



Wednesday: Grandparents' Day – Grandparents are the Face of God's Mercy

Each year, the Wednesday of Catholic Schools Week is designated as the day when the school community celebrates and pays tribute to grandparents and the role they play in handing on the faith to their grandchildren, and in supporting the community of faith at home and in the parish. In a very real way grandparents are the face of God's mercy to their grandchildren. This is shown in the way they love and accept them for who they are and support them in everything they do.

Classroom Activities

There is a classroom resource for this day available at www.catholicschools.ie.

Catholic Grandparents Association

National Grandparents' Day is celebrated in September every year. More details can be found at www.catholicgrandparentsassociation.org. The people who organise this event would very much like to receive prayers/poems about grandparents to include in their celebration. You might like to spend some time today inviting the children to write a story/poem/prayer about their grandparents. These will be brought to the altar during Mass in Knock Shrine at the Grandparents' Day celebration next September. Prayers and poems can be posted to: Catholic Grandparents Association, Castlebar Street, Westport, Co. Mayo (Tel. 098-24877). These could also be displayed in the school or the classroom and shared with grandparents.

Prayer Service to Celebrate Grandparents' Day

This short prayer service can be adapted to suit the needs of your class/school community. It can also be adapted to be prayed even if you are not inviting the grandparents in on the day. You may like to involve as many of the grandparents as you can by inviting them to read various parts.

Leader We begin our time of prayer together by marking ourselves with the sign of our faith: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

As we light our candle this morning we remind ourselves that Jesus is always with us in everything we do.

This morning we give thanks for our grandparents, for all that they do for us and with us, for all that they teach us, for the love we share with them and, most importantly, for being the face of God's mercy to us always. We begin by welcoming them in song.

🎵 'This is the Day', *Alive-O 4*, page 32

Leader This year, the theme for Catholic Schools Week is **Catholic Schools: Challenged to Proclaim God's Mercy**. This is a Jubilee Year of Mercy proclaimed by Pope Francis and we are called and challenged to be the face of God's mercy to one another. Mercy is difficult to define and even more difficult to practice in our everyday lives. To be merciful as the Father is merciful, we are invited to love unconditionally, to forgive without judgement and to live as people who believe that all are made in the image and likeness of God. Now we are going to listen to a story that helps us to understand that wonderful mercy of God. *Alternatively, one of the senior classes might act this out.*



Reader **The Parable of the Lost Son (Lk 15:11-32)**

Jesus continued: ‘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 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.”

Leader

This is a story from the Gospel of St Luke. Jesus told many of these stories, called parables, to the people who gathered to listen to him. He did this because he wanted them to know how God, his Father, wanted them to live if they chose to follow him. This story shows us the merciful face of God in the way that the father welcomed back his younger son who had left and spent all his money. It also shows us how hard it can be to be merciful, as we see from the reaction of the older brother when his younger brother returns. We are all called to be merciful as God the Father is merciful.

As grandparents you are very often the people who display these virtues to your grandchildren. The relationship that you have with your grandchildren is often characterised by unquestioning love and support, of knowing that they will always be welcome, that there will always be a hug and a space for them to be who they really are. You are indeed the face of God’s mercy for many children. Today we celebrate the gift that you are to your grandchildren. We pray for you, we give thanks for you and we ask God’s blessing on each and every one of you.



Now let's show how much we appreciate our grandparents and their love for us by giving them a big *bualadh bos* ...

Let us take a moment to bring our prayers to God.

Response Hear our prayer

We pray for all who are gathered with us here today. We give thanks for the many different ways in which we show God's mercy to one another every day. Lord, in your mercy ... **Response**

We pray for our parents and grandparents who love us, care for us and teach us by their words and deeds how to live like Jesus and be the face of God's mercy every day. Keep them safe in your loving care. Lord, in your mercy ... **Response**

Bless all children, those here in our school, in our community and all across the world. Today, we especially remember children who have no school to attend, who are hungry or in need of shelter and protection. Grant that we may do all we can to share what we have with them. Lord, in your mercy ... **Response**

We remember our grandparents who are no longer with us. We ask Jesus to bless them, as they live forever with the saints in your heavenly kingdom. Lord, in your mercy ... **Response**

Leader Today, on Grandparents' Day, we think of the faith and love that our grandparents share with us. They share their lives and gifts and play a special part in how we learn and live our faith. Lord, help us to share all that we have and all that we are. Help us to be the face of God's mercy to all we meet. Together we pray the prayer that Jesus taught us:

Our Father/Ár nAthair

Final Blessing

Leader As we come to the end of our celebration this morning, we will pray our final blessing together.

Invite the children to extend their hands over their grandparents and say:

Loving God,
Bless all our grandparents,
those with us here today,
those who cannot be with us
and those who have gone to be with you.
May they heed your call to share their wisdom and faith with us.
May they have courage and confidence
to hand on your gifts
of experience and knowledge
of stories, songs and memories.
May they continue to learn and grow with us day by day.
Bless them and all of us gathered here today with length of days and joy at the last.
We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Suggested Closing Hymn

🎵 'Connected', *Alive-O 4*, page 14