

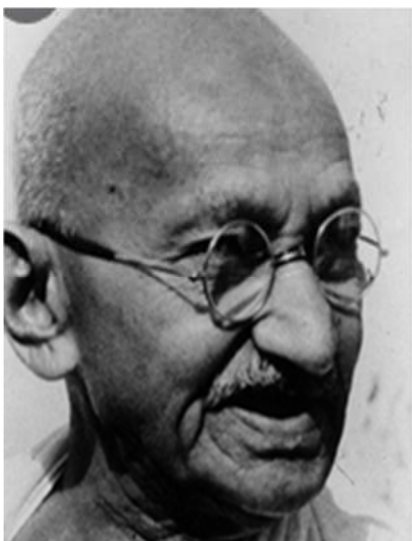


Setting up the space:

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, handprints for everyone, two large cut out hands, a cup and saucer/teapot, a globe, and smaller cut out hands for everyone to take with them.

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. Something fairly lively and uplifting! Or a small section of an online piece of music relevant to the theme might work well.

This prayer service requires the assistance of a number of readers from the TY group itself as well as help from the Year Head and your RE team.



The best way to find yourself is to
lose yourself in the service of
others.

— Mahatma Gandhi —

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.

We're also really proud of the way you handled yourselves in terms of your Junior Cycle achievements. Even though there was no formal state run exam this year, you were able to complete Third Year and can look forward now to the next chapter of your school life here in _____ (name of school) with great confidence.

Many of you have found the break from school fine and have managed it very well. 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. You did what you could do. And we'll move on from that.

Our theme of today's assembly is **Reaching out to Care for Others**. In Transition Year groups up and down the country, people like you are wondering how TY will be managed this year. Will you be able to have work experience, will you be able to get out and about on tours, will you be able to do outreach or fundraising work?

In our school, I can tell you that the focus will be very simple; it will be around helping you focus on finding out a little bit more about who YOU are. This is your time to take a deep breath together and figure out some important questions about yourself. And we believe in our CEIST school, that the best way of finding out about who you are is through reaching out to care for others. So that's our theme for today; reaching out to care for others.

This theme is symbolised in the two large cut out hands on our sacred space. These hands really reflect a reaching out for help and a reaching out to give help.

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. God reaches out to us and we reach out to God, in faith.

This candle is the candle we'll light every time we pray together. It's the same candle that is lit for all the year groups. I invite now _____ (name of TY year student) to light our candle on your behalf.



TY year head: Thanks to _____ (student's name, for lighting our candle). Welcome back everyone. I'm delighted to be your Year Head for this year. And I'd like to echo the words of congratulations and good wishes of _____ (Principal's name). Well done to you all for getting to this point.

Principal: We're going to have a look now with a short video clip from the American news service CNN about acts of reaching out to help that happened in parts of America during lockdown. Play the following link:

<https://edition.cnn.com/videos/us/2020/03/19/coronavirus-acts-of-kindness-savidge-pkg-vpx.cnn>

We're not going to focus too much now on the specifics of what was done by whom and when during lockdown, rather we're going to take some time to explore the question, "Why?" Why do we like caring for others, what is it about caring for others that makes us feel good? Why does it give our lives meaning? Obviously in a Catholic school, we've great holy men and women _____ (give a few short examples according to your own school's tradition, including recent highlights). We've also the very simple message of Jesus Christ, 'Love one another'. But let's take a step back and look at it from a scientific view as well. To help tackle this question, _____ (TY student name) is going to read something for us now on why being kind is good for you!

(Note: Alternatively, 5 students could read each of the 5 sections, if you want to involve more voices. The source here is www.buzzfeed.com)

Student:

Study after study shows that acts of kindness have a substantial impact on both your physical and mental health. So, if you needed even *more* reason to spread kindness during a time when we could all definitely use a bit more of it get ready to feel inspired by science.

Here are five things the research on kindness tells us:

1. It lengthens your lifespan.

If you've ever done volunteer work, you know how rewarding it can be, but it doesn't just make you feel warm and fuzzy inside — it literally adds years to your life. Studies show that people who are engaged in helping others live longer than those who are not.

2. It improves heart health.

Simple acts of kindness are really good for your heart too. Expressing love, catching up with friends, hugging — all of these things release a hormone called oxytocin.

Oxytocin stimulates feelings of happiness, trust, empathy, and generosity, and has a hand in how you interact socially. It's released in the heart and travels through blood vessels, where it plays a powerful part not only in lowering blood pressure.

3. It eases anxiety and depression.

Kindness helps us connect with others — and when we're more connected with others, we're less likely to isolate ourselves, which is a common symptom of depression. That lack of isolation promotes feelings of community and belonging, which help reduce negative emotions like anger, sadness, and anxiety.

4. It increases happiness.

A Harvard Business School study that surveyed happiness in 136 countries found that the psychological bliss we experience after helping others, has a consistent effect on our happiness, and might be deeply ingrained in human nature.

We tend to feel so good after being kind to others that researchers even refer to it as the “helper's high” — a unique physical sensation that results from helping.

5. And it's contagious.

Research has found that everyone involved in an act of kindness — even just someone who witnessed it happen — benefits from it. They each experience the positive effects of kindness within the brain, which actually motivate them to pay it forward. And I mean, who wouldn't be inspired by all of those glowing feelings radiating throughout their body?

