



Catholic Schools Week

UNITED IN FAITH AND COMMUNITY

TEACHERS HELP UNITE US IN FAITH

Teacher Background

The theme for Catholic Schools Week is **Catholic Schools: United in Faith and Community**. In this prayer service, students will reflect on what they have learned and from whom they have learned about Jesus.

Before gathering the students in the classroom prayer center, prepare the prayer table with a green cloth, a Bible open to Matthew 13, a candle, an image of Jesus, and a dish of seeds.

Gather the children in the classroom prayer center. Invite them to recall what they have learned about Jesus in religion class, at Mass, and in their families. Then invite them to name a person who has taught them about Jesus and what that person has taught them. Be prepared to give an example of your own. Explain that today's prayer service is a prayer of thanks for all who help us learn about Jesus.



Opening Prayer

- Light the candle, and sing a song you have chosen for today's prayer, such as your school's theme song for Catholic Schools Week, a song about the Word of God, or a simple Alleluia.
- Lead the class in praying the Sign of the Cross, and then offer the following prayer.

**Lord Jesus,
you were called Teacher
by your disciples.**

**You taught them,
and you teach us,
through the example of your life
and through your Word in the Gospels.**

**Open our ears to hear your teaching
as we listen to your Word today.**

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



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Word of God

- Invite the students to listen for what Jesus teaches in today's Bible story, the Parable of the Sower. Sing an "Alleluia" sung at your school or parish, and proclaim the following reading based on Matthew 13:1-9.

"A farmer scattered seeds in his field. Some seeds fell on a path. Birds ate them up. Some fell on rocks. They dried up and died. Some seeds fell among thorns. The thorns grew and choked the seeds. Other seeds fell on good soil. They took root, grew, and produced good fruit.

People are like the places where the farmer's seeds fell. People who do not try to understand God's Word are like the path. Some hear God's Word but remember it only a short time. They are like the rocks. Some people hear God's Word. But they let other worries crowd it out. They are like the soil with thorns. Other people hear God's Word and really listen to it. They are like the good soil. Faith grows in them."

- Invite volunteers to share aloud what they think is the meaning of the story. Then focus on the farmer who scattered seeds. Help the students make the connection that all of the people they named who taught them about Jesus are like the farmer who scattered, or planted, the seeds. They plant the seeds of time, money, talent, prayer, and example so that each of us will learn about God and grow in our faith in God.
- Review with the students what happened to the seeds. Conclude by asking the students what we can do to help the seed of faith grow in our hearts and in our lives.



Prayers of Gratitude

Lead the class in offering prayers of gratitude for those who have planted the seeds of faith in their lives through supporting Catholic education. Invite them to respond, **"Thank you, Lord."** (*You may also wish to invite the students to raise their hands in a gesture of thanks and praise when they pray the response.*)

For the many saints who gave their talents and time to open Catholic schools in the United States, we pray: **Thank you, Lord.**

For those who gave time, talent, and money to build our Catholic school, and for those who plant the seeds of faith in our lives by helping us learn about Jesus, particularly our parents and teachers, we pray: **Thank you, Lord.**

For our families, for the seeds of faith they plant in our lives, and for all they do to make it possible for us to attend this school, we pray: **Thank you, Lord.**



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For missionaries who work to build Catholic schools and to plant seeds of faith in the hearts and lives of those who have never heard the Good News, we pray:

Thank you, Lord.

For each of us, that we may look for chances to plant seeds of faith in the lives of others each and every day, we pray: **Thank you, Lord.**



Concluding Prayer

Conclude by leading the children in praying the Sign of the Cross and by singing a song of your choosing.

**Thank you, Lord,
for all who have planted seeds of faith throughout
our school community.**

**May those seeds of faith
grow to become examples of your love to others
today and always.
Amen.**



Extending this Prayer Service

Option 1. Have the students recall the names of the people they mentioned at the beginning of this prayer. Using blank notecards or quarter-sheets of drawing paper, invite the students to draw pictures and/or write the names of those persons. Hole-punch the top of each drawing/writing, run yarn or string through the holes, and hang the completed works on a “tree of faith” you have created out of large branches anchored in a bucket or large container. Display the “tree of faith” in your classroom prayer center.

Option 2. Draw on the board the outline of several symbols of faith, such as a cross, an anchor, a fish, an open Bible, a triangle, or a shamrock. Invite the students each to choose one symbol and to draw it on a small piece of poster board. Have them cover the outlines of their symbols with glue and put seeds of various colors and varieties on the glue outlines. Allow the seed-covered symbols time to dry, and then display them in your classroom prayer center as a reminder to sow the seeds of faith.

Option 3. Invite the students to recall the parable of the Sower and to draw themselves as sowers planting seeds. Invite them to include pictures of garden stakes or signs that name or show the seeds they are planting. For example, a sign could read “love” or show a picture of a heart; a sign could read “joy” or show a smiley face; a sign could read “prayer” or show a picture of folded hands.