

Centred on Christ

JANUARY 2024



Dear Colleague,

As we begin this New Year, we hope that you and your colleagues have enjoyed a restful Christmas holiday. We wish you and the school community every happiness and success in 2024.

Thank you to all schools, Parent Councils and parishes who made a submission on the Scottish Government's consultation on **RSHP guidance**. Hopefully, we will have made clear to the authors that they require to reinstate the explicit safeguards for Catholic Schools which were in the 2014 Guidance.

We are also grateful to all the clergy and Head Teachers who attended the joint meeting in November to share practice on how they, in their schools and parishes, strive to strengthen **Home-School-Parish partnerships**. The discussion generated lots of good examples of the ways in which schools and parishes work together to engage parents and families. We will add these to the practice which was published in *Centred on Christ* (April 2022).

Bishop John is delighted that 95% of our diocesan schools gave us their **Developing in Faith** reports. As we visit Cluster meetings, it has been a privilege to discuss the very good practice in all schools. We are grateful to the schools who have agreed to share examples of good practice in this and the previous edition of *Centred on Christ*. We are also collating the support you have identified which we will endeavour to address as we go forward. We will share these collated responses with SCES and you. It would be appreciated if schools would make their DiF reports for this session to the Diocese by **4 June**. The form has been uploaded onto TEAMS.

Several schools in their DiF submissions have expressed a desire to provide support for the **spiritual development of staff**. This is an area we will explore at future meetings with CHAPS, CHAS, R.E. Coordinators and PTs Religious Education. We know there is already good practice in this area: for example, some of you offer breakfast sessions and reflections during collegiate time. We also publish a prayer service for staff in every edition. These can be sourced in TEAMS/ Centred on Christ and in the Staff Reflection Resources channel.

We hope that the **Themes for Prayers and Assemblies** will support you in your work to deepen the faith of children and young people this term. We appreciate the many rich experiences you offer them to encounter Christ and grow in relationship with Him.

St Paul's Primary has shared its **Travelling Mary** initiative, similar to the Travelling Crib. You will be aware that in response to requests by a number of schools we are working with Pauline Media to offer this to all Primary Schools as part of the P4 pupils' preparation for First Holy Communion. We hope that this will provide a focus for families to pray together

The Diocesan Equalities and Inclusion Group has met on three occasions and has further meetings scheduled this term as we work to provide advice and plan CLPL for various groups of staff. We will also meet with SCES to ensure we are in-step with national developments. The minutes of meetings will be circulated when they have been approved.

Best wishes,

Neil Roarty

Neil Roarty
Director of Schools



Our Lady of Paisley;
pray for us

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Listening to the Lord

Father Matthew Carlin

This short service requires the school chaplain to lead it (or someone else to read the parts designated) and a reader (for the Old Testament reading). It could take place in a classroom or other quiet space, but ideally it would be in the school oratory in the case of a high school. Whatever the venue, it would be good to make sure that a Crucifix is placed at the front/in the centre of the room and is visible to everyone present. It would also be fitting to have some candles.

Begin with the following prayer. It should be read slowly, giving time for reflection. This prayer invites the Holy Spirit to operate within us:

Leader: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

We stand before You, Holy Spirit, as we gather together in Your name.

With You alone to guide us, make Yourself at home in our hearts;

Teach us the way we must go and how we are to pursue it.

We are weak and sinful; do not let us promote disorder.

Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path nor partiality influence our actions.

Let us find in You our unity so that we may journey together to eternal life and not stray from the way of truth and what is right.

All this we ask of You, who are at work in every place and time, in the communion of the Father and the Son, forever and ever. Amen.

A brief pause may be observed here.

Leader: “Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.” (Rev 2:7) Pope Francis often speaks about the need for all of us in the Church to listen: to God and to one another. This was one of the main themes of the recent (and ongoing) Synod in Rome:

“This is the primary task of the Synod: to refocus our gaze on God, to be a Church that looks mercifully at humanity. A Church that is united and fraternal... that listens and dialogues; a Church that blesses and encourages, that helps those who seek the Lord, that lovingly stirs up the indifferent, that opens paths in order to draw people into the beauty of faith.”¹

In response to this, we are in our turn called to listen. In doing so, we draw closer to the Lord who desires to speak to our hearts:

“God always reveals himself by communicating freely; and on the other hand, man and woman are asked to tune in, to be willing to listen. The Lord explicitly calls the human person to a covenant of love, so that they can fully become what they are: the image and likeness of God in his capacity to listen, to welcome, to give space to others. Fundamentally, listening is a dimension of love.”²

¹ Homily of Pope Francis at Mass for the opening of the XVI General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, 4/10/23.
<https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2023/10/04/0693/01510.html#en>.

² Message of Pope Francis for 56th World Day of Social Communications.
<https://www.cbcew.org.uk/popes-message-for-world-communications-day-2022/>.

Listening to the Lord - Father Matthew Carlin

(Continued from page 2)

Pause. A reader continues:

A Reading from the First Book of Kings

Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah, saying, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?' He answered, 'I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away.'

