



# Education Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> September 2024



**Catholic Education Service**  
Supporting Catholic Education Since 1847

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# Foreword

Established by the Bishops in 1848, Education Sunday is one of the oldest Days of Special Prayer in the liturgical calendar of England and Wales.

Education remains the largest charitable activity of the Church in this country, with many of our schools established for poor immigrant children in the 19th century. Our forebears rightly saw education as the principal means of handing on the faith and improving the spiritual, moral, social and cultural lives of children and young people.

Since then, the Catholic Church has become the country's largest provider of secondary schools and second-largest provider of primary schools, along with four universities.

Catholic schools continue to be true to their historical mission, in educating substantially more pupils from the most deprived backgrounds, and while outperforming national averages at GCSE RE, English and Maths.

This success, however, continues to be dependent on the support of the Catholic community. There are many ways to do this, for instance in prayer for vocations to Catholic education; asking your diocese about becoming a school foundation governor; or encouraging a young person to become a teacher in a Catholic school.

We also give thanks for the many thousands of teachers, lecturers, academics, support staff, leaders, governors, directors, advisers and others who have found their vocation in Catholic education, and without whom this would be impossible.

Catholic education is a wonderful achievement to be celebrated - happy Education Sunday.

**Paul Barber**  
Director of the Catholic Education Service



## Overview

This year's theme for Education Sunday is drawn from its Gospel reading of Mark 7:31-37: *He makes the deaf hear and the dumb speak.*

Pope Francis reflected on this reading at the Angelus of 9<sup>th</sup> September 2018. He said: 'Jesus revealed to us the secret of a miracle that we too can imitate, becoming protagonists of "*Ephphatha*", of that phrase "be opened" with which He gave speech and hearing back to the deaf and dumb man.

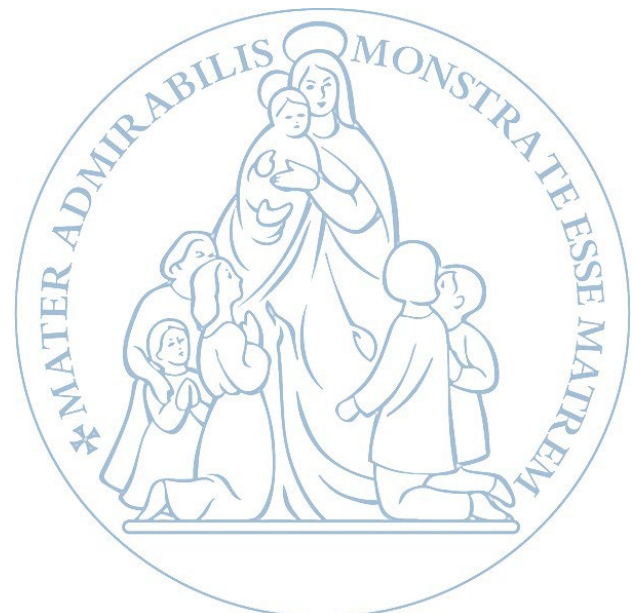
'It means opening ourselves to the needs of our brothers and sisters who are suffering and in need of help, by shunning selfishness and hardheartedness. It is precisely the heart, that is the deep core of the person, that Jesus came to "open", to free, in order to make us capable of fully living the relationship with God and with others.

'He became man so that man, rendered internally deaf and mute by sin, may hear the voice of God, the voice of Love that speaks to his heart, and thereby in turn, may learn to speak the language of love, transforming it into gestures of generosity and self-giving.'

The coming of Jesus enables the true healing of people and societies through his example. Catholic education in Church schools and universities endeavours to acknowledge Jesus' loving presence in the lives of young people as they work, learn, pray, grow in character and virtue, and discover their vocation.

Education Sunday is an opportunity to showcase the works and fruits of this, especially locally. From a priest speaking in his homily about a local school, to pupils wearing their uniforms at Mass, Education Sunday can be the reminder to all members of the Catholic community of the importance of education to the Catholic mission.

Dioceses rely on the generosity of the Catholic community each Education Sunday to support education in the diocese and the work of the Catholic Education Service. This makes Education Sunday a key event in the annual Catholic calendar.





# Celebrating schools in church this Education Sunday

Holy Mass on Education Sunday is a wonderful opportunity for churches and parishes to celebrate Catholic schools. Here are some ways in which this can be done:

- Encouraging pupils from Catholic schools to wear their school uniforms to Mass
- Going through the Sunday's readings, the psalms and the bidding prayers with pupils
- Devising their own bidding prayers
- Arranging for pupils to gather the second collection at Mass
- Placing students' art or crafts in the church, church hall or other prominent place
- Having a student-led bake-sale in the church hall after Mass
- Arranging for pupils to come into church with their school banner
- Having a teacher or pupil read out the second collection appeal
- Having pupils present the offertory
- Including the school choir

Some questions to reflect upon for the appeal:

- What has my experience of Catholic education been?
- What are my favourite parts of the school I am involved in?
- What are the core values that drive my school?
- Do you feel like Catholic education makes a difference? How?
- What are the connections between my school and the parish?
- What inspires me in my work?

This list is not exhaustive, and features of particular schools could be identified and celebrated. Additionally, schools may wish to invite staff and volunteers to Mass, including teachers, teaching assistants, playground or home-time volunteers.



# Reflection

The following reflection is by Fleur Dorrell, Biblical Apostolate Manager for the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales in partnership with the Bible Society. For further activities and resources on the Scriptures, visit [www.godwhospeaks.uk](http://www.godwhospeaks.uk)

Compassion and inclusion are defining qualities of Jesus' ministry. Right from his birth in a harsh winter's stable it is the shepherds who come to see him first, not the wealthy or powerful, the religious or political leaders. As soon as Jesus begins his public ministry, he seeks out the sick, the vulnerable, the outcasts. He embraces all those who challenge the status quo: the lepers and tax collectors, the children and women, the grieving and possessed, the disabled and poor. He welcomes everyone to his table with love and grace.

In the Education Sunday readings from the prophet Isaiah, the Gospel of Mark and the Letter of James there are three golden threads: compassion, healing and inclusion. God has compassion for those who are suffering: *4 he will come and save you*. This physical healing is up to God but when it happens: *5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; 6 then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy*. Isaiah 35:4-7

When Jesus heals the deaf man in Mark 7:31-37 he heals in the name of God as he looks up to heaven while touching the man so that *...his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly*. Each miracle that Jesus performs addresses a serious human and spiritual need and is always accompanied by a serious message about Jesus' identity and authority from God. These people's return to health was essential if they were to rejoin society and practice their faith before God in community since their conditions excluded them from public worship and social relationships.

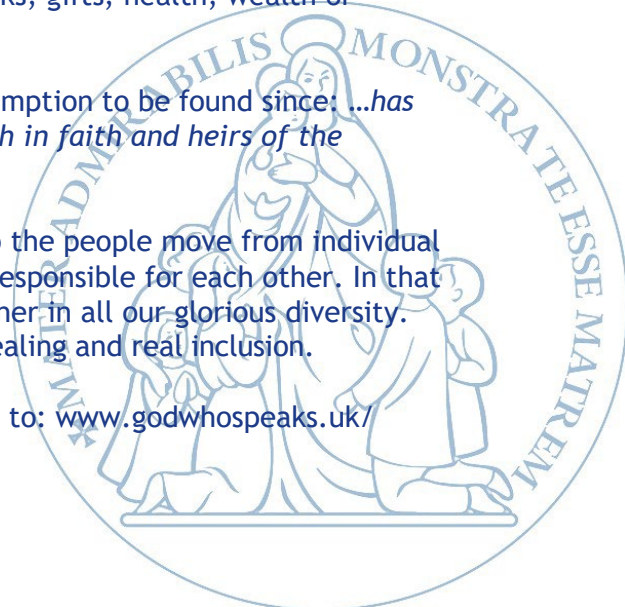
Healing operates at different levels. Not everyone is transformed physically. But spiritually through a different relationship with Christ, their suffering is given meaning and a hope that it will not last forever. In this way, Jesus, whose own suffering on the cross accompanies and redeems our own struggles, ensures that God's promise of a new Kingdom is within our reach.

