

## **Catholic Schools: Walking together in Faith and Love.**

**Leader 1:** Welcome to our liturgy for Catholic Schools' Week 2023. Our theme for this year is '**Catholic Schools: Walking together in Faith and Love**'. During this week, we celebrate how Catholic Schools help all our young people to achieve their full potential and journey together with the Lord in faith and in love.

We stand now for our opening hymn led by the choir from St Joseph's College Coalisland.

**Opening Hymn: 'We walk by faith and not by sight'**

**Celebrant: Sign of the Cross**

**Leader 2:**

We remind ourselves that Catholic education is person centered, inclusive and rooted in Gospel values.

Catholic schools aim to develop their students in a holistic way. It's about the whole person. We were always meant by God to live with others as community. We were never to walk alone in this life.

Our Faith calls us to walk in faith and love with others. It is true to say Catholic education encourages young people to develop themselves fully within our Faith Community. This past year and indeed for the next 3 years, we as a Church are walking on a Synodal Journey.

Young people are called in this journey to become the person that God created them to be. We do not journey alone but with the Lord Himself and within our school faith community. *(Pause)*

**Opening Prayer: (Celebrant)** *(Bless all with Holy Water during the prayer)*

Lord today, pour your blessing upon us as we gather to celebrate Catholic School' Week 2023.

In recent times we had to take precautions to stay safe. For many this was a lonely time. We thank you Lord, that we can be together safely again. *(Process around with Holy Water)*

We know that you always walk with us. Help us to walk forwards as a faith community in strong belief in You and always filled with your love.

We ask this through Christ Our Lord.

**All: Amen.**

**Leader 1:** God invites us to draw energy and life from His Holy Word. Our First reading is from the letter to the Ephesians Chapter 5. Read by a student from Belurgan National School

**Reader: A reading from the letter to the Ephesians. ( Student Belurgan NS)**

In light of all this, here's what I want you to do. While I'm locked up here, a prisoner for the Master, I want you to get out there and walk—better yet, run! — on the road God called you to travel. I don't want any of you sitting around on your hands. I don't want anyone strolling off, down some path that goes nowhere. And mark that you do this with humility and discipline—not in fits and starts, but steadily, pouring yourselves out for each other in acts of love, alert at noticing differences and quick at mending fences. You were all called to travel on the same road and in the same direction, so stay together, both outwardly and inwardly. You have one Master, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who rules over all, works through all, and is present in all. Everything you are and think and do is permeated with Oneness.

The word of the Lord.

**All: Thanks be to God.**

**Leader 2:** One of the great walking stories from the Gospels is the Emmaus story. A group of students from St. John the Baptist's College in Portadown will now present a tableau of the amazing story of Jesus walking with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus as we listen to this Gospel story. We remain seated so that we can follow the story. Fr Declan will read the Gospel Story for us.

*Minister will proclaim the Gospel.*

**Gospel Reading: Luke 24,13 – 35**

**The Lord be with you**

**All: And with your spirit**

**A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke.**

**All: Glory to you O Lord.**

It was a difficult few days for the disciples of Jesus. They had seen and heard about the death of their Lord. They were all alone now with no one to lead them. Two of these disciples left the city of Jerusalem, where Jesus was crucified, and began to walk the seven miles to a village called Emmaus.

They were walking along the road, talking about all that had happened, when Jesus came near and began to walk with them. In their sadness, the disciples did not recognise that it was Jesus who came near to them.

“What are you talking about as you walk along the road?” Jesus asked.

They stopped and looked at one another in sadness. “Are you the only one in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place these last few days?”

“What things?” Jesus asked.

“The things about Jesus of Nazareth, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be crucified,” said one of the disciples.

“We had hoped that he was the one who would redeem Israel. Today is the third day since he died,” said the other disciple. The first disciple jumped in and said, “Moreover, some women of our group have astounded us. They were at his tomb this morning, and they did not find his body there. They told us they had a vision of angels who said he was alive!”

“Others went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see him,” said the other disciple.

“Oh, how foolish you are, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets declared!” Jesus said. “It was necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter into his glory.”

Then, as they continued to walk, Jesus interpreted many things that the prophets, beginning with Moses, had said about him in the scriptures.

Finally, they arrived in the village of Emmaus, and Jesus walked ahead of them.

“Stay with us! It is almost evening, and the day is now nearly over,” the disciples shouted.

So Jesus came back to stay with them. They sat down for a meal, and Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples.

At that moment, their eyes were opened, and they recognised Jesus for the first time. Then he vanished from their sight.

They turned to each other. “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was explaining the scriptures to us?”

They got up immediately and returned to Jerusalem to tell the apostles about their encounter with Christ.

### **The Gospel of the Lord R / Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.**

**Leader 1.:** We take time now to listen and pray as we listen to our second hymn.

**Hymn: ‘On the Journey to Emmaus.’**

**Leader 2. :** There is an amazing painting called “Kitchen Maid with the Supper at Emmaus”. The artist shows a servant maid or perhaps a slave, doing the washup in the kitchen of the inn at Emmaus. Look at the copy here on the sanctuary. She is looking into a shiny pot she has just dried. The pot helps her see behind her like a rear-view mirror. She looks just as the two disciples recognise Jesus their Risen Master. He blesses and breaks bread for them at the table. She too recognises that Jesus is her Risen Lord. Like them and us, she is on her own faith journey.

Let us listen to this wonder filled poem by Denise Levertov, reacting to this amazing moment caught in the painting. Read by Mr Dermot mc Coy Principal of Belurgan National School.

### **Reader: The Servant-Girl at Emmaus**

She listens, listens, holding  
her breath. Surely that voice  
is his—the one  
who had looked at her, once, across the crowd,  
as no one ever had looked?  
Had seen her? Had spoken as if to her?