He said, 'Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.' Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice to him that said, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?' (1 Kings 19:9-13)

(The following reflection may be read by the chaplain/leader or another person)

The context for this passage is intriguing. The prophet Elijah has been faithful to God and to His Law. He stood up for the Lord in the face of strong opposition, even from those in authority. For this, his life was threatened; and so he runs away. In his fear, he is led by God to Horeb, which is another name for Mount Sinai. This is where God had given the Law to His people through Moses and had inscribed the Ten Commandments on the tablets of stone. It is in this place that Elijah has an experience going beyond any words. The voice of God is not heard in the great, powerful wind, nor in the terrifying earthquake, nor in the raging fire. These things, like the events that overtake us in our lives, can be distressing, to say the least. They can seem to imply that God has forgotten us, or abandoned us, or has left us to fend for ourselves. They can lead us to lose hope; but once they have passed, once the noise has subsided, there is silence. Only faith in God can give us confidence when everything around us seems to have been blown away, or shaken to its core, or burned to the ground. If we allow our faith to lead us into silence, we give ourselves the opportunity to hear the voice of the Lord. In the story of Elijah, God calls the prophet to return to his vocation of calling the people to repentance. The voice of God, heard in our hearts in the silence of prayer, may call us out of ourselves and our comfort-zones (as God called Abram to leave his homeland); He may call us to make a difficult change of path (like the people of Nineveh in response to the prophet Jonah); He may call us to carry on with what we are already doing, however hard it may be (like Elijah); He may simply call us to rest in him, and to allow the assurance of His presence and His love to refresh our spirit: "The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul that seeks him. It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord." (Lamentations 3:25-26) Let us listen for Him.

After a pause to allow quiet reflection, finish by praying the Our Father together.

Leadership - Accompanying our Community

In Chapter One of [‘How to survive in leadership in a Catholic School’](#), Raymond Friel reflects upon Pope Francis’ call for Catholics to light a fire. The Pope cited the passage on the Road to Emmaus where the disheartened disciples were leaving Jerusalem but a stranger walked with them, sharing their pain. He tells them they are ‘slow of heart’ but they recognised him at the breaking of the bread. They returned to Jerusalem with their hearts burning (Luke 24:32).

The encyclical *Evangelium Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel) exhorts the faithful to ‘light a fire in the heart of the world’ (#271.) It is a call to all Catholics engaged in pastoral work to be part of the mission of the Church.

“the Gospel tells us constantly to run a risk of a face-to-face encounter with others, with their physical presence which challenges us, with their pain and their pleas, with their joy...”

True faith in the incarnate Son of God is inseparable from self-giving, from membership in the community, from service, from reconciliation with others. The Son of God, by becoming flesh, summoned us to the revolution of tenderness.”

In the chapter, entitled “The Revolution of Tenderness – ‘The Joy of the Gospel’ and Catholic Schools”, Friel reminds us that Jesus spent time with people, even when he wanted time for reflection. (Luke 9: 1-11). He challenges us to see that everyone who works in a Catholic school, no matter what their role, is a student of the art of accompaniment. We are called to be with our young people. School leaders are also called to be with all members of the community.

Pause and Reflect

- How have we spent our day or our week?
- How much of our day is spent with people and how much with paper?
- Who have we encountered today/this week and how far have we ‘accompanied’ them?
 - the angry or worried parent
 - the young person who is upset – or who has caused others to be hurt or upset
 - the member of staff who has shared problems in their family circumstances; or whom you feel is being obstructive?
- Do we have as many opportunities for face-to-face encounters with our community as we should? What are the demands which prevent us from doing so? Are there any ways of minimising some of these pressures?

Raymond Friel OBE grew up in a tenement in the east end of Greenock and went to St Lawrence’s Catholic Primary School. He has spent most of his career in England where he has been a headteacher, a leader of academies of 30 schools, and is now the Director of CSAN, a network of domestic Catholic charities in England and Wales.

Raymond is the author of a number of books on Catholic Education.

‘How to survive in leadership in a Catholic School – a personal reflection for headteacher and deputies’ (Redemptorist Publications, 2015)

Gospel Values for Catholic Schools: A Practical Guide for Today (2017)

Prayers for Schools: Original prayers and resources for teachers and chaplains (2018)

How to Survive Working in a Catholic School: A Guide for Teachers and Support Staff (2013) – Co-authored with Sister Judith Rossi

'Laudate Deum: To all People of Goodwill on the Climate Crisis'

A Summary by Justice and Peace Scotland and SCIAF

On 4th October 2023, the Feast Day of St Francis of Assisi, Pope Francis released the apostolic exhortation *Laudate Deum: To all People of Goodwill on the Climate Crisis*. It is no coincidence that the document was published on the same day as we celebrate St Francis. Indeed it was purposefully released on his feast day on account of the saint's love and care for all God's creation as we will no doubt remember fondly from stories about him from our childhood. In the opening line of *Laudate Deum*, Pope Francis quotes his namesake as he reminds us of St Francis' words: "Praise God for all His creatures!". From here he goes on to lament the ongoing climate crisis and to call the world to action in response.



Laudate Deum is a follow-up to 2015's '*Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*'. In its eight-year existence, *Laudato Si'* has become a key document of Catholic Social Teaching for parishes, schools, and even world leaders and politicians. The main message of *Laudato Si* is to urge society to recognise that we are all interconnected as one human family. In particular Pope Francis draws attention to the "cry of the earth and the cry of the poor", noting that there are not two crises, one about poverty and the other about ecology, but that both of these are one and the same and are as a result of our over-consumption of goods and materials, destruction of the earth's environment at an unsustainable rate, and an unequal distribution of wealth and resources. *Laudato Si* is what we refer to as a papal encyclical, meaning that it can be interpreted like an official statement or authoritative teaching from the Church. *Laudate Deum*, on the other hand, is an apostolic exhortation which is not authoritative but can be considered more like a guiding document or an encouragement of a particular activity or virtue. In this context then, *Laudate Deum* can be seen almost like a "reminder and reinforcement" of *Laudato Si*, identifying the urgent problems and subsequent actions that must be addressed in order to make *Laudato Si* a reality. So what does *Laudate Deum* say?

The exhortation is much shorter than its predecessor, at only 7,500 words in comparison to nearly 40,000. It is comprised of six sections, and a brief description of each is as follows:

Section 1: The Global Climate Crisis

The first section of *Laudate Deum* discusses the world's increasing temperatures and the Pope's concern about what will happen if these continue at the rate they are progressing. Of note is Pope Francis adding his voice to the consensus among the vast majority of the world's scientists that the current rises in global temperatures are not a result of natural variations in the earth's climate but instead are caused by human activity.