This counter-cultural attitude reverses many of the challenges that the world presents us with today. It models compassion, healing and inclusion. Everyone should have the same rights: to live well, to have equal access to resources to fulfil their potential, to be respected and not judged by superficial appearances or criteria, or to be defined only by certain skills. We are all beautiful, not because of our looks, gifts, health, wealth or success but because we are created in God's image.

No matter how wounded or troubled we are, there is redemption to be found since: *...has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom*. James 2:1-5

Part of the point of the miracles Jesus performs is to help the people move from individual self-concern to a new shared sense of solidarity. We are responsible for each other. In that collective care, our schools can help us to value one another in all our glorious diversity. And living compassionately each day, enabling spiritual healing and real inclusion.

If you'd like to know more about the miracles of Jesus, go to: [www.godwhospeaks.uk/posters-for-schools/#m](http://www.godwhospeaks.uk/posters-for-schools/#m)



# Liturgy

Education Sunday - 8 September 2024

23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B

Reading 1:

Isaiah 35:4-7 *The ears of the deaf shall be unsealed and the tongues of the dumb shall be loosed.*

Psalm:

145:7-10, r.1 *My soul, give praise to the Lord. Or Alleluia!*

Reading 2:

James 2:1-5 *God chose the poor to be the heirs to the kingdom.*

Gospel Acclamation:

1 Samuel 3:9; John 6:68 *Speak, Lord, your servant is listening: you have the message of eternal life.*

cf. Matthew 4:23 *Jesus proclaimed the good news of the kingdom, and cured all kinds of sickness among the people.*

Gospel:

Mark 7:31-37 *He makes the deaf hear and the dumb speak.*



# Homily

We have prepared some general bullet points which priests may like to use in preparing their homily of Education Sunday.

- Church documents talk about a true education being one that prepares students for eternal life, as well as enabling them to discern and follow their vocation on this earth
- Time spent at school should not only equip us for life in the world but instil in us a transcendent love for knowledge and a desire to seek truth and wisdom
- The Catholic history of education: Many of the first schools and universities were founded by the Church, which has always esteemed education as integral to the Christian journey

## Quotes about education

Pope Francis, to students and teachers from schools across Italy:

‘I love school. I loved it as a pupil, as a student and as a teacher. And then as Bishop.

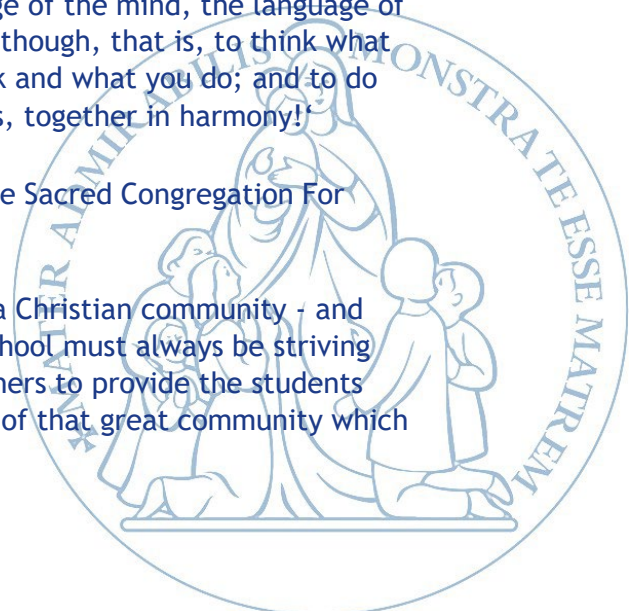
‘Going to school means opening one’s mind and heart to reality, in the wealth of its aspects, of its dimensions. And we do not have the right to be afraid of reality! School teaches us to understand reality. Going to school means opening one’s mind and heart to reality, in the wealth of its aspects, of its dimensions. And this is so very beautiful!

