



# Prayer/Service Assembly to Begin Catholic Schools Week 2016

## You Will Need

- A large candle with the words: kind and compassionate; fair and just; forgiving and reconciling; living like Jesus (*cf. final page of this document*).
- A prayer space containing an open Bible and a holder for the candle.
- One person to carry the lighted candle and place it in the prayer space.
- Two readers, and seven children to hold up posters or signs with the following words: kind, compassionate, fair, just, forgive, reconcile, live like Jesus.
- Some Senior Infants to tell the story of St Brigid from *Grow in Love* (this is an optional element of the Prayer Service and can be omitted); five people to read the Prayers of Intercession.

**Leader** Good morning everyone, and welcome to our time of prayer together as we begin Catholic Schools Week 2016. We begin our prayer in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Let us take a moment to be quiet in the presence of God ...

## Opening Song

Use the video or audio of the Year of Mercy song. This is available on [www.catholicschools.ie](http://www.catholicschools.ie). It is over seven minutes long but you only need to use a couple of minutes as a settling piece.

*While the opening song is being sung, the lighted candle is carried in and placed in the prayer space.*

**Leader** Today is St Brigid's Day, and on this day we welcome the beginning of spring in Ireland. We also begin Catholic Schools Week. During this week, the pupils, staff, parents, grandparents, members of boards and the people of the parish will show in lots of different ways that they are proud of their Catholic school. It is good to celebrate who we are and what we do.

The theme for Catholic Schools Week this year is **Catholic Schools: Challenged to Proclaim God's Mercy**. This year's theme is a reminder that we are celebrating an Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy in the Church. The Year of Mercy was proclaimed by Pope Francis. It began on 8 December 2015 and will conclude on 20 November 2016. Pope Francis wants this to be the year when we all try to be merciful, just as God is merciful. Mercy is a hard thing to understand and perhaps the most difficult thing to realise about mercy is that we don't deserve it. No matter how we try we can't earn mercy. It is given to us or we give it to somebody else. Mercy is forgiveness, wrapped up in love and compassion. The best example of how to give or show mercy is Jesus Christ. Jesus is the face of God's mercy. This week we are all challenged to see how we can be the face of God's mercy to each other, to our families and to our community. Let's see some of the ways that we might do this during the coming week.

**Reader 1** We are the face of God's mercy when we are ...

*Children 1 and 2 hold up the signs with the words 'kind' and 'compassionate' on them and say the words. Alternatively all those present could shout out the words.*



**Reader 2** We are the face of God's mercy when we are ...

*Children 3 and 4 hold up the signs with the words 'fair' and 'just' on them and say the words. Alternatively all those present could shout out the words.*

**Reader 1** We are the face of God's mercy when we are ...

*Children 5 and 6 hold up the signs with the words 'forgive' and 'reconcile' on them and say the words. Alternatively all those present could shout out the words.*

**Reader 2** We are the face of God's mercy when we are ...

*Child 7 holds up the sign with the words 'live like Jesus' on it and says the words. Alternatively all those present could shout out the words.*

**Leader** Let's take a moment to look at all those words again. I am going to ask the children to place the words in our prayer space for Catholic Schools Week. This week we are all going to try to put those words into action. We are going to accept the challenge to be a school where we are the face of God's mercy to one another. We are going to do our very best to be kind and compassionate, fair and just. We are going to forgive and be reconciled, and most of all we are going to try and live like Jesus because that is what makes our school different – that is what makes our school a Catholic school.

*The children and leaders return to their seats.*

*If you are going to invite Senior Infants to tell the story of St Brigid from their Grow in Love programme, this would be an appropriate time to do so. It could be introduced using the following words:*

**Leader** One of the ways that we learn how to be the face of God's mercy is by hearing about other people who tried very hard to show God's mercy to everyone. St Brigid did this in lots of different ways, and now Senior Infants are going to tell us one of those stories ...

## Prayers of Intercession

**Leader** We now turn to our God in prayer. The response to our prayer is: 'Hear our prayer.'

**Reader 1** We pray for our parents: that they may always be merciful as God our Father in heaven is merciful. Lord in your mercy ... **Response**

**Reader 2** We pray for our teachers and all who work in our school: that they will continue to help to make our school a place where all are shown mercy. Lord in your mercy ... **Response**

**Reader 3** We pray for our priests, parish sisters, parish workers and all in our parish faith community, that together we can continue to learn to live as Jesus wants us to. Lord in your mercy ... **Response**

**Reader 4** We pray for people who are looking for shelter and refuge, for those who don't have enough to eat and for those who are ill. May they see the merciful face of God in all they meet. Lord in your mercy ... **Response**



**Reader 5** We pray for Pope Francis, for our bishop [*insert name*], for all priests and for all who work to bring God's mercy into our world. May God's mercy be always in their hearts and minds as they go about doing the work that Jesus called them to do. Lord in your mercy ... **Response**

**Leader** Let us now pray the prayer that Jesus taught us:  
**Our Father**

## Closing Prayer

**Leader** God of mercy and compassion,  
we know that you are always with us.  
May we always carry the light of Christ in our hearts,  
in our minds and in our deeds,  
and may our school continue to be a place where we accept the challenge to proclaim your  
mercy in all that we say and do. Amen.

*If the priest is present you might ask him to give a blessing at this time. Otherwise conclude:*

We end our prayer time as we began, by marking ourselves with the sign of our faith: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

### Concluding Song

We Sing a Song to Brigid

**KIND AND COMPASSIONATE**

**FAIR AND JUST**

**FORGIVING AND RECONCILING**

**LIVING LIKE JESUS**