



Catholic Education
An Irish Schools Trust 

Week of 30 March 2020

Reflections to accompany us during this time of challenge.

Introduction

Community is not bricks and mortar; it doesn't depend on geography or proximity. Real community is built on the bonds that tie us together because of who we are, what we believe and what we dream of together. For Christians, community is always about love because we believe that God is love.

Each week, we will include resources which are expressly designed for your own personal use, whether you are a teacher, a principal, a parent or a student. They may be of particular help to senior students. Our care for them extends to a deep desire to care for them spiritually. We want to help ease their burdens at this time, to help them know that they we 'have their backs' and that God is there for them too.

As you pray these prayers, and as you share them, please be assured of our prayers here in CEIST. None of us is alone; we belong to God and we belong to one another and to a network of great schools all doing their very best for our students at this time.

As well as praying together, we encourage you to reach out to anyone who can help you in these challenging times. You don't have to feel alone. We may all need to keep our physical distance but that does not mean we can't be united spiritually through the bonds of real community and communion that we all share.

Structure of the prayers

Each prayer is a simple prayer and it begins and ends the same way.

At the start, you are called to centre yourself as you begin to pray. Then there is piece (a prayer or a poem or a picture) to reflect on. Each prayer also includes a line or two from scripture. At the end, you are called to reach out in faith, hope and love to all those you love and care about. In each prayer, there's also a moment or two of gratitude. This is important to have because even in the darkest of days, we need to see through the gloom and be grateful for what we have.

Each prayer will take about five to seven minutes of your time. If you want to extend your prayer time, you can use some reflective music at the start to help quieten you down. Some of the prayers also have a suggested hymn or song. These can be used or not. The link to the YouTube clip for each hymn or piece of music is also provided. But don't allow yourself to get distracted by YouTube! (To avoid distraction, it might be better to have the music lined up before you start especially if there are ads. at the start of the music!)

The structure is repeated to allow you to become familiar with it and for you to be at ease with it. These prayers are designed to build up your sense of confidence in God and to lead to a deep sense of peace and wellbeing. Finally, it's a good idea to decide when every day you'll pray these prayers. And we'll add to them as required. Having a set time for prayer makes it more likely that we will pray. A perfect time to pray is at the beginning of every day just before you start your work or your study.

Prayer 2: God is with us.

To begin

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Centre yourself now in silence. Take five deep breaths in and out. Allow your mind to become a little quieter. Put everything except this prayer away from you. Give yourself a few minutes of stillness to calm yourself before you begin. Become aware of God's Spirit with you inspiring you in your prayer.

My prayer today

In Ireland, religious faith has been important in the lives of generations of people for many years. Some might even say, that it is part of our identity. We see it everywhere; in the statues on the roadside, in our way of greeting one another (Dia Dhuit, Dia is Muire dhuit). My school is a testimony to that faith; yesterday, today and into the future. In these times, we find ourselves returning again to the deep well that is God's love for us – for hope, for consolation, for guidance.

This faith is a gift given to us by the great holy men and women who taught us. Spend a moment thinking about your school or your local town and the holy men or holy women who helped the people – young and old – to know God.

We remember too that these men and women were ordinary people. What made them different was their great love for you God and their great love for their fellow human beings.

St. Patrick is our Patron Saint.

Take a moment to read this beautiful extract from Saint Patrick's Breastplate. Alternatively, you could listen to a beautiful hymn with lovely images called "I arise today". It is available by going to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xveGOpjXQ>)

Christ with me,
Christ before me,
Christ behind me,
Christ in me,
Christ beneath me,
Christ above me,
Christ on my right,
Christ on my left,
Christ when I lie down,
Christ when I sit down,
Christ when I arise,
Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of
me,
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks
of me,
Christ in every eye that sees me,
Christ in every ear that hears me.

Now spend a moment reflecting on this very modern painting (see below) of St. Patrick by Gracie Morbitzer. What can you remember about St Patrick? What images of St Patrick are we used to seeing?

What do you notice about this image that is perhaps different from our traditional images of St Patrick? What does it say to you about Patrick? His ordinariness? His youthfulness? What about his determination here in this image? What else are you seeing? Beyond all the stories of Patrick, do you see something else in this picture that maybe you hadn't seen before?

Take some time to reflect on this image as an 'icon' – a prayer picture. What is it asking of *you*? What are you being invited to be or to do through this icon? Listen deeply to God in your prayer as you take some time with this image. And because God in prayer is always a God of consolation (deep spiritual reassurance and comfort) what is it that consoles you about this image?



A word from scripture

Psalm 16:7 - 8 I will praise the LORD, who counsels me; even at night my heart instructs me. I have set the LORD always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

To conclude

Pray these or words of your own in response to St Patrick's Breastplate

Father, you love me and want me to know you. In these challenging times, even as I struggle with feeling as if everything is out of my control, bless me with the deep peace that comes from knowing your love for me. Thank you for your love for me.

Jesus, be with my friends and my family. Be with my school community. I think of them now and send them all of my love through the heart of your Son who loves them too. Thank you for my friends and family.

Holy Spirit, inspire me to believe in myself the way you believe in me. Give me the strength to continue my work for God's greater glory, not for mine. Thank you God for being with me now.

Conclude by saying slowly firstly the Hail Mary and then the Our Father.... .. and by blessing yourself, In the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN

