**Celebrating and Worshipping**

***N.B****. If schools would rather write their own input for parishes, etc. these notes can serve as a possible framework.*

**PARAGRAPH 1 - INTRODUCTION**

* *Greeting*
* *My name is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and I am a \_\_ year pupil from \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.*
* *Thank Fr. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for allowing me to speak to you all today to mark Catholic Education Week.*

The theme for this year’s Catholic Education Week is designed to help us reflect upon how our schools are communities of faith and learning, characterised by our celebration and worship.

We can list many things that make a Catholic school distinctive:

* learning is shaped using Gospel values,
* prayer, worship and religious celebrations are integral to the life of the school
* Catholic schools promote social justice and serve their communities
* their vision, aims and values, to educate the whole person- body, mind and soul - are developed in partnership with parents and parishes, and designed to nurture communities which are secure enough in their own identity and purpose to allow them to be outward-looking and welcoming of all.

All of these distinctive markers come as a result of Catholic schools having Jesus Christ at the centre of all that they do.

**PARAGRAPH 2 – DISTINCTIVE NATURE OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**

*Some points to consider:*

* Our Catholic schools are communities where Jesus is the ‘driving force’ behind the school’s planning and actions.
* We are communities of faith and learning
* Work with homes and parishes to provide a rounded, holistic education and system of support for young people’s physical, intellectual, social, emotional and spiritual well-being and development
* Catholic schools in Scotland are inclusive communities

**PARAGRAPH 3 – THEME FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION WEEK: “CELEBRATING AND WORSHIPPING”**

*Some points to consider:*

* Recent circumstances have posed real challenges for so many in our school, parish and wider communities (speakers may wish to give local examples)
* We lost so much in our day-to-day: the opportunity to attend Mass; to receive the Blessed Sacrament and share in the other sacraments; the chance to meet with others and share or grief and joy. These are things which were woven into the fabric of our lives, and how keenly we felt the loss of them during lockdown and restrictions. We should remember how that felt, and guard against taking these things for granted. For celebration and worship is such a part of what we do and of who we are. For all of us, some of our happiest, most poignant and most beautiful memories are linked to times when we have joined with others in celebration and worship; no doubt, we hope to make many more such memories.
* In the preface to the weekday Mass we find these beautiful words:

*Father all-powerful and ever-living God,
we do well always and everywhere to give thanks.

You have no need of our praise,
yet our desire to thank You is itself Your gift.*

*Our prayer of thanksgiving adds nothing to Your greatness,
but makes us grow in Your grace,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

We see here that there is never a wrong time to turn to God in prayer and worship. There is never a wrong time to celebrate his unending love for us. Indeed, in so doing, we strengthen our relationship with God, our loving Father, and with our brothers and sisters in Christ with whom we celebrate. We are made to know, to love and to serve Him; it is here that we find our purpose, and we can do that through joining together in celebration and worship.

This is why the prayer and sacramental life of our school is absolutely central to who we are and to how we grow as a community. It is also why the links we have with our parishes are so important to us.

In particular, it is in the celebration of the Eucharist, and in Eucharistic Adoration, we find a special and precious way to join our celebration and worship. Time spent in the true presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament reminds us, in the words of Pope Francis, that “life's greatness does not consist in having, but in loving."

Our young people first discover this in their homes; they celebrate it in their parishes, and it is at the centre of their school experience. As they grow in knowledge and skills through their lessons, they grow in friendship with Jesus, learning from his example, and our wish to celebrate and worship expresses our gratitude and our joy in being his disciples. In the words of

Pope Benedict, during his visit to Britain in 2010, “A good school provides a rounded education for the whole person. And a good Catholic school, over and above this, should help all its students to become saints.” All of the saints teach us of the importance of prayer, of celebration, of worship.

**PARAGRAPH 4 – WHAT DOES THAT MEAN IN THIS PARISH?**

So, what does this mean for us in the parish of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_? How do we live as people of celebration and of worship ? We were created to be in a loving relationship with God, our family and our world. In our homes, in this parish [and in our schools] we learn how it feels to be treated with love, with compassion and with mercy; we learn about the importance of acting with justice and integrity; we experience understanding, kindness and gentleness. We learn how to celebrate, and how to come together in praise and in worship. We can then learn how to use these virtues and values in our interactions with others and, in so doing, we take the message of Christ to those we meet, within our communities and beyond. *(Speakers may choose to add details specific to their parish)*

**PARAGRAPH 5 – WHAT DOES THAT MEAN IN OUR SCHOOL?**

*Some points to consider:*

* Our school(s) work together with our parishes to give our children the best opportunities possible to grow in love of God and with each other. Here are some of the examples of the ways in which our schools and parish work together as a community of faith and learning living in the example of Jesus:
* We are challenged to use our talents for the service of others and so we….[insert local details]
* And we put into practice the things we learn about the love of Jesus through our own acts of witness, in our contributions to charities such as [insert local details here ] *(continued over)*
* by participating in parish activities such as [insert local details here . . . ]
* by showing loving concern for others in our school when we [insert local details here . . . ]

**PARAGRAPH 6 – CONCLUSION**

*A possible conclusion could be:*

I would like to finish by thanking you all for listening today, and for allowing me to share with you my thoughts on how we, in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ School, are growing in our learning and growing in our love of God and neighbour through celebration and worship. I would also like to thank Fr. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for allowing me to share this Mass and speak to you all today, and for all the support we receive from the parish.

We will continue to remember you in our prayers.