



Catholic Schools Week

UNITED IN FAITH AND COMMUNITY

HELP US LEAD BY EXAMPLE

Teacher Background

The theme for Catholic Schools Week is **Catholic Schools: United in Faith and Community**. In this prayer service, students will reflect on how they follow the example of Jesus and how, by their example, they lead others to follow Jesus.

Give each of the students a copy of the Beatitudes. Divide the class into four small groups. Invite one group to focus on how Jesus lived the first four Beatitudes. For example, Jesus took time to pray. This showed his need for maintaining his relationship with God the Father. Have the second group focus on the ways we, as a school community, live the first four Beatitudes. For example, out of our need for God we take time to pray together as a community. Invite the third group to focus on how Jesus lived the last four Beatitudes. Ask the fourth group to focus on how we live the last four Beatitudes as a school community.

Before gathering the students in the classroom prayer center, prepare the prayer table with a green cloth, a Bible open to Matthew 5, and a candle.



Opening Prayer

- Invite the students to bring their Beatitudes handouts and to gather in the classroom prayer center.
- Light the candle, and sing an opening song about the Beatitudes, such as “Lead Me, Lord.”
- Lead the class in praying the Sign of the Cross, and then offer the following prayer.

**Lord, your Word challenges us to be a faith-filled community
united in the way that we show mercy to others,
stand up for truth and justice,
and work for peace.**

**Unite us as a community of faith,
that by your example we may lead others
to live by the values of the Kingdom of Heaven.**

**For you are Lord for ever and ever.
Amen.**



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Word of God

- Sing an “Alleluia” sung at your school, and proclaim the Gospel (Matthew 5:3-10).
- Remind the students that the Beatitudes outline values of the Kingdom of Heaven. These are values that all followers of Jesus are expected to live by. Review these values with the students, using the Beatitudes list as a reference.
- Invite one person from each of the four small groups to share his or her group’s thoughts about how Jesus lived the Beatitudes or how we can live the Beatitudes. Encourage volunteers to share additional thoughts and ideas.



Prayers of Petition

Lead the students in prayers of petition, inviting them to respond,
“Lord, help us lead by example.”

We give thanks for the opportunity to attend (name of school).

Help unite us as a faith-filled community, we pray:

Lord, help us lead by example.

We give thanks for those who teach us about our faith

and who help us to grow as disciples of Jesus, and we pray:

Lord, help us lead by example.

We hear your call to serve others

and to work for justice and peace for all, and we pray:

Lord, help us lead by example.

We recognize that each person is created in your image.

Help us to treat all people with love, care, and respect, we pray:

Lord, help us lead by example.

We know that you alone are God.

As we come to know your will more and more each day, we pray:

Lord, help us lead by example.

In every moment of every day, in every situation,

and with everyone we meet, we pray:

Lord, help us lead by example.



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Concluding Prayer

Conclude by leading the young people in praying the Sign of the Cross and by singing a song about the Beatitudes or another song of your choosing.

**Help us lead by example, Lord,
so that our school community will be marked by
listening, sharing, praising you, and treating one another
with a spirit of love and care.**

**Help us lead by example, Lord,
so that seeds of faith planted in our community
will grow and spread throughout the world.**

**Help us lead by example, Lord,
and one day lead us to share everlasting joy with you
in the Kingdom of Heaven,
where you are Lord, for ever and ever.
Amen.**



Extending this Prayer Service

Option 1. Create a Beatitudes display in your classroom or in the hallway. Begin by assigning partners or small groups one of the eight Beatitudes. Give each pair or small group a full-sized piece of poster board, and provide colored markers. Instruct the students to use their Beatitudes list and to write their assigned Beatitudes across the top of their posters. Then invite each pair or small group to illustrate its poster with a drawing of young people living that Beatitude, or with words and images that describe that Beatitude's meaning. Label the display "*Living the Beatitudes*."

Option 2. Write each Beatitude on a slip of paper. Put the eight slips of paper in a bag or a cup. Divide the class into eight small groups, and invite each group to draw one slip of paper. The groups are to create role-plays that demonstrate one way to live the Beatitude they have chosen. Invite the groups to present their role-plays to the class. You may wish to have them present their role-plays to other classes too.

Option 3. Invite the students to read the Beatitudes again silently. Then invite them to vote on the top two Beatitudes they would like to work on as a class. Challenge the class to make special efforts in their chosen Beatitudes and to be leaders of Christ-like living by their example. Make a point of asking the students one day in the coming weeks if and how they are meeting the challenge.





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The Beatitudes

**“Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

**Blessed are they who mourn,
for they will be comforted.**

**Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the land.**

**Blessed are they who hunger
and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be satisfied.**

**Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.**

**Blessed are the clean of heart,
for they will see God.**

**Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.**

**Blessed are they who are persecuted for
the sake of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”**

Matthew 5:3-10