
CEIST

Catholic Education
An Irish Schools Trust



Third Year Assembly: Stronger Together

WE ARE
Stronger
TOGETHER

Setting up the space:

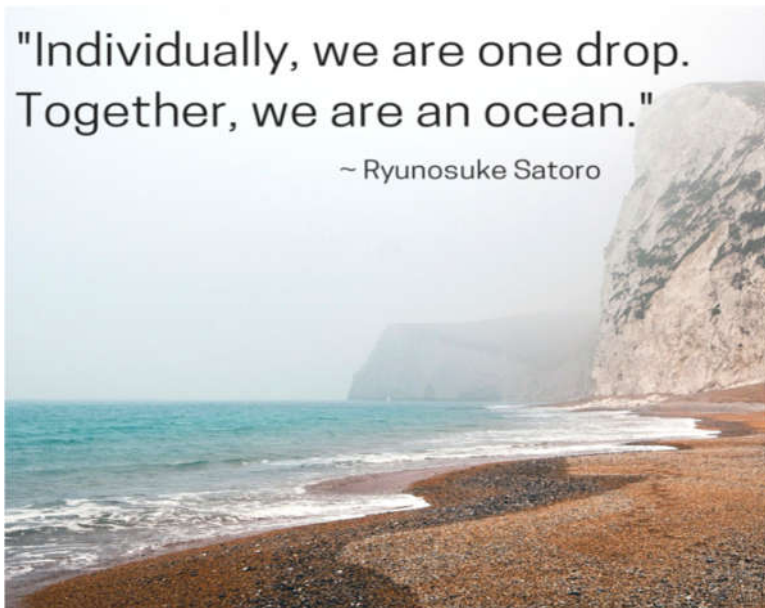
Social distancing requirements should be observed in terms of the room set up. A small sacred space at the top of the room might include a candle, a bible, a container filled with pencils, a megaphone and a sample Student Profile of Achievement – changed to Third Year group Profile of Achievement.

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 Third Year group itself as well as help from the Year Head and your RE team.

"Individually, we are one drop.
Together, we are an ocean."

~ Ryunosuke Satoro



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. 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.

So I'm here today – and so are your teachers – to tell you that, no matter what happened over the last few months, we are all in this together. And that's our theme for today's assembly; **We are stronger together.**

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 Third Year student) to light our candle on your behalf.



Third Year 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.

This is your third year in our school and as you know by now, all of our school's traditions and experiences have all been built on one simple word – **Community**. We don't believe in any kind of

selfish individualism, where it's everyone for himself or herself! Instead, we believe that every one of you matters. And that because of that we are all stronger and better people as a result. So, what does that mean for you in third year. Well let's maybe start with a small experiment.

I'm going to ask _____ (student from third year) to come forward, take a pencil from the container and try to break it in half.

(student does so and remains standing)

Thanks for doing that! I'm now going to ask _____ (student from third year) to come forward and take two pencils and try to break them in half while holding the two pencils together.

(student does so and remains standing)

(Important Note: make sure to have rehearsed this with Student 1 and 2 here or they could be embarrassed if they can't do it on the day of the assembly! It's actually really hard to break two pencils so factor that into what you're saying here!)

Thanks! I'm now going to ask _____ (student from Third year) to come forward and take the rest of the pencils and while holding them all together, try to break them in half! No cheating!

(Student come forward and tries to do this!)

You'll see that it was no problem at all for _____ (student 1) to break one pencil, and it was harder to break two pencils for _____ (student 2), but we saw that it was impossible for _____ (student 3) to break all of the pencils when they were held together. You can immediately see the meaning in it. The pencils are obviously representing us all – and we're all stronger together.

But, I hear you ask, so what if you're less breakable when you're all together! It's not like anyone is trying to break you, is it! So what else is it saying?

So imagine for a moment, in the middle of that big bunch of pencils that _____ (student 3) tried to break, there was a very small, and maybe slightly less strong pencil. It's a bit like that in any kind of caring society or community, we gather together to protect those who are most vulnerable. You did that, as strong young men/women during the Lockdown. You protected the older people and those who were sick. We're proud of you doing that. So being stronger together means that the weakest, and most vulnerable in any community are protected. And that's important to remember in our school community too. We protect the First Years, for example. We look out for those who might be feeling low, we mind those who are maybe feeling vulnerable in lots of different ways. That's what we do, isn't it?

But the theme for our assembly – 'stronger together' – means even more than simply protecting one another, it also means celebrating everyone, welcoming everyone and being there for everyone.

Principal: To explore what that means, we're going to look at two symbols now. The first is a megaphone! A bit strange maybe! _____ is going to hold this up for us now.

I want you to look at this megaphone and ask yourself what you think of it when you see it?