Section 2: A Growing Technocratic Paradigm

Here Pope Francis strongly criticises the value we have afforded to technological advancement as a society. He offers that we often fall into a trap of thinking that if something is technologically advanced then it must be good for us and good for the world. Yet not all increases in our technological capability are a sign of true progress: the development of technologies and weaponry that can eliminate human beings on a vast scale are not to be celebrated. What's more, the world's natural resources required by technology, lithium and silicon for example, are not unlimited, especially at the rates at which we use them. When commenting on the physical scarcity of resources that is being or will be encountered in the race to continue to develop "the next best thing", Pope Francis insists we must detach ourselves from the notion that anything that is not human is there to be exploited. Humans are part of nature.

Technology must develop and advance along with corresponding values and ethics and ensure technological advancements benefit people and planet simultaneously.

Section 3: The Weakness of International Politics

The main focus of this section is to endorse new ways of international cooperation. In particular the Pope says that action and the coordination of action should not be left to political authorities alone as this often does not work. Instead, he advocates for the inclusion of civil society groups in decision-making processes and reflects on globalisation in a positive light by suggesting that global knowledge exchange between civil society groups in different countries and contexts can lead to bottom-up activity to influence action on climate change and put pressure on political powers.

'Laudate Deum: To all People of Goodwill on the Climate Crisis'

(Continued from page 5)

Section 4: Climate Conferences – Progress and Failures

Pope Francis now turns his attention to analysing the various climate conferences (COPs) that have taken place since the establishment of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). For example, he notes the initial establishment of the Paris Agreement in 2015 at COP21 as a success. The Paris Agreement requires all state parties to do everything in their power to keep global temperature rises below 2 degrees Celsius and make every effort to limit these increases to 1.5 degrees Celsius. Each year, governments must submit emissions targets but the Pope notes that these are often unambitious or not met.

Section 5: What to Expect from COP28 in Dubai

In the penultimate section of *Laudate Deum*, Pope Francis notes that the latest COP will take place in a fossil-fuel producing country but that we must not be hopeless as resigning ourselves to thinking that nothing can be done will expose humanity to the worst impacts of climate change. He also notes that the United Arab Emirates has made significant investments in renewable energy sources. COP28 must produce binding agreements on energy transitions that are obligatory on state parties and can be monitored.

Section 6: Spiritual Motivations

Finally, Pope Francis connects the teachings of our faith and examples from scripture to the problems he has discussed in the exhortation. He encourages us as Catholics to respond to the cry of the earth as stewards of God's creation. In Genesis God tells us that what He had created was good, we must keep it so. He emphasises that our faith should motivate us to act and respond to combat the climate crisis on account of our theological understanding of the interconnectedness of humans, creatures, and all of nature. Pope Francis asks us to embark upon a pilgrimage of reconciliation with the world so as to make it more beautiful, and to do so personally, in our families and in our communities. He concludes by saying: "'Praise God' is the title of this letter. For when human beings claim to take God's place, they become their own worst enemies."

This article was written using the following source material:

Pope Francis. *Laudate Deum: To All People of Goodwill on the Climate Crisis*. Vatican: The Holy See. Available at: https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/20231004-laudate-deum.html (Last accessed 23.11.23).

Booth, P. (2023). *Laudate Deum – a Summary*. Catholic Social Thought (online). Available at: <https://catholicsocialthought.org.uk/laudato-deum-a-summary/> (Last accessed 23.11.23).



Justice and Peace Scotland and SCIAF are eager to visit schools, both Primary and Secondary, to deliver educational inputs, talks, and workshops on Catholic Social Teaching, care of creation, climate justice, and sustainable solutions and behaviour changes on everything from global poverty and emergency responses to natural disasters, to the sustainability of the fashion and textile industry and the global journey of a cotton t-shirt. Our agencies can deliver activities in schools suitable for the age and stage of the pupils and can relate these to other areas such as IDL topics, TIOF strands, citizenship work, Laudato Si Schools, Rights Respecting Schools, and so on. Colleagues are very welcome to get in touch to talk more about this and tailoring inputs to pupil's needs and the learning and teaching plans of the school. Laudato Si Schools is a joint initiative by SCES, SCIAF, and Justice and Peace to encourage school communities to respond to the call of Pope Francis and become places of ecological education concerned with care for our common home.

If your school is interested in becoming a Laudato Si School or finding out more about it, or if you need support on your Laudato Si Schools journey, please contact SCES.

- Anne-Marie Clements, Catholic Social Teaching Engagement Officer, Justice and Peace Scotland:
Annemarie.clements@justiceandpeaceScotland.org.uk
- Mark Booker, SCIAF Senior Education and Community Engagement Officer:
mbooker@sciaf.org.uk

Faith Fridays

St. Fergus' Primary School Paisley

Following the COVID Pandemic we wanted to find a way to encourage families and children to return to regular Mass attendance and to ensure our school's Catholic Identity was promoted to all families in our school. To do this we decided that we would incorporate First Friday Mass with *Laudato Si* and introduced 'Faith Fridays'.

On the first Friday of each month, we attend morning Mass as a whole parish community. This includes all our children and staff, parents and carers and members of our Parish. During Mass our Primary 5 to 7 children participate in the liturgy and at the end of Mass our *Laudato Si* Leadership Group update our Parish on the progress we are making on our *Laudato Si* journey. After Mass our parents, carers and Parish members are invited back to our school for a cup of tea and a catch up. The attendance at these Masses is much improved since we introduced the Family Mass.

Our Faith Friday continues into the afternoon, where each class focuses on learning directly related to the quote we have chosen. The whole school then come together for a *Laudato Si* Assembly, which is led by our Pupil Leadership group guided by our School's *Laudato Si* Co-ordinator. Each Assembly begins by singing the *Laudato Si* Song together, we share prayers that each class has written and add them to our school prayer tree and then each class shares what they have been learning about with the whole school. We take pictures of this and share them on our social media pages. We end our assembly with a short reflection and a prayer.



MISSIO

St Ninian's Primary School

As a school we have always celebrated the work of MISSIO. However, due to the Covid years we had lost some momentum. A recent RE Co-ordinations meeting raised awareness of the Pope's charity and we were keen to promote it again within the school.

We invited Gerard Gough to present to our school during assembly to highlight the work of MISSIO and how to become a MISSIO 5 Star School. The MISSIO website and resources were shared with teachers at every stage encouraging and supporting a whole school focus. Classes were also encouraged to pray the Mission Rosary during Mission Month. One of our teachers also led a lunchtime Mission Rosary prayer service which children from P4 -P7 attended.

The work of MISSIO was further shared during our own whole school assemblies. The MISSIO resources were helpful in supporting children's understanding of the role of the missionary. Children's Rights and *Laudato Si'* are the golden threads which run through our curriculum. Both underpin the work of the missionary, working alongside global communities that are poor or in need, regardless of their background. The children could clearly make these links.

Inspired by the renewed focus on prayer during MISSIO month, our P5 children wrote a prayer which has now become our school prayer. Our P6-P7 children led a beautiful Missions Mass on the First Friday in October sharing the Missions prayer and celebrating the work of the missionaries across the five continents. In the coming weeks, we will participate in the Christmas Art Competition and in the year ahead the children will lead fundraising for MISSIO Scotland and continue to raise awareness within our school community and beyond.



Travelling Mary

St Paul's Primary School

Why our Rosary Bag Began

After the huge success of the Travelling Crib with Primary 1 and 2 we wanted to continue encouraging our children to pray together with their families. We decided to try out another initiative for our P3s and P4s to encourage our families to pray the Rosary together at home during May, the month of Our Lady.

How it worked in our school

The P3 and P4 teachers started off the month by teaching a series of lessons about Mary, the Month of May and the Rosary. They set up their class altars with blue cloths, flowers and statues of Our Lady. The children really enjoyed setting this up in class and this made them enthusiastic about being able to do the same at home. Every evening a child would take the bag home and set up an altar in their home and pray the Rosary with a family member.

As there were so many holidays in May last year, we decided to have two bags per class so that every child would get the opportunity to take the bag home.

The bag included:

- A statue of Our Lady.
- An LED tealight candle.
- A booklet on 'How to Pray the Rosary'
- And two pairs of Rosary beads.

The next morning during check in the children would share pictures and stories about their altar and how they prayed at home.

The Impact

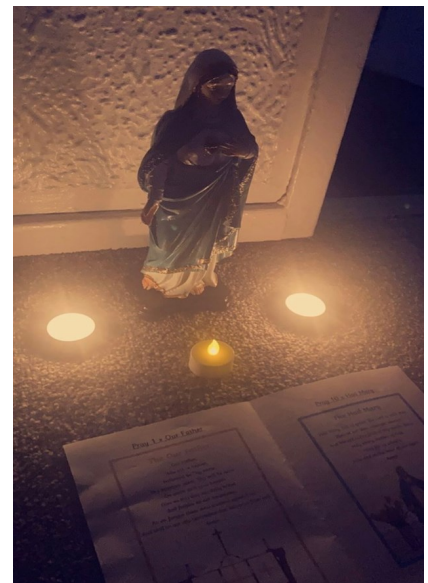
One of our children came to school the next day with a new pair of Rosary beads. He told us how his Gran had gone to Rome the month before he was born and had a pair of Rosary beads blessed for him, by the Pope. His Mum had totally forgotten about them, until they were setting up the altar together.

The children loved being chosen to take the bag home and loved discussing it the next day in class. The staff felt that it strengthened the bond between school and home through prayer. The parents felt more involved in their child's prayer life and were encouraged by their child's enthusiasm. They were happy to share photographs.

Advice for other schools

Having two bags per class was useful, as if a child forgets to bring the bag back the next day there is still one that is able to go home. Allowing time each morning during check in allowed the children to share their prayerful experiences.

It was a very worthwhile experience for all involved and we will be repeating it this again in May.



Reviewing our School Vision, Values and Aims

St Benedict's High School (Alan Taylor)

In February 2023, St Benedict's High School was visited by HMIE. A key aspect of their findings centred around the positive impact of reviewing the school's vision, values and aims.

"The headteacher reviewed the values recently with the chaplaincy team so they reflect better the teachings of the Gospel. These values are deeply embedded, widely understood, and evident in actions and behaviours. As a result, staff and young people enjoy positive and caring relationships. They are proud of their school and demonstrate a strong sense of belonging to the school community."

On my arrival in the school in 2018, I very quickly recognised the need to strengthen, with all members of the St Benedict's community, an understanding of the school's vision, values and aims and the impact these could have in practice.



St. Benedict's High School – Our Vision, Values and Aims

St. Benedict's High School is a Roman Catholic community with an ethos centred on and inspired by the love of Christ, expressed through our shared vision, values and aims.

Our Shared Vision – Ora et Labora – Pray and Work

St. Benedict's is a community which fosters ambition for all, where all young people feel safe, valued and included, and where attainment and achievements are recognised and celebrated. It is an inclusive, diverse community where everyone is treated with respect and the values of the Gospel are alive and evident every day. High aspirations of excellence are encouraged for all our young people.

