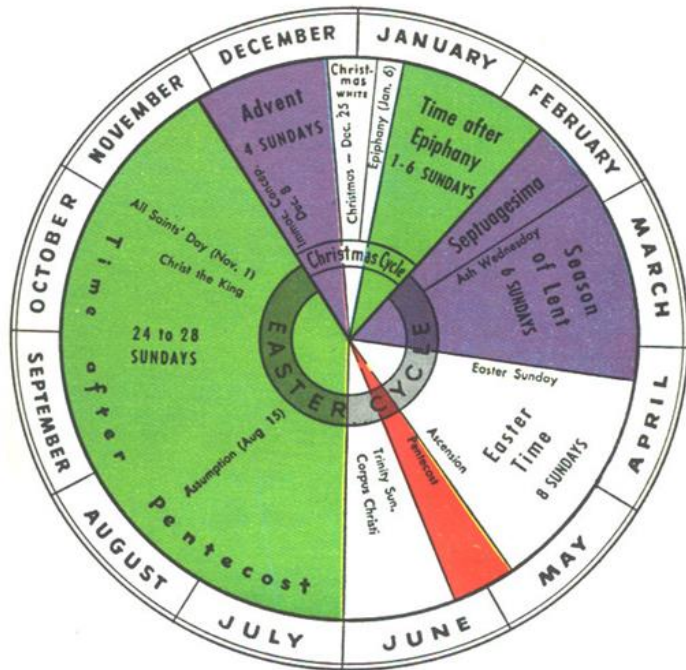


FEAST DAYS AND CELEBRATIONS

The richness of the Catholic faith is evident in the celebrations throughout the liturgical year.

THE LITURGICAL YEAR



Each of these times of year has its own particular celebrations, liturgies and styles of prayer.

A 'liturgy' is any form of public worship within the Catholic community, and it takes many different forms, from group prayer to celebration of the Mass, the most important liturgy of the Catholic church.

- ADVENT** – 4 week preparation for Christmas
- CHRISTMAS** – lasts until 6 Jan, The Epiphany, celebrating the visit of the Magi
- LENT** - 40 day preparation for Easter, begins on Ash Wednesday with distribution of the ashes. The focus is on prayer, fasting and works of charity.
The final week before Easter is a very solemn time— Holy Week beginning with Palm Sunday; Holy Thursday commemorates the Last Supper and the first Mass; Good Friday commemorates the Crucifixion of Jesus.



- EASTER**— the high point of the Christian year celebrating Jesus' Resurrection
- ASCENSION** – 40 days after Easter, when Jesus returns to heaven
- PENTECOST** - the birthday of the Church, the descent of the Holy Spirit
- TRINITY SUNDAY** – one week after Pentecost, celebrates the central Christian belief in the three persons in one God: Father, Son & Holy Spirit
- CORPUS CHRISTI** – the Body of Christ, in the Eucharist, is celebrated
- SAINTS PETER AND PAUL** – 29 June: the two giants of the Church
- ALL SAINTS** – 1 November: a celebration in honour of all the saints
- ALL SOULS** – 2 November : a commemoration of all who have died

In addition, we celebrate the feast day of our community's patronal saint.

A PRAYERFUL COMMUNITY

Prayer is traditionally described as raising the mind and heart to God – in other words, listening to and speaking to God.

Prayer is not just about us and it's not about a performance to impress a divine examiner: in Matthew's gospel, Jesus tells us not to bring offerings to the altar until we have been reconciled with anyone who has something against us (Matthew 5:23-25) – and in Luke's gospel we hear about the humble taxpayer, praying simply: 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner.' (Luke 18:24).⁶

So when we pray, we shouldn't feel any pressure to be 'holy' or to boast about our virtues. Quite simply, God's spirit is within each of us, praying for us.

Prayer can take a multitude of forms, depending on the setting:
using a formula (e.g. the Sign of the Cross, the Lord's prayer)
expressing thoughts and needs
using music and dance
meditation
assemblies
liturgical celebrations, including Mass



Many staff, not used to working in this environment, find that they really enjoy time for prayer and reflection – and also taking part in the Mass.

Needing help? – don't worry!!!

Your RE leader or your chaplain will be happy to provide you with resources, e.g. a school prayer book, with prayers, themes for the liturgical season and 'thought for the week' etc.

They can help you plan prayer time with your tutor group and for staff briefings and meetings, as well as with assemblies. They will be on hand to explain whole school liturgies, and retreats.

And above all, remember to engage with your students, who will be able to assist you in all these areas – they love to take a lead!

HOW DO I FIT IN?

Please don't feel that you have to buy in to every or any aspect of Catholic belief, but the practice of Catholic rituals, traditions and celebrations is built into the everyday life of our schools and colleges.

