

Education Sunday 2018

Guidance for Parishes

‘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
23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B

Reading 1	Isa 35:4-7	<i>The ears of the deaf shall be unsealed and the tongues of the dumb shall be loosed.</i>
Psalm	Ps 145: 7-10 r. 1	<i>My soul, give praise to the Lord. Or Alleluia!</i>
Reading 2	Jas 2:1-5	<i>God chose the poor to be the heirs to the kingdom.</i>
Gospel Acclamation	1 Sam 3:9; John 6:68	<i>Speak, Lord, your servant is listening: you have the message of eternal life.</i>
	cf. Matt 4:23	<i>Jesus proclaimed the good news of the kingdom, and cured all kinds of sickness among the people.</i>
Gospel	Mark 7:31-37	<i>He makes the deaf hear and the dumb speak.</i>

Homily Suggestions

The reading from Mark's Gospel today 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. Not only are they the most ethnically diverse schools in the country, they are popular with parents of all faiths and none.

We can also interpret this Gospel as showing that God's mercy is closed to no one. He is open to all. Schools can 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 young people should reflect on what it means to have a mind open to learning.

Bidding Prayer Suggestions (Parishes may wish to include one or two)

For all those working in Catholic schools at the start of this academic year: 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 entering 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...

Suggested Hymns

1. Abide with me
2. Be thou my vision
3. Oh God beyond all praising
4. All glory, loud and honour
5. Crown him with many crowns
6. Amazing grace
7. Praise my soul the King of heaven
8. How great thou art
9. Glory, glory alleluia
10. All people that on earth do dwell
11. Love divine all love excelling
12. Bread of heaven