Our Values

The values which underpin this vision, and which shape our approaches, relationships, policies and behaviour are:

- Respect
- Love
- Trust
- Tolerance
- Integrity

Our Aims

- To put faith into action to support everyone in our wider community and beyond.
- To fully develop the unique talents of all members of our community spiritually, morally, intellectually, socially and physically.
- To provide a safe, caring, inclusive and nurturing environment where everyone feels valued.
- To provide our young people with the highest possible standards of learning and teaching.
- To maximise the attainment and achievement of our young people.
- To work in close partnership with parents, the Church and the wider community.
- To ensure all our young people progress into positive and sustained destinations.

Reviewing our School Vision, Values and Aims

(Continued from page 10)

The starting point of this process was through a series of consultations involving different groups of young people, parents and staff. We recognised the importance of our values of respect, love, trust, tolerance and integrity as the foundation and driving force of all that we do. Key to these discussions was the importance placed on ensuring the Catholicity of our school remained central to our mission.

Initially, through the chaplaincy group which consisted of staff and pupils, we sought to define each individual value, reflecting and linking each meaning to examples of the gospel teachings of Jesus Christ.

Our School Values reflecting the Teachings of the Gospel

Respect

*"Love one another warmly as brothers and sisters,
be eager to show respect for one another"*
Romans 12:10

Recognising our common humanity, created in the image and likeness of God, we show respect to one another. Our fundamental equality requires mutual respect in every thought and action.

Love

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."
John 13: 34-35

Our mutual respect is shown and bears fruit in love. That our love be not merely a word to describe an emotion, our energies and efforts are directed to those in greatest need, conscious that faith is shown in action.

Trust

*"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him,
so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."*
Romans 15:13

Conscious of our respect and love for one another, we trust those who form us, as well as our fellow pupils, to pursue the common good and always avoid selfishness.

Tolerance

"With all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love"
Ephesians 4:2

Understanding that we will encounter and share our lives with others different from ourselves, we acknowledge the challenges in showing respect, love and trust for everyone in our school community. We undertake to strive to do all we can to live in peace with one another.

Integrity

*"Pray for us. We are sure that we have a clear conscience
and desire to live honourably in every way."*
Hebrews 13:18

Seeking to remain true to our Catholic beliefs, we actively promote equality, fairness and justice in everything we say and do. We will follow the example set for us by Jesus in promoting a loving and caring environment where all show this respect, love, trust and tolerance.

Reviewing our School Vision, Values and Aims

(Continued from page 11)

On completion of this process, all members of our community were asked to personally reflect on the findings and define each statement for themselves, in their own words. This was done through a series of group meetings, with support being provided by members of the chaplaincy team. From this we established short concise statements, complementing our recently defined ones linked to the teachings of the Gospel.

School Values
Respect
Created in the image of God, we show respect to one another in every thought and action.
Love
Our love is not merely a word to describe an emotion; our energies and efforts are directed to those in greatest need, conscious that faith is shown in action.
Trust
We trust those who form us, as well as our fellow pupils, to pursue the common good and always avoid selfishness.
Tolerance
Understanding that we will encounter and share our lives with others different from ourselves, we acknowledge the challenges in showing respect, love and trust for everyone in our school community.
Integrity
Seeking to remain true to our Catholic beliefs, we actively promote equality, fairness and justice in everything we say and do.

Our work then focussed on embedding these values into our day-to-day language and action. Inserts at year group assemblies and lessons in RE were used for our young people to reflect on the values and their meaning. Pupils were given opportunities to look at different “every day” scenarios which required faith in action and living these values. They reflected on what their words and actions would look like; in what they would say or do or in what they would not say or do.

This process is now embedded and revisited on a regular basis with additional input for all young people joining the school.

Staff are fully invested and model these values day to day and we ask pupils to do the same. This has developed a calm, nurturing environment with positive relationships at the core.

Over the past three sessions, we have also engaged with all of our cluster primary schools through our extended transition programme. Pupils in primaries 6&7 are introduced to our values and their meaning and asked to reflect on these and to recognise the similarities to the current values of their primary school. This allows them to develop a wider understanding of values and supports a positive transition to St Benedict’s.

It was also crucial to share and highlight our statements and definitions to all members of the community. This was achieved through inserts in newsletters and staff/pupil bulletins. High profile signage of our values around the school has allowed for easy reference for all members and visitors to the school and has proved to be very beneficial.

The overall process has resulted in a community ownership of our school values and these are demonstrated on a daily basis, allowing positive relationships and interactions with one another to flourish.

This has benefitted the whole school community and has fostered and strengthened the strong Catholic Ethos of St Benedict’s High school.

Themes for Prayer and Assemblies



Diocese of Paisley
Education Department

January

The Childhood of Jesus

While Christmas trees and decorations have all been packed away, the Church continues to celebrate the Christmas Season after the start of the new term.

The tradition of keeping the **Christmas nativity scene** until the Feast of the Presentation of the Child Jesus in the Temple on 2 February has been revived in recent years. Perhaps within the school or classrooms, teachers could continue to display the Crib until this date.

On Sunday 2 January, the Church celebrates **the Feast of the Epiphany**. The Magi brought gifts that revealed Jesus identity and mission: frankincense for God, Gold for a King and Myrrh for His humanity and death. Perhaps we could discuss with the children and young people what gifts **we** would give Him. How could we use our God-given talents to serve Him and our neighbours?

- Spending some more time in prayer and going to Mass.
- Giving time to someone who is lonely.
- Using our talents to the best of our ability.

The season of giving doesn't have to end at Christmas!

