



Catholic Schools Week 2026

Catholic Schools: Normal Lives, Called to Holiness

18–24 January 2026

Third and Fourth Class/P5 and P6



Strand Units – Level 3

LITURGY AND PRAYER	CHRISTIAN MORALITY
Prayer • When people pray, they talk and listen to God and get to know and love God better (<i>General Directory for Catechesis</i>, 139; <i>Catechism of the Catholic Church</i> [CCC], 2653). • God calls us to prayer and we respond (<i>Gaudium et Spes</i>, 18; CCC, 2567). • God always hears our prayers.	Social Teaching of the Church • I can use my gifts to help others. • I can be fair and just (CCC, 1944–5, 2255, 2319). • I can be honest, truthful and kind (<i>Revised Core Syllabus for Religious Education</i>, 3b). • I can help people who are poor and people who are hungry.
CHRISTIAN FAITH	
Mystery of the Church • The Saints: God's special friends who are part of the family of the Church in heaven (CCC, 828, 956–7, 960–2, 1195, 2013, 2030, 2683, 2692). St Patrick, St Brigid, St Columba (Colum cille). • All that is good in our present world will survive in the kingdom of heaven. Every act of kindness, generosity and service contributes to the building of the kingdom.	Mystery of Jesus Christ • Jesus helped the sick (Lk 17:11-19). • Jesus loved and cared for the poor (Jn 6:1-13).



Monday: Called to Holiness through Prayer

Consider

Prayer is how we speak and listen to God. It helps us grow closer to him and become holy. Jesus prayed often and taught his disciples the 'Our Father'. When we pray, we are called to holiness, as we can talk to God and listen to God.



Explore

Begin by asking: 'When you talk to your friends, do you only speak – or do you also listen?'

Explain: 'Prayer is talking to God, but also listening to him. Sometimes we use words, but sometimes we are very quiet. This is called Christian meditation or silent prayer.'

Show a candle (lit safely) as a symbol of God's presence.

Connect to holiness: 'When we pray in silence, our hearts become closer to God, and that is how we grow in holiness.'

Share the story of Elijah and the Gentle Whisper (1 Kgs 19:11-12, adapted):

Elijah wanted to hear God. There was a strong wind, but God was not in the wind.
There was an earthquake, but God was not in the earthquake.
There was a fire, but God was not in the fire.
Then came a gentle whisper – and Elijah knew God was there.

Explain: 'God often speaks to us in quiet and peace, not in noise. That is why we take time to sit still and listen.'

Brief discussion:

- Why do you think it's hard to be quiet sometimes?
- How can being quiet help us listen to God?



Activity

Guided Christian Meditation:

1. Invite children to sit comfortably with hands on their laps.
2. Light the candle and say: 'We are now going to pray in silence. We will listen to God in our hearts.'
3. Teach them a simple prayer word or phrase they can repeat silently, e.g. 'Come, Lord Jesus.'
4. Guide them into 2–3 minutes of quiet meditation. Use a gentle bell or chime to begin and end.
Timers for meditation can be found at the Christian Meditation Ireland website:
<https://christianmeditation.ie/meditation-timers-2/>
5. After silence, ask: 'How did it feel to sit quietly with God?' (Affirm all answers.)

Closing Prayer: 'Lord Jesus, thank you for being with us in silence. Help us to listen to you and grow holy in prayer. Amen.'



Tuesday: Called to Holiness through Love and Friendship

Consider

To be a friend is to support, care for and show mercy to one another. Jesus taught us how to live this way in how he lived his own life. Jesus calls his disciples (his friends) to follow him in love and friendship.



Explore

Use the following questions to have a class discussion around modern acts of service and sacrifice:

- What does it mean to serve others in today's world? Can you give examples of people who help others in your community?
- Who do you think makes sacrifices for others today (e.g., parents, nurses, firefighters, missionaries)? What do they give up to help others?
- How can children your age show service or make small sacrifices for others? What are some ways you can help at home, at school, or in your parish?
- Can you think of someone in your life or in the news who has done something brave or kind for others? Why do you think they chose to act that way?
- How do acts of service and sacrifice show love, like Jesus showed love? Can you think of a time when Jesus served or sacrificed for others in the Bible?
- Why do you think our faith encourages us to serve and help others, even when it's hard? How can prayer and God help us be strong enough to serve others?



Story

Share the following story about St Maximilian Kolbe and his self-sacrifice in Auschwitz. He gave up his life to save another prisoner during World War II. His love and courage came from his deep faith in Jesus.

During World War II, a kind and brave priest named Maximilian Kolbe was taken to Auschwitz, a prison camp in Poland. Even though he was surrounded by sadness, hunger and fear, Fr Kolbe never lost his faith in God or his love for others.

Fr Kolbe spent his days in the camp praying and comforting those around him. He reminded people that even in the worst places, God was with them.

One day, a prisoner had escaped, and as punishment, the guards chose ten men to die in his place. One of the chosen men cried out, 'My wife! My children!' Everyone stood in silence.

Then, something extraordinary happened. Fr Kolbe stepped forward and said, 'I will take his place. I have no wife or children. Let me go instead.' The guards were shocked, but they agreed.