Surely those hands were his,  
taking the platter of bread from hers just now?  
Hands he’d laid on the dying and made them well?

Surely that face—?

The man they'd crucified for sedition and blasphemy.  
 The man whose body disappeared from its tomb.  
 The man it was rumoured now some women had seen this morning, alive?

Those who had brought this stranger home to their table  
 don't recognise yet with whom they sit.  
 But she in the kitchen, absently touching the wine jug she's to take in,  
 a young Black servant intently listening,  
 swings round and sees  
 the light around him  
 and is sure.

### **Hymn: Are not our hearts burning within us ?**

1. Are not our hearts burning within us?  
 Are not our hearts lighted with fire?
  
2. Jesus is with us is risen is with us;  
 Jesus is risen is with us today!
  
3. Jesus is the Lord! Jesus is the Lord!

**Leader 1:** We invite Archbishop Éamon to speak to us now.

**Leader 2.:** Now guest students from St Ronan's College and students from St. John the Baptist Primary School in Portadown will now lead us in short reflections and prayers.

#### **Student 1 reads reflection: Student 2 adds footsteps along the road**

Like the disciples we walk together in life. We are blessed to have our families and school community. We are not alone. We walk together in faith and love always trusting in God the Father's love for us all. Jesus walks with us always.

#### **Student A reads prayer: (Primary Student)**

Lord, you have blessed us by giving us our school community of faith. Help us to always make the most of this precious gift in life as we journey together. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

#### **Student 3 reads reflection: Student 4 adds footsteps along the road.**

Life can throw burdens and difficulties around us. The disciples saw their Master taken from them. Their dreams were shattered and they felt alone and abandoned. Faith is your gift to us.

**Student B reads prayer: : (Primary Student)**

Lord, we thank you today for our faith in you. The Apostles asked you to deepen their faith. As we journey together deepen our faith in your love and care, and help us reach out to support others. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

**Student 1 reads reflection: Student 2 adds footsteps along the road**

Did not our hearts burn within us as He explained the scriptures to us? The disciples were joined by Jesus as they walked. They did not recognise him yet as He explained to them all that what had happened to Him. Their hope and faith were strengthened and their friendship and love made stronger.

**Student C reads Prayer: : (Primary Student)**

Lord, we thank you for friendship, love and care. Jesus had friends who he loved to visit and chat with like Martha, Mary and Lazarus. Like Jesus, we get support and strength from loyal and good friends. Help us to be a true friend and to walk together with Jesus by our side always. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

**Student 3 reads reflection: Student 4 adds footsteps along the road**

When they arrived at Emmaus It seemed that Jesus was about to leave the two disciples but they persuaded Him to stay and join them for supper. It was when He took and blessed the bread that their eyes were suddenly opened and they recognised that their walking companion was indeed their Risen Master.

**Student D reads prayer: : (Primary Student)**

Lord, Your Spirit lives in our hearts and speaks quietly to us when we face choices. Help us listen and be guided so as to be true followers of Jesus. Help us too to recognise Him in the Holy Eucharist and within the community of our families, parishes and school. Walk with us in faith and in love. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

**Celebrant** : We thank God for the people who love us and for all those who help us as we walk together in faith and in love (**Pause**) Together we all pray from your prayer card:

**All: We strive to always walk boldly together in Faith and in Love by:  
Loving each person we meet.**

**Being joyful even when times are tough.**

**Being attentive and listening to each other.**

**Being peaceful in times of conflict.**

**Being patient when our patience is tested.**

**Being kind to those who are unkind.**

**Being gentle when we would rather be harsh.**

**Being generous with our time and resources.**

**Being faithful in all our friendships.**

**We strive to always walk boldly together in Faith and in Love.**

**All Amen**

**Celebrant** : Now let us pray together as Jesus taught us.

**All : Our Father...**

**Celebrant:**

Lord God, Abba Father, we walk step by step, moment by moment with eyes of faith with Spirit filled love. We strive to stay focused on You in the now of the moment, by dying to self and thinking and caring in love for others.

We are grateful for all Your blessings, counting them one by one. You are our refuge, our strength, our rock. Your Words are the words of life that sustain and feed us.

You are the truth that guides us always.

Please continue to bless us all. Lay your hand upon us, keep us from evil and from causing pain or hurt to others. Travel the road of life with us until we meet you face to face.

Lord God, Abba Father, we walk step by step, moment by moment with eyes of faith with Spirit filled love. Amen

May Almighty God Bless us all, The Father, The Son and the Holy Spirit.

**All Amen.**

**Leader 1.**

Students from St John the Baptist College will now lead us in this Blessing. Let's join them in asking God to bless us for our continued journey. *(Pause)* We Pray

**May the Lord bless you and take care of you; *(Bring hands, head and body down into low bow, palms facing down)*.**

**May the Lord be kind and gracious to you; (*Bring hands up above head level and stretch them outward with palms open*).**

**May the Lord look on you with favour and give you peace. (*Bring palms together and bow head slightly*).**

*(Adapted from Priestly Blessing, Numbers 6:24-26)*

**All: Amen.**

**Leader 2** Before our closing Hymn we thank all of you for attending here today. The organizing Group greatly appreciate all our schools who kindly participated in doing drama, music , prayers and readings. We thank Archbishop Eamon, the Parish here for hosting our service again. Fr Michael Sheehan PP and Fr Peter Clark for their welcome, the Sacristan Francis Hagan a great friend to us as ever. We invite you all to wear the wrist bands with their reminder "To walk together in Faith and Love" Bless you all Our Choir will now lead us in our Final Hymn:

**Closing Hymn: Abba Father.**