During the start of our new term, we could focus on **the Childhood of Jesus**: His life was ordinary, built around home and family, village and friends. He had to learn to live kindly in family life, accommodating His needs to the rest of the house. He took faith and the big questions of life seriously, going to the synagogue every week. We know He could read as He read the scroll of Isaiah, so He went to school. We do not know for definite if He could write. He had to negotiate growing up and so He got lost in the Temple being preoccupied with His life and vocation. This caused tension with His parents who still had care of Him. In the end it was resolved in mutual respect and giving each other space. He had to experience death in the family with the passing of St. Joseph and how to take on work as a carpenter and family responsibilities.

How does this relate to the lives of our pupils – their relationships with family and friends, their spiritual growth, their education, their sorrows and losses, and their vocation in life? What is God calling them to do? A reflection and prayer service on the Childhood of Jesus has been prepared by Sister Maria McGuire of the Daughters of Wisdom. It can be found on TEAMS/Education Resources for Schools/Prayers and Assemblies/Themes January to March.

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February-March

Lent

The Season of Lent begins with **Ash Wednesday** on 14 February and brings to our attention the three main pillars of Christian spirituality: Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving.

Prayer

We know that during Lent schools and chaplains make a special effort to enable young people to draw closer to God in preparation for Easter. In addition to Mass and other liturgies, schools may wish to consider a focus on The Sign of the Cross, the Stations of the Cross or the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary.

The Sign of the Cross

First-century Christians began making the Sign of the Cross as a reminder and renewal of what happened to them when they were baptised "*In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit*". Many footballers and athletes make the Sign of the Cross before an event or after scoring a goal. Why? The Sign of the Cross is a prayer in its own right, not just a sketchy introduction or a casual end to prayer. This prayer starts out, "*...in the name...*" What does this mean? The answer is everything we do, our entire life, is of concern to God; everything we do should be in His name. In making the Sign of the Cross, footballers and athletes place their trust in God and thank Him for the blessings He has given them; and that is true for us too.

Perhaps during Lent, especially on Fridays when we recall Our Lord's suffering and death on the Cross, we could focus on the Sign of the Cross in our classroom prayers. We should encourage the children and young people – and ourselves – to always make it with reverence and devotion – and not merely a habit carried out without thinking about it.

Father De Ravignan, a 19th century French priest, always made the Sign of the Cross with reverence and devotion. A Protestant clergyman had gone to hear him preach. When he saw how reverently and thoughtfully Father de Ravignan had made the Sign of the Cross, he said, "He has preached already; the sermon is finished and we might go." What might that 'sermon' have been that the clergyman 'heard' by observing the priest?

The Sign of the Cross is **a sign of love**. It reminds us that God has loved us so much that He gave Himself up for our sakes to suffer on the Cross, and that we must love Him with our whole hearts.

The Sign of the Cross is **a sign of hope**. By making this Sign we express our hope that through the Cross God will redeem us and continue to bless us.

The Sign of the Cross is **a sign of faith** in God. It is like a short form of the Apostles' Creed. We state our belief in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We proclaim our faith in what God has done - the creation of all things, the redemption of humanity from sin and death by Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church and of the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit in our own lives. When we bless ourselves we are reminding ourselves of God's presence and opening ourselves to his action in our lives.

Greeting the Gospel

Why do we make Signs of the Cross on our foreheads, lip and heart when we prepare to listen to the Gospel at Mass? We cross our forehead so that the Word of God may be in our thoughts and purify our minds. We cross our lips so that our speech may be holy and incline us to share the Gospel with others. And we cross our hearts to invite God to strengthen our love for Him and others. All of this is so that we might know, proclaim, and love Jesus Christ all the more. (Life Teen: <https://lifeteen.com>)

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Stations of the Cross

The Stations of the Cross, which follow the path of Christ on Good Friday from His meeting with Pontius Pilate to being laid in the tomb, are a popular devotion in parishes during Lent, particularly on Fridays.

A meditation on the Stations of the Cross for upper primary and lower secondary pupils has been prepared by Fr John Morrison, Vicar Episcopal for Youth and Vocations and can be found in TEAMS/Education Resources for Schools/Themes January to March. It focuses on three main characters: Pontius Pilate, Simon of Cyrene and Veronica. It can be delivered as part of an assembly or within the classroom. If the latter, the presentation contains activities as well as reflections and prayers.

Other forms of the Stations can be found on various websites:

<https://thekidsbulletin.com/stations-of-the-cross/>

https://wau.org/resources/article/re_stations_cross_kids/

<https://cathfamily.org/childrens-station-of-the-cross/>

<https://acnuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Primary-school-stations.pdf>

<https://cafod.org.uk/News/UK-news/Stations-of-the-Cross>

https://www.archwinnipeg.ca/media/youth/docs/youth_resource-1238107982.pdf

https://www.thinkingfaith.org/articles/20130325_1.htm

Fasting

Why do we 'fast' during Lent? The forty days of Lent is modelled on the forty days Christ spent fasting in the desert before embarking on his public ministry (Mt 4:1-11). We are asked by the Church to imitate Christ by using Lent as a time of spiritual discipline before the Easter celebration of Christ's triumph over sin and death.

St Augustine said our prayer is like a bird wanting to fly to God. To do so, it needs the two wings of fasting and almsgiving, signs of humility and charity.

You may wish to discuss with classes ideas for fasting during Lent. Some suggestions for fasting for children and young people can be found at: <http://www.nicksenger.com/csc/101-practical-fasting-ideas-for-lent>.

Almsgiving

In the Old Testament, Tobias stated: "Prayer and fasting are good, but better than either is almsgiving accompanied by righteousness ... It is better to give alms than to store up gold; for almsgiving saves one from death and expiates every sin. Those who regularly give alms shall enjoy a full life" (Tob 12:8-9).

