
CEIST

Catholic Education
An Irish Schools Trust



*Second Year Assembly 2020: A Fresh
Start*



Setting up the space:

Social distancing requirements should be observed in terms of the room set up. A small sacred space at the top of the room might include a candle, a bible, a ship/picture of a ship and a bucket with soil and some seeds to one side. A watering can and some plant food.

You might also have a screen to allow for readings, lyrics of songs etc. to be displayed. Ideally, begin with a song/piece of music from your assembled music group. Alternatively, a small section of an online piece of music relevant to the theme might work well. (See list of suggested songs at the end of the resource).

This prayer service requires the assistance of two sixth year students (you can of course include more). A number of teachers might also help out especially the Year Head and RE team.



Suggested Text for Prayer Service

Principal: Hello everyone. Thanks to _____ for that beautiful piece of music. We begin our assembly as we begin every assembly in _____ (name of school), by blessing ourselves, in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Welcome back everyone. It's great to see you all looking so refreshed and ready for the new term. These have been very strange times, haven't they? We've really missed you all. And well done on doing your best over the last few months – especially during lock down. You were part of the solution that saw us being able to be back together as a school. It's worth remembering that; that what you did especially during the hardest days of lockdown made a big difference. And we're really, really proud of you.

Many of you have found the break from school fine and have managed it very well in terms of your subjects. But many of you have maybe found it all a bit overwhelming. And there are lots of reasons why you might have found it hard and they're all very understandable. There is not one person – not a student, or a teacher or me – who handled everything perfectly. No one could have expected you to.

So I'm here today – and so are your teachers – to tell you that, no matter what happened over the last few months, this is your chance for a fresh start. This is #take2 for Second Years! And that's our theme for today's assembly. So welcome back! This is your fresh start. And God specialises in giving us fresh starts.

I'd like to welcome especially _____ (other teachers names). They'll be helping me lead this assembly. Thank you.

In our school, for every assembly, we also recognise that God is among us and with us. To do that, to make God's presence feel a bit more real to us, we're going to light a candle. This is our first symbol today.

This candle is the candle we'll light every time we prayer together. It's the same candle that is lit for all the year groups. I invite now _____ (name of second year student) to light our candle on your behalf. Light is a very good symbol of our theme; 'a fresh start' because light has the power to replace darkness, light has the power to bring new understandings and a new energy to what we do. So we pray a blessing on one another; that God's light will direct us as we begin again, this time as second years, here in _____ (school's name).



Principal: The second image I want to share with you to try to explore what it might be like to have a second chance at a fresh start is the image of a new journey; a voyager on a ship. To help us to do that we're going to listen now to a poem, written especially for the occasion. It's going to be read now by _____ (second year student name).

A new start – a poem



Last year wasn't quite what we were expecting,
It wasn't what we had planned.
I felt as if we'd lost control
And our ship had hit dry land.

The things we'd hoped and dreamed of
For first year in our new school
It didn't work out the way we'd hoped for -
2020 broke all the rules.

At times, I felt alone,
I felt quite high and dry
It wasn't a nice feeling
At times I was angry – about this I won't lie.

But here we are together
We have a second chance
A new adventure awaits us
So, my friends, with courage, let's advance.

I look around me at our crew
I feel a growing pride
I know you believe in me
You know I'm by your side.

And so as we begin again
We've second year ahead
I don't feel any fear
It's hope I feel instead

Sure, we've lots of questions
Our confidence was knocked
But we're ready for second year
We're going to give it socks.

The journey is what's important
The destination's not the thing
It's not the certainties that matter
It's hope, joy, and courage, these are what we must bring.

So set a course for second year
Bring it on, we shout with pride!
We'll show the world what we are made of
From the future we've nothing to hide!

I see a new reality
The second chance we've been given
We're within sailing distance now my friends,
Let's advance – 2020
All's forgiven!

Principal: Thanks _____ for reading us that very energising poem. Our picture of a ship on our sacred space captures that sense of a journey very well. But as well as the confidence you can have in yourself and in your classmates as you begin again this year, here in _____ (school's name), we also believe in a God who travels with us. He travels with us, because he loves us. Our God is the God of second chances. We know how good God is at giving us fresh starts because we read it in the bible. Jesus gave a fresh start to so many people; you'll know the story of Zaccheus and the fresh start he got. There's also the story of the Samaritan woman, and the story of Jesus forgiving Peter for his betrayal on the eve of Jesus' crucifixion. So, Jesus knew all about fresh starts. The two very short readings we're going to hear now are from the Old Testament and one of the letters of St Paul. Listen carefully to the words. I invite _____ (second year students' names) to read our readings for us.

