older people enrich our lives. We thank God for their presence in our lives. They are part of our Catholic school community through their connection with us.

THURSDAY

'Catholic Schools seek to reflect a distinctive vision of life and a corresponding philosophy of education.' (*Vision 08: A Vision of Catholic Education in Ireland*)

Scripture: 'For so many marvels I thank you; a wonder am I, and all your works are wonders.' (Psalm 139)

Reflection: Sometimes, if we're fortunate, we can see great and amazing wonders outside of ourselves – in nature, in people, in the arts. But we can forget the wonder within ourselves. We may fall into the trap of thinking little of ourselves; we may have low self-esteem. This can happen because we believe, rightly or wrongly, that others think little of us. However, the deep personal love God has for us surpasses all this. But it can be a struggle to believe such wonderful things about ourselves without getting big-headed or arrogant about it, as some do. So, the challenge is to get the balance right. Will we rise to that challenge? Will our Catholic school community encourage us and support us to rise to that challenge?

FRIDAY

'Catholic education is inspired by the Gospel and as such, respects the freedom and dignity of every human being.' (*Vision 08: A Vision of Catholic Education in Ireland*)

Scripture: 'I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full.' (John 10:10)

Reflection: Sometimes there can seem to be a contradiction between living a full life in the present and turning our minds to the future. But it doesn't have to be 'either/or'. We can do both. In fact, living fully in the present can create the firm foundation of a positive future. As we turn our minds and hearts towards others and towards God, we can create a satisfying and worthwhile present while building a future that can be life-enhancing. Our Catholic schools support us in this endeavour.