Almsgiving is a form of prayer because it is "giving to God" — and not mere philanthropy. It is a form of fasting because it demands sacrificial giving — not just giving something, but giving up something, giving till it hurts: <https://www.catholiceducation.org/en/religion-and-philosophy/spiritual-life/introduction-to-lent-almsgiving.html>

Jesus presented almsgiving as a necessary part of Christian life: "when you give alms, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by men. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing" (Mt 6:2-3).

As always, it is important that Catholic schools place their charity work within the context of 'Faith into Action'.

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Diocesan Youth Events

Please share details of Youth Events with pupils and parents.

FEB	18	Sun	2-15pm	Primary Lent Day	St Mary's, Paisley	P4 to P7
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Classroom Resources

ACN Scotland

ACN has produced Stations of the Cross for Primary pupils in PDF, PowerPoint and YouTube video. Similarly, for Secondary, Stations of the Cross resources comprise a PDF commentary, PowerPoint slides and a narrated YouTube video. We encourage you to remember suffering Christians around the world and keep them in your prayers during this time. ACN will add to its Lent Resources: [Aid to the Church in Need | Resources \(acnuk.org\)](#)

Mary's Meals (marysmeals.org.uk)

Mary's Meals suggest sharing the Mary's Meals prayer with children as well as encouraging them to get involved in their campaign '**Move for Mary's Meals**' <https://www.marysmeals.org.uk/move-for-meals> which is a great opportunity for a class to get outdoors and support Mary's Meals. They also provide speakers for schools.

Prayer for Mary's Meals

Our Father,

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us for the times when we take more than our share of the bread that belongs to all.

Let us help You fill the starving with good things, not with scraps from our table.

Teach us how to share what is not ours to keep.

Clothe us with Your love that we may complete each good work You created us to do.

Place in our hearts Your compassion for each starving child and use our little acts of love so that they starve no more. Amen.

Missio

Lenten resources can be found at: <https://www.missioscotland.com/resources> Missio has also updated its **Lenten Calendar**. One of its key prayer resources is the **Mission Stations of the Cross**. This link also gives you access to a drop-down menu for each individual season or theme; for example, Confirmation/ Pentecost and Missionary Saints.

The wider primary school section is at: <https://www.missioscotland.com/primary-schools> which contains information about past projects, country files, games, assembly requests (the more of them the merrier) and Five Star Schools.

Resources for secondary schools can be found here: <https://www.missioscotland.com/high-schools>

Contact: gerard@missioscotland.com

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Feast of St Joseph (19 March)

Patron Saint

St Joseph is the patron of the Universal Church. He is the patron of a happy death (*to die in a state of grace and in friendship with GOD, so as to be assured of our eternal salvation*), families, fathers, expectant mothers, travellers, immigrants, craftsmen, engineers, and workers. He is also the patron of the Americas, Canada, China, Croatia, Mexico, Korea, Austria, Belgium, Peru, the Philippines and Vietnam.

<https://www.churchpop.com/2015/06/21/8-little-known-facts-about-st-joseph-the-foster-father-of-jesus/>

Children's Prayer to St. Joseph

St Joseph,
watch over me and care for me
just as you cared for the child Jesus;
and by your help, may I come to know your Son,
and so grow in strength and wisdom
and the favour of God. Amen.

An Assembly on St Joseph is on TEAMS/Education Resources for Schools/Themes January to March.

The Annunciation

The Church celebrates the Feast of the Annunciation on 25 March, when we recall Mary's 'Yes' to God. Mary's deep faith enabled her to respond to God's call. God is calling each one of us to do some special work for Him.

- How can we create space in our lives to hear what God is calling us to do?
- Do we have Mary's courage to respond to God's call?
- Do we have Mary's generosity to respond to God's call?
- How can we use our God-given talents to bring peace, justice, compassion and hope to our world?

Father John Morrison has prepared a reflection for P1 and P2 which can be found on TEAMS/Education Resources for Schools/Prayers and Assemblies/Themes January to March. Other suggestions would be to pray the Angelus on that day. Traditionally, the Angelus bell rings daily at noon and 6pm, reminding us of God's love for us. We also remember Mary's example of openness to God's will: <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/prayers/the-angelus.html>

Alternatively, we could focus reverently on the *Hail, Mary* reminding pupils that much of this prayer is taken from the words of the Angel (Luke 1:26-38) and Elizabeth (Luke 1: 39-56).

Diocese of Paisley - Education and Youth Calendar: 2023-24						
Month	Date	Day	Time	Event	Location	Target Group
JAN	7	Sun	2-5pm	Primary School Day	St Mary's, Paisley	P4-P7
FEB	14	Wed		Ash Wednesday	School-based	All schools
FEB	18	Sun	2-15pm	Primary Lent Day	St Mary's, Paisley	P4-P7
APR	17	Wed	6.30pm	Celebration of Confirmation	St Mirin's Cathedral	Confirmandi - St Thomas', St Mark's & St John's
APR	18	Thu	6.30pm	Celebration of Confirmation	St Mirin's Cathedral	Confirmandi - St Charles', St Peter's & St Paul's
APR	24	Wed	6.30pm	Celebration of Confirmation	St Mirin's Cathedral	Confirmandi - St Cadoc's & St Clare's
APR	25	Thu	6.30pm	Celebration of Confirmation	St Mirin's Cathedral	Confirmandi - St Catherine's, St Fergus, St James', St John Ogilvie & St Mary's
APR	29	Mon		33 Day Diocesan Consecration to Jesus through Mary begins (ends on 1 June)	School-based	P7 pupils
MAY	1	Wed	6.30pm	Celebration of Confirmation	St Mirin's Cathedral	St Anne's, St James' & St John Bosco
MAY	2	Thu	6.30pm	Celebration of Confirmation	St Mirin's Cathedral	OLM & St Joseph's
MAY	9	Thu		Ascension Day	School-based	P1-S6
MAY	13-17			ACN Rosary for Peace	School-based	P1-P7
MAY	15	Wed	6.30pm	Celebration of Confirmation	St Mirin's Cathedral	OLOP, St Anthony's, St David's, St Fillan's & St Margaret's
MAY	16	Thu	6.30pm	Celebration of Confirmation	St Mirin's Cathedral	Craigmarloch, St Francis', St John's, St Michael's & St Colm's
MAY	19	Sun	2-5pm	Primary Day - Pentecost	St Mary's, Paisley	P4-P7
MAY	22	Wed	6.30pm	Celebration of Confirmation	St Mirin's Cathedral	All Saints, St Mary's & St Patrick's
MAY	23	Thu	6.30pm	Celebration of Confirmation	St Mirin's Cathedral	St Andrew's, St Joseph's, St Ninian's and St Joseph's & St Patrick's Parish
MAY	26	Sun	2-5pm	Day for Altar Servers	Diocesan Offices	Altar Servers
JUN	3	Mon	TBC	National Caritas Awards Ceremony	Clyde Auditorium	Caritas Students
JUN	11	Tue	9.45-3pm	Teaching in Catholic Schools	Cathedral Halls	S6
JUN	12	Wed	4.30pm	Thanksgiving Mass	St Mirin's Cathedral	All teaching and support staff – particularly NQTs