Year Head: Thanks to _____ for reading that for us. It's interesting, isn't it, that what we've been saying to you for years about minding one another is actually rooted in such rich science! So the next obvious question is what kind of shape will this take for you in _____ (school's name) in Transition Year. To get a sense of the possibilities, it's important to have a sense of what needs are out there at the moment. So we're going to take two simple examples. These examples relate to two very specific groups/causes; most of which you'd be familiar with. _____ (3 students) will share them with us now.

(NOTE: here are two examples, the writer of this resource has put together. The two symbols accompanying these examples are a cup and saucer and a globe. These can be presented by students as each example is read out. Your school's own experiences of outreach and care, explicitly named, will make much more sense. It might even be worth asking fifth and sixth years to come and talk about their experience in TY doing outreach/charity/fundraising work and the positive effect it had on their own lives and on the lives of the people with whom they worked/for whom they fundraised. However, if time doesn't allow, you can use these examples. They'd work in most

school contexts, tweaked slightly as necessary. Change the symbols according to the examples being used here. The first symbol is a cup and saucer, the second is a globe)

Student:



We present here a symbol of a cup and saucer/teapot. A cup of tea in Irish society symbolises so much. For our assembly, it symbolises hospitality and care, particularly of the elderly.

Very recently, Pope Francis called on young people to reach out to their grandparents or the elderly who may be lonely or on their own.

"Be inventive, make phone calls, video calls, send messages, listen to them and, where possible, in compliance with health care regulations, go to visit them, too. Send them a hug," he said before leading visitors in giving a big round of applause for all grandparents.

The pope made his remarks on the memorial of Saints Joachim and Anne—Mary's parents, Jesus' grandparents and the patron saints of grandparents.

Pope Francis said he wanted to mark the day by inviting all young people to make a concrete "gesture of tenderness toward the elderly, especially the loneliest, in their homes and residences, those who have not seen their loved ones for many months" because of rules in place to curb the spread of the coronavirus.

Is there something in this challenge that we can look at during the year?

Student:

We present here a symbol of the globe. We all know very well that our planet needs care.



One thing we can all safely do during these challenging times, is spend time outdoors. During these very challenging months, more and more people took to going for walks and to gardening. This has given us all a new appreciation of the importance of looking after nature. This year (May 2020) marked the fifth anniversary of the publication of *Laudato Si – on the care of our common home*, again by Pope Francis. In this very important document, we hear the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. It is the poor in our world who suffer the most because of climate change. Time and again, Pope Francis has called on young people to, as he put it, “get up off their sofas” and go out onto the streets to work together for change. Is there something in this challenge that we can look at during the year?

Principal: Thanks _____ (student names for those examples). We’ll be spending quite a bit of time with you over the coming weeks and months really looking at what this all means for you in practical terms. If service of others is a key focus for TY for you, then what practically will you do? To help you begin to think about that, I’d like you to take a handprint from the sacred space and bring it home with you to reflect further on what your interests are in this area. Take some time over the next week or so to reflect on what you see are the great needs in our society at the moment and to touch into what causes are close to your heart. (Again, give some examples here from your school’s history and experiences).

The very act of taking one of these handprints is in itself an important start. It’s your way of saying that this is something you’re willing to begin to think about.

(Note: This symbolic gesture needs to be managed. It can be done so in a variety of ways depending on the size of the group e.g. you could have a number of different tables set up around the room, obviously while maintaining social distance. Another alternative is that the handprints would be left on or under the chairs of the students).

Year Head: In the Christian Tradition, and in many other religious traditions, caring for others is a requirement, because it’s not only good for the individuals involved (including as we saw, the person who is giving), it’s also good for society. We’re going to take a short reading now from scripture that illustrates just how important caring for others, particularly those who are vulnerable, is in our faith.

(Note: If you’d prefer you could play the following video – it’s a lego depiction – of the Parable of the Good Samaritan – it’s a different take on it.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L3GJCK4Wy-0>

Student: A Reading from the Gospel according to St Luke.

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?”

He answered, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’

“You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”

But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbour?”

In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead.³¹ A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side.³² So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.³³ But a Samaritan, as he travelled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him.³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him.³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

"Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" The expert in the law replied, "The one who took care of him."

Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

Principal: Thanks _____ (student name) for reading that passage for us. Some people say that it is the best summary you could find in the bible of what it means to be a Christian. Sometimes we think that Christianity or any religion is about looking to heaven, actually religion at its best always directs us to look at one another, to take care of one another. This is what will give us energy and will give our lives meaning. The science we heard earlier and the passage we just heard there from scripture are both of one voice in this. What must I do to live a good life? I must seek out those in need and help them.

Year Head: So we'll conclude now with some short prayers. The response is Lord graciously hear us. And we ask _____ (students' names) to come forward now to read our prayers for us.

1. Lord, we pray for one another. Help us to be inventive, to be creative in how we deal with the challenges ahead. Help us to be inventive, to be creative in how we reach out to care for others. Lord hear us
2. Lord, we pray for one another, that this year will be fun and interesting and that we'll all enjoy it and learn lots from our experiences. 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 courage, especially the courage to act justly in this world. 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 song. You could pick one of these to show: Matthew West, 'Do Something' https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b_RjndG0IX8. Or Brandon Heath, 'Give me your eyes', <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P5AkNqLuVgY>. Alternatively, it could be a live piece from your own music group.