First reading – a short reading from the Prophet Isaiah (43:18 -19)

This is what the Lord says, "Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not see it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland."

The word of the Lord. (All: Thanks be to God).



Second reading – a short reading from the second letter of St Paul to the Corinthians (*)

The real power comes from God and not from us. We often suffer, but we are never crushed. Even when we don't know what to do, we never give up. In times of trouble, God is with us, and when we are knocked down, we get up again.

We never give up. Our bodies are gradually dying, but we ourselves are being made stronger each day. These little troubles are getting us ready for an eternal glory that will make all our troubles seem like nothing. Things that are seen don't last forever, but things that are not seen are eternal. That's why we keep our minds on the things that cannot be seen.

The word of the Lord (All: Thanks be to God)

Principal: Thanks to _____ (second year students' names) for reading those two very challenging Bible readings. It's good to remember that in all of our efforts to make a fresh start it is, as the second reading says, God who is our ultimate help. The real power comes from God and not from us. It's also good to remember that we're being asked, as we heard in our first reading, not to dwell too much on the past. God is making a new way for us and the challenge for us is to be able to see it and to have faith in God who leads us to it and through it all. I'm going to hand you over now to your Year Head, Ms/Mr _____.

Second Year Year Head: Hello everyone! As _____ (Principal's name) has already said, you're all very welcome back. Thank you again for all that you did during the months you were away physically from us. I say 'physically' because I want to reassure you that you were very much in our thoughts and in our prayers.

So far we've looked at a ship or a journey as a way of trying to explain our theme 'Take 2' or Second Chance. We've also lit our candle to help us understand our theme and why we believe God is at the centre. I'm going to bring you now through another very important symbol for you to consider.

Interestingly, one of the things that happened during lock down is that people started taking an interest in outdoor green areas and even in gardening! You'll notice in our sacred space a big bucket of soil, a watering can, some plant food and some seeds. These seeds represent each of you – and a fresh start this year.

We're going to ask a few of you now to take a seed each and to plant the seed, one at a time in this pot of soil. We're going to leave it in the foyer/Reception/Prayer Room and see what happens to the seeds.

You're being planted here in _____ (name of school) again, in Second year. It's really good soil, we think anyway! And you are all top-quality seeds! And everything that happens between now and the end of second year is represented in the food that we'll give to these seeds and in the water. The water and the food will help the seeds grow. The classes, the friendships, the school activities you'll participate in are like the food and the water – they'll help you grow. So let's do some quality gardening now!

Symbolic planting of seeds by a selection of second years – observing social distance. And one student 'feeds' the soil and one student waters the soil.

You might have some instrumental music playing in the background.

Principal: Thanks _____ (Year Head) for leading us in that symbolic moment. And thanks to _____ for planting those seeds and thanks _____ for feeding and watering the soil. We'll all be keeping a very, very close eye on those seeds over the coming months. And as you see them grow, you can have confidence that you too are growing as well.

We'll listen now to some prayers on this theme of new beginnings and growth. _____ (names of Second Year students) will lead us and our response is *Lord graciously hear us.*



1. Lord, we pray for one another. Help us to grab this second chance at a fresh start with both hands. Lord hear us.
2. Lord, we pray for the new First Years joining our school this year. Their last year in primary can't have been easy. We pray that they'll have a great first year; that they'll make lots of friends and that they'll really enjoy their time with us. Lord hear us.
3. Lord, we pray for our parents and families. Help them as they support us so that we can continue to grow strong, kind and true in all that we do. Lord hear us.
4. Lord, we pray for the sixth years. May they always know your love as they continue their own growth and learning this year, their last year in _____ (name of school). Lord hear us.
5. We pray for our teachers. We pray that they'll also experience this year as a very positive time in their lives. Lord hear us.
6. Lord, we pray for those who have died or who are sick. We remember in particular_____. Lord hear us.

Principal: Thank you for those beautiful prayers _____. (Students' names). We are coming now to the end of our assembly. Thanks to you all for participating so beautifully. We're going to conclude now with a short hymn. It's called The Blessing.

A very beautiful and interesting thing happened during Lockdown. Countries all over the world worked together to produce dozens of versions of a hymn called The Blessing. The one we're going to listen to now is the Lebanon Version. As we listen to this version we pray for the people of Lebanon as they struggle with coming to terms with the recent devastating explosion in Beirut.

Our prayer for you here in _____ (school's name) is this; that God will bless you and keep you, that he will protect you and mind you. And because of these blessings, that you will continue to grow in truth, strength, honesty and love as you begin again in Second Year. AMEN

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tQ818qHiHL0>



(Note: alternatively you can use the teenage version of the hymn
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6rT08PzhmrA>