



Catholic Schools Week 2025

Catholic Schools: Alive in Christ

19–25 January 2025

Third and Fourth Class/P5 and P6





Strand Units – Level 3

CHRISTIAN FAITH	WORD OF GOD
<p>Mystery of God</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Christians bless themselves in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.• God is our loving Father and Creator (Gn 1:26-7).• God is good (Ps 116:1).• God knows us and loves us (Ps 139).• God is my friend. <p>Mystery of the Church/Kingdom</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The way of life of the parish involves caring, sharing and praying together (CCC, 2179; <i>Revised Core Syllabus for Religious Education [CSRE]</i>, 2a).• The church is a special place where God's people gather to pray.• Our family helps us become friends of Jesus.• The priest/teacher helps us to become friends of Jesus (<i>Lumen Gentium [LG]</i>, 10).	<p>Sacred Scripture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Luke 15:11-32• Mark 3:13-14
LITURGY AND PRAYER	CHRISTIAN MORALITY
<p>Prayer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• God calls us to prayer and we respond (<i>Gaudium et Spes</i>, 18; CCC, 2567).• God always hears our prayers.• The church is God's house, where his family comes together (CCC, 1180; <i>LG</i>, 6; 1 Tm 3:15).• God's family gathers in the parish church to pray and celebrate (CCC, 1069-71, 2179).• The church is a holy place where people go to pray and talk to God (CCC, 1181).	<p>Human Dignity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• God loves each one of us (Jer 31:3; 1 Jn 4:10-11; <i>CSRE</i>, 3a).• I am unique/special because God created me (CCC, 1004; Gn 1:26-7; Ps 137:14).• I am called to love God and to love others (Mt 22:36-40).• Every person is special in the eyes of God (CCC, 225, 356-61, 369, 1604, 1700-1, 1944-6, 2319, 2334; <i>CSRE</i>, 3a).



Monday: Life to the Full in Our Community of Friends

Consider

We all belong to a family, and we all like to have friends. We can also be part of sports teams or clubs.

In our Catholic school, we are called to help each other and be kind to each other, as each person should feel welcome, included and cared for. As a community, we encourage one another to live our lives to the full. We do this together, supporting and caring for each other in our thoughts, words and actions.

Today we celebrate the fact of God's love for each of us, how he made each of us special and unique, and that we are made to work with others to be the best we all can be.



Explore

Remind the children that our Catholic school should always be a kind and happy place for everyone. Ask the children for examples of what it means to be a good friend. Sometimes people find it hard to make friends. Jesus shows us what it means to be a true friend.

The story of Zacchaeus teaches us about how Jesus saw the goodness in a person that others didn't like because he had been mean to others. The story, dramatised in the film *Jesus*, can be found on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R59GTcEnR2U>.

Discuss with the class why Zacchaeus wasn't liked by people, why people didn't see Zacchaeus as a good friend and how Jesus invited Zacchaeus to meet him.

Some people find it hard to make friends and get excluded from things. If we want to be good friends to each other, what lessons can Jesus teach us about treating others? In our Catholic school, how do we show what it means to be a good friend?

Activity

Complete the following worksheets on the story of Zacchaeus.

<https://sermons4kids.com/activities/zacchaeus-meets-jesus-5>

<https://navanroadparish.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Zacchaeus-Activity-sheet.pdf>



Tuesday: Life to the Full in Our Faith Community

Consider

Our Catholic school is part of a faith community. Each Catholic school in Ireland belongs to a community called a parish. Each parish belongs to a family of parishes called a diocese, which is overseen by a bishop. Parishes have churches and on Saturdays and Sundays, members of the parish come together to worship at Mass. Some parishes have priests who live in the parish and others have priests who visit to celebrate Mass.

What do we know and what can we learn about our parish today?

Explore

Using Google Maps, locate your Catholic school. If available, access your diocesan website to see what information is available about your parish.

Using Google Maps, see can the class locate the local church and graveyard (and parochial house, if applicable).

Brainstorm with the children what important information we can gather on our parish (parish name, number of schools, age of the church, etc). Create a checklist in the class about your local parish and what information you would like to learn about the parish.

Activity

Invite the local priest to the classroom and interview them about their work in the parish. Prompt questions might include: How long are you in the parish? What kind of jobs does a priest do every week? What makes this parish interesting?

Each child can use the information gathered to fill in a fact sheet about their parish, highlighting that their school is an important part of this faith community.





Wednesday: Life to the Full in Our Families

Consider

We are learning this week about how Christ is alive in our Catholic school communities. Our grandparents are very special members of our family community who help us to live life to the full. On this Wednesday of Catholic Schools Week, we celebrate and remember the important role our grandparents play in our lives, in nurturing us, supporting and encouraging our talents and in handing on the faith from one generation to the next. When we demonstrate our love, appreciation and care for our grandparents' contributions to our lives, we are alive in Christ.

