

Education Sunday 2018

Guidance for Schools

‘Ephphatha! – Be Opened’



Sunday 9th September 2018

Introduction

Education Sunday is the special time of year when our Catholic community comes together to celebrate and support our Catholic schools.

Coinciding with the start of the academic term it is an opportunity for us to give thanks for the important work our schools perform.

On Education Sunday we encourage young people to attend Mass in their school uniform and to reflect on their hopes and aspirations for the coming school year.

We also use this opportunity to give thanks to the thousands of teachers, support staff, and diocesan education officials who play such a crucial role in making sure our schools are some of the most successful in the country.

This year's theme is '*Ephphatha: Be Opened*', which comes from Mark's Gospel reading on Education Sunday. It symbolises that Catholic schools are open and welcoming places for all, and that in our schools, young people's minds are opened to the revelation of Christ's teaching and his love for us all.

Catholic schools couldn't exist without the support of the Catholic community. This has been the case for the last 170 years. The second collection taken on Education Sunday is vital in enabling our schools to continue to thrive.

I hope you find this guidance useful in preparation for Education Sunday.

Fr George Bowen
Secretary to the Bishops' Conference
Department for Education and Formation

'Ephphatha'

Education Sunday - Sunday 9th September

Mark 7:31-37 (NRSV)

³¹ Then he returned from the region of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. ³² They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand on him. ³³ He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. ³⁴ Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, “Ephphatha,” that is, “Be opened.” ³⁵ And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. ³⁶ Then Jesus ordered them to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. ³⁷ They were astounded beyond measure, saying, “He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.”

Suggested Reflection

This reading from Mark’s Gospel tells of Jesus healing a man who was both deaf and mute and He does this with a simple command: ‘Ephphatha’ (be opened). This is a command for us all. Jesus is telling us to open our ears to the joys of the Good News and open our mouths to praise God. This is an especially important message for young people as they start their new school year.

Openness is central to what it means to be a Christian. Open to the love of God, the Good News of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. It also means we must be open and accepting of others. Catholic schools have a strong track record of being extremely open to all. The questions we must ask ourselves now is how can we be more open and what is stopping us being more open to the love of God?

We can also interpret this Gospel as showing that God’s mercy is closed to no one. He is open to all. Schools can often be the first place where God’s mercy can be encountered, especially for families who have wandered from the Church. Finally, education calls us to open our minds to learning. At the start of this academic term we should reflect on what it means to have a mind open to learning.

Prayer Suggestions (for use in assemblies and collective worship)

For all those working in Catholic schools: may they be an example of Christ's love and create a warm and welcoming learning environment for all young people.

Lord hear us...

For all pupils, especially those starting at a new school. May their minds be opened to learning and their hearts opened to the love of Jesus Christ, our Lord and saviour.

Lord hear us...

For those pupils who are in an exam year: May they grow in their love and understanding of learning and may the Lord give them strength to focus their talents to the best of their ability.

Lord hear us...

Lord Jesus, you who made the deaf hear and the dumb speak, we pray for all children with special leaning needs, Catholic special schools and special needs teachers. May your love, kindness and strength be with them always and help them overcome any challenges they face.

Lord hear us...

Supporting Education Sunday

There are many things your school can do to support Education Sunday. These can range from lesson plans reflecting on the theme of *Ephphatha* to school visits to your local church. The most important thing however, is that there is a visible presence of young people attending Mass on Education Sunday.

You can also liaise with your local Parish Priest/School Chaplain to arrange for pupils to give the readings/bidding prayers/offerings on the day as well.

In this pack we have provided a sample letter to be sent home to parents informing them of Education Sunday, a poster for school notice boards, sample copy for websites and school newsletters and some suggested tweets.