(If the group is small enough and open enough to speaking out, you could take some answers from the group. If the group is too large – offer some suggestions yourself and ask students to respond with a show of hands. Examples you could use; Black Lives Matter, demonstrations, climate strikes, organising crowds, #metoo. Also try to illicit some other more immediate examples, where maybe they didn't use a megaphone but they spoke 'truth to power', where they spoke up for someone or for a cause they believed in. Also, in terms of protecting the most vulnerable in our world).

To help you unpack a little bit more why we're using a megaphone as a symbol, let's listen to _____ (4 Third Year students) read this poem, called very simply, 'A poem about a megaphone'.



Student 1:

A Poem about a megaphone

This is a poem about a megaphone,
A strange shaped cone,
Much louder than your phone.

Student 2:

We can't be silent,
It's time for everyone to listen, it's time for us to be heard.
Our voices so small, made megaphone large,
Speaking truth to power to those in charge.

Student 3:

Gone are the days when silence protected
Gone is the time when we can be subjected
To an indifference that wounds, that tears our flesh,
That grounds our earth into the dust.

Student 4:

So let's right those wrongs, see those crimes,
Hear their pleas, fight those tears.

We won't be afraid just 'cause we're young in years.

This is our time, this is the place

Together as Third years,

we'll do our part to take care of the human race.

See, it's clear, can't you see?

Megaphone truth; it's a new way of rebelling,

Our way of truth-telling.

Principal: Thanks _____ (student name) for reading that very challenging poem. It's very challenging for us as adults especially because we know sometimes we need to be challenged. The question it asks is, what is it that you can do **together** that will make a difference to the lives of others? There's lots you might like to rebel against, to fight against but together let's find something we can all work on together.

This is a very Christian idea, as we'll see now in this reading. We're not used to thinking of Jesus as getting angry but the bible tells us he did, at least on one very memorable occasion. We sometimes think Christianity is just about 'being nice' to people, but actually it's much more; it's about standing up and being counted. It's about working for a more just and fair world, for everyone and for our planet. So let's read now about Jesus's own experience of anger. _____ (Third year student) is going to read for us.

Student:

A reading from the Gospel of St Matthew (*)

Then Jesus went into the house of God and made all those leave who were buying and selling there. He turned over the tables of the men who changed money. He turned over the seats of those who sold doves. He said to them, "It is written, 'My house is to be called a house of prayer.' You have made it a place of robbers."

The blind and those who could not walk came to Jesus in the house of God and He healed them. The religious leaders of the Jews and the teachers of the Law saw the great things He did. They heard the children calling in the house of God and saying, "Greatest One! Son of David!" The leaders were very annoyed. They said to Jesus, "Do you hear what these children are saying?" Jesus said to them, "Yes, have you not read the writings, 'Even little children and babies will honour Him'?" Jesus left them and went out of the city to the town of Bethany. He stayed there that night.

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



Principal: Thanks to _____ for reading that for us. It's interesting, isn't it, that it was the children, the young people who knew Jesus and what he was really about! They could see his integrity and the religious leaders couldn't. That's important for you to notice. As young people you also have a particular gift of seeing what is true and fair and calling out what is untrue and unfair. So we're going to really encourage you this year, as Third Years to do that. It's useful to think about what would make Jesus angry today? That's an important question for you to consider together as a group.

Year Head: We're going to turn now to our last symbol. This is a certificate that TY/Fifth year students will be receiving. It's called a Student Profile of Achievement. (Hold up certificate). It's to record their results in their various subjects and also to record their other achievements. It can be used then by students looking for a job or when they're older, it might even be used in terms of college. You'll get one of these this time next year. I wonder what will be on each of these certificates for you? What will you have achieved?

Principal: Of course, as you'll know by now, in _____ (school's name) we're not interested only in your examination results. We want to help you grow in other ways. This assembly suggests the best way you can do that is by growing together as a group. So I've asked some students to come up with some examples of the things they hope you'll achieve together during the year. What kinds of things do you as a group maybe want to happen? What kinds of things would make you proud? What would make your parents/guardians proud of you? (We know they're already very proud of you!) It's isn't fame, money or any of that kind of stuff; we know that from talking to them. So what is it? We invite now _____ to give their answers to this question.

(In advance of the assembly, ask this question to a few students and then at this point in the assembly, ask them to share what they have written. It'll be unique to your school and to this year group.)

Thanks for that _____ (students' names).

Year Head: So we'll conclude now with some short prayers.

1. Lord, we pray for one another. Help us to work together this year for the good of everyone in our year, for the good of our school, for creation and for those most in need in our society. 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. We pray that they'll know we're here to help them settle in and to look out for them. 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 *Something inside so Strong*.

It's a song associated with the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa. As you know Apartheid was a very unjust system of government that segregated Black people from White people. It meant that Black people were forced to live in poverty. We hope that it inspires you to realise your own strength as a group as you face the year ahead.

Play song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VFdy-Lslv8>