Explore

Our grandparents are a blessing in our lives. Pope Francis tells us: 'Grandparents are the memory of a family, the memory of a country, the memory of the faith, because it is they who give it to us. Grandparents. I ask you this question: Do you speak with your grandparents? Do you ask your grandparents: "Grandpa, grandma, what was this like? How do you do this? What did you used to do?" Ask them, ask them! Because grandparents are a font of wisdom, because they have the memory of life, the memory of the faith'" (Eucharistic Youth Movement, 7 August 2015). Grandparents are a precious gift in our lives. They care for us, support us and love us. They help us to flourish, enabling us to live our lives more fully, to become the people we are called to be.

Ask the children: What kinds of things can grandparents teach you? Children can discuss this in pairs or small groups. Write their contributions on the whiteboard, with examples of words children associate with their grandparents.

Invite the children to pray together aloud the following prayer for grandparents based on Pope Francis' teachings:

Dear Grandmother, dear Grandfather,
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.





Teachers should use their discretion in relation to these activities if pupils have recently lost grandparents or are not in contact with grandparents. All classes can engage with the following activities at different levels. Choose an activity to suit your class.

Activity

Select any one or more of the activities to celebrate Grandparents Day.

Portrait of Granny and/or Grandad and Me

Encourage the children to draw and colour a portrait of themselves and their grandparent or grandparents, focusing on a happy time they shared.

Thank You Card

Encourage the children to make a thank you card for their grandparents with a focus on the positive influence grandparents have had on their lives. They can give the card to their grandparents or post it if they live far away.

A Special Memory

Encourage the children to think of a time when their grandparents shared something special with them. Invite them to write the memory down so that they can share it with their grandparents.

Prayer

Ask the children to write a prayer of thanksgiving for their grandparents.

Project

Linking with the SESE history curriculum, encourage the children to research a grandparent's life by surveying their grandparent, if possible. If they cannot talk to their grandparent for whatever reason, they can interview their parents or relatives and find out details about their grandparent's life. They can locate pictures of their grandparent when they were younger, be it as a child or at their wedding, or a photo of them with their grandchild. The children can then create a poster celebrating the unique contribution their grandparent has made to their life and to their family life.





Thursday: Life to the Full, for and with Others

Consider

Each of us is loved by God unconditionally. We are made to show love and to receive love, as we are reflections of God's love. In our Catholic school, we are taught to work for and with each other to make the world a better place for all. When we fall short of the goodness within us, in our thoughts, words or actions, we know that God's love is greater than our mistakes.

Explore

Watch this clip from the show *The Chosen* of Jesus teaching his followers about the lost sheep: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=koTyshmoa7M>.

Discuss how God's love is so great that he rejoices when someone returns to him. No matter anyone's background, class or ethnicity, God will welcome them back, as each of us are worth the world to God. In his eyes, we are all equal.

Read the following passage from Luke 15:11-32.

The Parable of the Loving Father

There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' So he got up and went to his father.

But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.





The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.'

The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'

'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'

Discuss with the class what they felt the message from this reading was.

Activity

Use the activity sheet below. Children are invited to write their own story based on the parable of the Loving Father, applying its message to modern times.



Write your own version of the parable of the Loving Father. You can use this story planner to map your story.

Setting (Where)	
Characters (Who)	
Main plot/ issue (What happened)	
Response from the other characters (What is the ending)	
Meaning behind the story (Why is the story important)	
Similarities between your story and the parable of the Loving Father	
Differences between your story and the parable of the Loving Father	



Friday: Life to the Full for the Common Good of All

Consider

We learn many things in our Catholic school, and our teachers and SNAs help us become better people and realise our talents. Christ calls us to not just keep our gifts to ourselves, but to bring about God's reign in the world around us. We are alive in Christ when we work with one another to make the world a more just, inclusive society. We are called to help others flourish, for when we do so, we too flourish. At a time of climate emergency, our Catholic school can be a place where we realise that we can change the world and contribute to the common good of all.



Explore

Place the provided statements (on following page) on the whiteboard. In groups or pairs, ask the children to discuss each statement.

Having completed this, write the term 'Common Good' on the board, and discuss what the meaning of the term is. Discuss how being part of a Catholic school means that we do what is best for everyone. We don't just think about ourselves, or just our friends or classmates, but we look around to see who might be lonely, left out or hurt. Jesus teaches to look out for these people and to include them, because they are part of our human family. This is how our Catholic school can be a community where Christ is alive. This is the common good.

Activity

Ask the children to design a poster showing ways we can contribute to the common good in our schools, home and parish.

Instead of a piece of written homework, assign the children a kindness task, to do one kind deed for someone at home that they wouldn't usually do. By completing a kindness task, we contribute to the common good by using our gifts and talents for the good of someone besides ourself.



Statements

Everyone deserves to have a friend.

I'm more important than other people.

Taking care of the environment
is something I should do.

People suffering in other countries
is not my problem.