There will be times when you are called on to assist your students in the practice of the faith: don't be daunted, because the pupils / students and staff members will always help you.

Your key supporters will be:

- the school chaplain (in some schools this will be a parish-based priest, in others a school-based lay person or deacon)
- Religious Education leader
- one of the senior leadership team

and they will be delighted to work with you!

Remember that the school / college respects and values your past experience and the richness you bring to the community.

PRAYER

As part of their life as a faith community, Catholic schools and colleges are committed to communal prayer and there is an expectation that all teachers will play an active part in this. Most teachers will be required to organise a daily prayer slot in tutor time.

On a rotational basis you may also be involved in planning assemblies – when we come together to celebrate God's love for each one of us. All assemblies begin and end with prayer by staff and pupils / students. Meetings and staff briefings start with prayer, and staff take turns to lead on this

From time to time, e.g. on feast days, or during Advent and Lent, students may be out of lessons attending Mass, or other acts of collective worship. These are key staging posts in the prayer life of the school, so it is important that pupils / students are allowed to attend, and that staff support this part of school life.

WHAT MAKES A SCHOOL/COLLEGE CATHOLIC ?

What makes a Catholic school/college Catholic is the story it tells. the story is a very explicit one. It is the story of Jesus. ²

Jesus Christ is the foundation of the whole educational enterprise ...His revelation gives new meaning to life and helps us to direct our thought, action and will according to the gospel.

The fact that in their own individual ways **all members of the community** share this Christian vision, makes the school/college 'Catholic'; principles of the Gospel in this manner become the educational norms since the school / college then has them as its internal motivation and final goal. ³

On a practical point, the local Bishop must designate a school as Catholic.

WHAT IS CATHOLIC ETHOS OR CATHOLIC LIFE?

The word 'ethos' comes from the Greek meaning 'custom' or 'habit' And ethos is a way of living, behaving and doing things by (a group of) people, who, though diverse, follow common values and are united by a shared vision of life. ⁴

When we struggle to put into words what 'Catholic ethos' is about, and never seem to be able to put our finger on exactly what it is, we are actually trying to articulate our experience of the presence of the risen Christ at the heart of our school and college community, a presence which may provoke us into faith, but does not compel faith.

It is a tangible presence and can be experienced through the signs and symbols present in the school/college, and especially by the quality of the lives, and the prayer, of the school leadership, staff and pupils / students.

All these things are vehicles by which we can come to recognise the presence of Christ. They are at the heart of any Christian community and at the heart of a school/college that wants to be Catholic.⁵

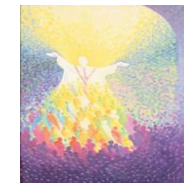


Are young people today at all interested in prayer?

Our young people, despite enormous pressures from society, haven't completely turned away from God – in addition there is also a strong moral dimension to their outlook and a desire to do something worthwhile with their lives. The imaginative and inclusive prayer times, liturgies etc provided in our schools and colleges address this need.⁷

Research commissioned by the Church of England found that only one in seven people insist they would "never" resort to prayer in the face of problems in their lives, those of their friends or the wider world. And when asked to give an example of something they might pray about irrespective of whether or not they were religious, four out of five people ventured a response. Perhaps significantly, teenagers and people in their early 20s emerged as less likely to reject prayer than their parents' generation -The Telegraph 2013

In Catholic schools and colleges we do not say prayers just because pupils want to, but because praying is one of the defining characteristics of a Christian community. In addition, the 1944 Education Act requires a daily act of collective worship.



'The young people in our schools and colleges come not as empty vessels to be filled with knowledge, but, through their relationship with you, and each other, to discover what it is to be human and the place God has in their lives... This doesn't mean that you have to personally assent to every statement of belief, but you must recognise and appreciate the ethos of the school/college, and value it as a place which is underpinned and imbued with a sense of Christian spirituality.'⁸

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

The future of humanity lies in the hands of those who are strong enough to provide coming generations with reasons for living and hoping.

' Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the modern world -1965'

What a challenging statement!

It would be wrong to omit some thoughts on Catholic Social Teaching—because the Catholic faith is fundamentally an *active* faith.

“The principle of Catholic Social Teaching is that from a ‘living faith’ comes loving action ‘ which brings about a transformation into a ‘civilisation of love’.”⁹

The task of all teachers is to encourage those we teach to work for positive change in our world—and Catholic schools are very actively involved in social justice issues, which appeal so much to young people’s idealism, enthusiasm and innate sense of justice. Catholic Social Teaching, sometimes called ‘the Church’s best kept secret’, covers human dignity and the option for the poor, the dignity of work, solidarity and subsidiarity, a place at the table for all, political responsibility, social justice, and stewardship of creation.