CLPL (January-April)			
Course	Date	Time	Venue
Principal Teachers of Religious Education (Senior Phase/SQA)	12.01.24	9.30 - 12.00	Diocesan Offices
Sacrament of Confirmation – Session 2	17.01.24	4.00 - 5.30	Diocesan Offices
Sacrament of Confirmation – Session 2	18.01.24	4.00 - 5.30	All Saints Primary, Greenock
Primary RE and <i>Laudato Si'</i> Co-ordinators' Meeting - Sharing Practice on <i>Laudato Si'</i>	7.02.24	4.00 - 5.15	Diocesan Offices
Primary RE and <i>Laudato Si'</i> Co-ordinators' Meeting - Sharing Practice on <i>Laudato Si'</i>	8.02.24	4.00 - 5.15	All Saints Primary, Greenock
Preparing for Local Authority Interviews Renfrewshire	16.02.24	10.00 – 11.30	Diocesan Offices
Preparing for Local Authority Interviews East Renfrewshire	20.02.24	10.00 – 11.30	St Luke's High
Preparing for Local Authority Interviews Inverclyde	23.02.24	10.00 - 11.30	All Saints Primary, Greenock
Sacrament of First Eucharist To support teachers new to P4 in preparing children for the Sacrament of First Eucharist.	6.03.24	4.00 - 5.30	Diocesan Offices
Sacrament of First Eucharist To support teachers new to P4 in preparing children for the Sacrament of First Eucharist.	7.03.24	4.00 – 5.30	All Saints Primary, Greenock
God's Loving Plan - Teachers new to P6/P7	13.03.24	4.00 - 5.30	Diocesan Offices
God's Loving Plan - Teachers new to P6/P7	14.03.24	4.00 - 5.30	All Saints Primary, Greenock
Lenten Service for Staff—Father Matthew will prepare a prayer and reflection service which will be sent to schools at the start of the Lent.	February/ March		School-based
Paisley Diocese CHAPS Conference	26.04.24		Gleddoch House Hotel

Diocesan Contacts

Fr Matthew Carlin	Vicar Episcopal for Education	VE-Education@rcdop.org.uk
Neil Roarty	Director of Schools	Director.Schools@rcdop.org.uk
Anne Marie Mullan	Primary Advisor	primaryadvisor@rcdop.org.uk
Stephen Parsons	Secondary Advisor	secondaryadvisor@rcdop.org.uk
Tommy Hughes	Curriculum Development Officer	Curriculum.DO@rcdop.org.uk
Dorothy Graham	Church Representative	eastrenfreweducation@rcdop.org.uk
Jim Docherty	Church Representative	inverclydeeducation@rcdop.org.uk
Jack Nellaney	Church Representative	renfreweducation@rcdop.org.uk
Mgr Joseph Burke	Church Approval	approvals@rcdop.org.uk
Norma Scott	Director of SPRED	spred@rcdop.org.uk
Canon Michael McMahon	Vicar Episcopal Formation and CLPL provider	VE-Formation@rcdop.org.uk
Father John Morrison	Vicar Episcopal for Youth and Vocations	VE-VocationsandYouth@rcdop.org.uk
Fr Jonathan Whitworth	Vicar Episcopal for Marriage and Family	VE-MarriageandFamily@rcdop.org.uk
Rebecca Harrison	Marriage and Family	marriageandfamily@rcdop.org.uk

SSVP Update

SSVP has not yet appointed a new Youth Officer and would encourage schools to contact their parish SSVP Conference for support in organising any Vinnie activities. Details of Mini, Junior and Senior Vinnies can be found at <https://www.ssvpscotland.com/ssvpyouth/> Information for teachers can be accessed at <https://www.ssvpscotland.com/ssvpyouth/teaching-resources/>

If you have any news of your Vinnie events, please send details to communication@ssvpscotland.com who will publicise your news on their website, social media pages or Ozanam News.

KNIGHTS OF ST COLUMBA COMPETITIONS 2023-24

The Knights of Saint Columba have organised several competitions for schools and would be delighted if your pupils had the opportunity to participate in them. There are separate competitions for Primary and Secondary age groups.

	Deadline
• Easter Photography	Thursday 14th March 2024
• Lent Scene Painting	Thursday 14th March 2024
• Prayer Composition	Thursday 4th April 2024
• Essay Writing	Thursday 18th April 2024

The competition rules and further details have been uploaded onto TEAMS/Education Resources for Schools/ KSC Competitions.