

Catholic Schools Week 2026 – Catholic Schools – Normal Lives, Called to Holiness

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18th to the 24th January 2026

Catholic Schools – Normal Lives, Called to Holiness

*“Holiness does not mean performing extraordinary things, but doing ordinary things with love and faith.”
— Pope Francis on Blessed Carlo Acutis*

Introduction

Catholic Schools Week 2026 celebrates the extraordinary call to holiness in the midst of ordinary life. Inspired by Pope Francis’s reflection on Blessed Carlo Acutis—soon to be canonised as the first millennial saint—this year’s theme invites pupils, teachers, families, and parishes to explore the call to holiness as something both universal and accessible. Holiness is not for a few, but for all; not reserved for religious professionals or mystics, but for every student, teacher, parent, (and grandparent!) living each day in friendship with Jesus Christ. Catholic schools exist to form individuals who know that their lives have a purpose and a calling. This year’s theme, “Normal

Lives, Called to Holiness,” resonates with the central conviction that education is a path not only to knowledge and maturity but to sainthood.

“Each of us is called to be holy by living our lives with love and by bearing witness in everything we do.”

— Gaudete et Exsultate, 14

Key Theme: Everyday Holiness

This theme offers a meaningful opportunity to speak to children and young people about how God calls each of us to holiness in the concrete circumstances of daily life. It allows us to:

- Introduce students to modern saints like Blessed Carlo Acutis, who lived an ordinary teenage life with extraordinary faith.
- Highlight saints who lived in families, went to school, worked in trades, or suffered illness.
- Explore the meaning of holiness as a loving relationship with Jesus Christ, lived through prayer, service, courage, love, and joy.
- Emphasise the role of the Eucharist, the Scriptures, and Christian friendship in forming a holy life.

As Pope Leo XIV recently affirmed:

“The saints show us that holiness is not about escape from the world, but deep engagement with it in the Spirit of Christ.”

Daily Themes

Each day of the week reflects a different dimension of our call to holiness:

Monday: Called to Holiness through Prayer

Holiness begins with a relationship with God. Children will learn that prayer is the lifeblood of that relationship—from silent moments to joyful praise, from formal prayers to personal words shared with Jesus.

Tuesday: Called to Holiness through Love and Friendship

Holiness is lived in love of neighbour, in kindness, forgiveness, and friendship. Inspired by the words of Jesus, “Love one another as I have loved you” (John 15:12).

Wednesday: Called to Holiness in Family Life – Grandparents’ Day

A cherished tradition, this day honours the vital role grandparents and elders play in passing on the faith and in showing how holiness can be lived over a lifetime. Pupils will be encouraged to show gratitude and celebrate their family roots.

Thursday: Called to Holiness through Service and Courage

Young people will explore how self-giving love and courage in the face of challenges form part of holiness. Stories of saints who served the poor, forgave their enemies, or stood up for what is right will be shared.

Friday: Called to Holiness through Joy and Mission

Holiness is not grim but joyful! The final day focuses on the joy of the Gospel and how young people are called to be missionary disciples who share Christ through action and word in the world.

Support Resources

Resources for Catholic Schools Week 2026 will include:

- Daily classroom reflections and activities (Junior Infants to Leaving Cert).
- Suggested Scripture passages and short prayers.
- Profiles of saints (e.g. Carlo Acutis, St. Therese of Lisieux, St. Josephine Bakhita, Bl. Pier Giorgio Frassati).
- Multimedia content developed in collaboration with CCO to support social media campaigns and classroom engagement.
- A poster and theme logo for school display.

Pedagogical Integration

CSW 2026 aligns with the ethos of Catholic education and with current curriculum developments:

- **SPHE:** exploring human dignity, resilience, and friendship through a Catholic lens.
- **Religious Education:** drawing on themes of sainthood, sacramentality, and Scripture.
- **Wellbeing:** understanding spiritual wellbeing as integral to personal flourishing.
- **Digital Literacy:** engaging with Carlo Acutis' story as a way of exploring positive online presence and ethical technology use.

Conclusion

Holiness is not an achievement but a gift—a gift that God offers to each of us in the ordinary rhythm of our days. During Catholic

Schools Week 2026, let us joyfully proclaim with Pope Francis:
“Do not be afraid to be saints!”

Catholic schools are communities where every pupil can discover that their life matters, that they are loved by God, and that they are called to be saints—not in some distant way, but right now, today, in the classroom, the playground, and at home.

“The measure of holiness stems from the stature that Christ achieves in us, to the extent that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we model our whole life on his.”

— Gaudete et Exsultate, 21