Fr Kolbe was taken with the others to a small underground cell. They had no food or water. After many days, Fr Kolbe was the only one left alive. He was weak, but his spirit was strong. Finally, on 14 August 1941, he gave his life completely, just as Jesus did for us.

Class Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think Fr Maximilian Kolbe was able to stay kind, hopeful and full of faith even in such a terrible place like Auschwitz? Encourage reflection on how faith gives us strength and purpose, even in hardship.
2. Fr Kolbe offered to die in place of another man. What do you think gave him the courage to do something so loving and brave? Encourage the children to consider how deep faith can inspire extraordinary acts of love.
3. How can we show love, kindness and courage in our own lives – at school, at home or during hard times?
4. Fr Kolbe comforted others and reminded them that God was still with them. Why is it important to remind others of God's love, especially during difficult times?
5. What does this story teach us about living a holy life – not just through prayer, but through our actions toward others?

Activity

'Thank You' Prayer: Write a prayer for someone who helped others during hard times (e.g., doctors, carers, family).

Prayer Starters:

- Lord Jesus, I pray for ...
- Jesus, I ask that you ...
- Please bless ...
- God, thank you for ...



Wednesday: Called to Holiness in Family Life (Grandparents' Day)

Consider

We are learning this week about how we are all called to holiness in our lives, to live a certain way and to be like Christ in our thoughts, words and actions. This includes in our family life. Our grandparents are very special members of our family who can show us what living a holy life looks like. On this Wednesday of Catholic Schools Week, we celebrate and remember the important role our grandparents play in our lives, caring for us, supporting and encouraging us to achieve our dreams and teaching us what holiness can look like in our lives. When we show our love, appreciation and care for our grandparents in our lives, we live holier lives.



Explore

Our grandparents are a blessing in our lives. In his message for the fifth World Day of Prayer for Grandparents, on 27 July 2025, Pope Francis told us:

How often our grandparents have been for us examples of faith and devotion, civic virtue and social commitment, memory and perseverance amid trials! The precious legacy that they have handed down to us with hope and love will always be a source of gratitude and a summons to perseverance.

Grandparents are such a precious gift in our lives. They care for us, support us and love us. They help us to become all we can be, encourage us and teach us so many important lessons.

Ask the children: What kinds of things do your 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 Pope Francis' prayer for grandparents .

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.

Activity

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

Portrait of Granny and/or Grandad and Me: Encourage the children to draw and colour a portrait of them 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. Give the card to grandparents, or if they live far away, why not post it?

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

Write a prayer of thanksgiving for your grandparents.

Project

In linking with the SESE history curriculum, encourage the children to research one of their grandparents by surveying their grandparent where 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. Perhaps they can locate pictures of their grandparent, be it as a child, 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: Called to Holiness through Courage and Service

Consider

There are many ways to be holy. Holiness includes service (helping others with love) and courage (being brave when it is difficult). We see examples of holiness in our lives and in role models like Brother Kevin Crowley. As he bravely followed the example of Christ, we too can be holy, serving others through kindness and mercy in our thoughts, words and actions.



Explore

Tell the story of the late Brother Kevin Crowley, who served the homeless for many years in Dublin. Explain in simple words: 'Brother Kevin showed holiness by giving food, care and kindness to people in need. He gave his entire life to serve others, just as Jesus taught us.'

The following YouTube clips highlight Brother Kevin's holiness in how he served the poor, the hungry and the homeless of Dublin.

Brother Kevin retires from role at Capuchin Centre:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mnBSIOi7Uvg>

'I will carry the joys and the sorrows of the homeless' – Brother Kevin gets farewell at Capuchin Centre:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fgs4QUhkiXQ>

Ask the class: 'In what little ways can we serve others at home, in school, or in the playground?'



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Activity

Helping Hands: Have each child trace their hand on a sheet of paper. Inside, they can draw or write one way they can serve (e.g. tidying, sharing, helping at home).

End with a short prayer: 'Jesus, help us to be brave and to serve others with love.'



Friday: Called to Holiness through Joy and Mission

Consider

Mission means sharing the Good News of Jesus. We are called to do this joyfully, just like the women at the tomb who told the disciples that Jesus is alive. We joyfully proclaim the Good News that the kingdom of God is here, where we are called to live justly and serve one another joyfully. It is our mission to bring about this kingdom each day. St Carlo Acutis is an important example of being called to holiness through joy and mission.



Explore

St Carlo Acutis was made a saint last year. Ask questions such as:

- 'What is a saint?'
- 'Do we know any saints?'
- 'Do you think we can be saints?'

Play the St Carlo Acutis' Super Mission! video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_9PHighnhk44

Discuss how the students can show holiness in their thoughts, words and actions.

Activity

Friendship Chain: Give each child a strip of coloured paper. On it, they can write or draw one way to show love and friendship (e.g. sharing, helping, kind words). Link the strips to form a class 'Friendship Chain' to display.

End with a short prayer: 'Jesus, help us to love our friends as you loved your friends. Help us to live as St Carlo Acutis did, with holiness and joy.'