To say it is radical is an understatement, but it must permeate all our work in all parts of the curriculum in our schools and colleges.

Catholic Social Teaching should inform all our actions – and the issues that the teaching covers affect everyone in our school/college, as we engage with and affect each other. CST should be very visible in our Catholic schools and colleges — a guide to our relationships with one another, and to our interactions with the wider world.¹⁰

Effective world solidarity should allow all peoples to shape their destiny.

Pope Paul VI, ‘The Development of Peoples’



You must be the change you want to see in the world.

Mahatma Gandhi



WORKING IN A CATHOLIC SCHOOL OR COLLEGE

This is a short guide for staff new to Catholic schools and colleges.

It is not a definitive description of Catholicism, but rather it sets out to describe some fundamental principles of Catholic education, what might be expected of staff new to Catholic schools and colleges, and to offer tips on areas such as Catholic life, Catholic Social Teaching, and being part of a community of prayer.

Help is always at hand from other members of staff, particularly chaplains and RE leaders, and from the young people themselves.

We respect and value the past experiences and belief system that you bring to the school, and we hope you will find the opportunity to grow in your own spiritual way during your time here.¹





WELCOME FROM ARCHBISHOP PETER

This little booklet has been written as a guide for teaching staff who are new to teaching in our Catholic schools and Colleges here in the Archdiocese of Southwark – a diocese which covers the whole of South London and the County of Kent.

I hope it will be of help those not yet familiar with the fundamental principles of Catholic education of youngsters. It offers some simple and straightforward guidelines for new staff coming into our schools and colleges.

I should also add that for newcomers, the head-teacher and other members of staff in the school will be very willing to help you as you become familiar with the whole Catholic ethos that pervades all the education given to the youngsters who form the major part of the school community.

I wish you well in your new venture,

Archbishop of Southwark



'In your Catholic schools there is always a bigger picture, over and above the individual subjects you study, the different skills you learn. All the work you do is placed in the context of growing in friendship with God, and all that flows from that friendship. So you learn not just to be good students, but good citizens, good people.....Always remember that every subject you study is part of a bigger picture a good school provides a rounded education for the whole person. And a good Catholic school over and above all this should help all its students to become saints.'

Pope Benedict XVI 2010



With thanks to Archdiocese of Southwark chaplains and Sheila Connolly

Footnotes:

1. Deacon Tony Flavin
2. 'What has the Catholic ethos of a school to do with the Resurrection' - John Deehan, *The Pastoral Review* September 2007
3. 'The Catholic School, Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education' - 1977 The Vatican
4. 'Christ at the Centre: why the Church provides Catholic schools' - Marcus Stock 2013
5. *ibid* John Deehan
6. 'Prayers for School' Raymond Friel - 2018
7. *ibid*
8. 'How to survive working in a Catholic school' - Sr Judith Russi, Raymond Friel 2013
9. 'Our best kept secret – the rich heritage of Catholic social teaching' – Michael Schultheis 1988
10. CAFOD (cafod.org.uk)

Useful books :

The Survival Guide for Young Catholics (John Chater)
gives a short overview of all aspects of Catholic practice.

ISBN 9780852314241

How to survive working in a Catholic School (Sr Judith Russi and Raymond Friel)

ISBN 9780852314043

Prayers for Schools (Raymond Friell)

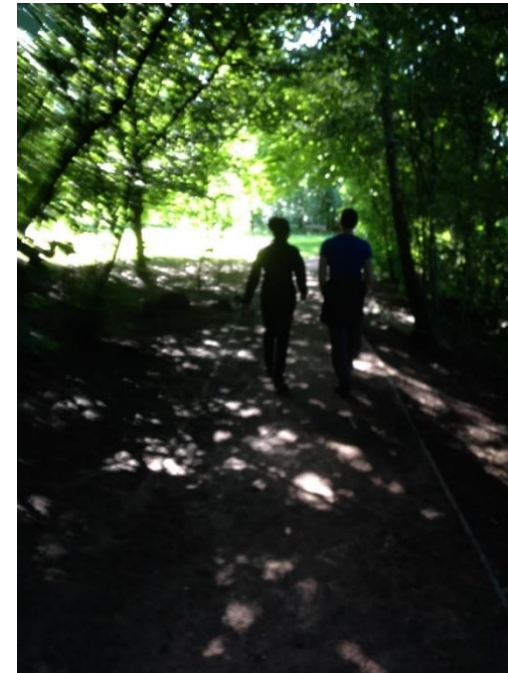
ISBN 9780852314920

YOUCAT Youth Prayer Book

ISBN 9781860828522



WORKING IN A CATHOLIC SCHOOL OR COLLEGE



**PRACTICAL TIPS FOR NEWLY
APPOINTED STAFF**