‘The family is the first core for relationships: the relationship with one’s father and mother and with one’s brothers and sisters is the basis, and it always accompanies us in life. But at school we “socialise”: we meet people who are different from us, different in age, culture, roots, abilities. School is the first society that integrates the family. Family and school should never be opposed! They are complementary, and therefore it is important that they cooperate in mutual respect.

‘I wish you all – parents, teachers, people who work in the schools, students – a beautiful journey at school, a journey that enables you to learn three languages that a mature person should know how to express: the language of the mind, the language of the heart and the language of the hands. Harmoniously though, that is, to think what you feel and what you do; to feel deeply what you think and what you do; and to do well what you think and what you feel. Three languages, together in harmony!’

From *Lay Catholic in Schools: Witnesses To Faith*, by The Sacred Congregation For Catholic Education:

‘When the educational community is at the same time a Christian community - and this is what the educational community of a Catholic school must always be striving toward - then it offers a great opportunity for the teachers to provide the students with a living example of what it means to be a member of that great community which is the Church.





‘It must never be forgotten that the school itself is always in the process of being created, due to the labour brought to fruition by all those who have a role to play in it, and most especially by those who are teachers.’

From *Declaration on Christian Education*, known as *Gravissimum Educationis*, proclaimed by His Holiness Pope Paul VI:

‘Beautiful indeed and of great importance is the vocation of all those who aid parents in fulfilling their duties and who, as representatives of the human community, undertake the task of education in schools. This vocation demands special qualities of mind and heart, very careful preparation, and continuing readiness to renew and to adapt.’

## Bidding prayers

You might like to use some of the following prayer suggestions. Alternatively, pupils could write their own prayers:

We pray for the Church. We give thanks for the vision of Church leaders who placed the education of young people at the heart of Christ’s invitation to ‘make disciples of all nations’. May the Church continue to guide and inspire communities of faith, who gather in your name.

Lord in your mercy,  
**Hear our prayer**

We pray for the world and for young people everywhere, especially those who through conflict, poverty or oppression, do not have access to education. May you guide world leaders to recognise education as a source of hope for the future.

Lord in your mercy,  
**Hear our prayer**

We pray for our school and all Catholic schools in our area [You may like to list your local Catholic schools]. We give thanks for the dedication, example and inspiration of school leaders, teachers, and all who contribute to nurturing and supporting children and young people. May our school communities be filled with Jesus’ compassion, love and joy.

Lord in your mercy,  
**Hear our prayer**

We pray for children and young people in our parish and in our school. Fill them with hope, courage, and determination to face new and exciting challenges and experiences as we start our new school year.

Lord in your mercy,  
**Hear our prayer**

We pray for those who are ill in mind and body in our parish. May they find comfort and hope in the tender love of Jesus. We pray also for those who care for them, that they may be blessed with the gifts of gentleness and patience.

Lord in your mercy,  
**Hear our prayer**

We pray for those who have died, especially those from our parish. May they rest with you in the peace and light of your glory. We pray also for those who mourn loved ones, that they may find comfort and peace.

Lord in your mercy,  
**Hear our prayer**



## Social media guide

The following tips can help your school and parish use X/Twitter for Education Sunday and beyond.

If your school doesn't have an X/Twitter account, it only takes a few minutes to set one up. However, please ensure your content, especially all photos of children, is in line with your online safety policy and that you apply appropriate security settings to your account.

This can be useful for promoting the work of the school and linking to other organisations. Posts are short and you can also include photos and videos.

- Use a brief and easy-to-remember handle (e.g. @CathEdService)
- Put key information in the 'about' section - website and name of your school
- Follow and post/repost people and schools who do similar work to your own
- Follow the Catholic Education Service at @CathEdService to find out what other Catholic schools are up to for Education Sunday. You can follow the Holy Father at @Pontifex, bishops, cathedrals, parishes and more
- Some other good accounts to follow are @BBCeducation and your local newspaper. If you post lots of content about an interesting event at your school, a local journalist might decide to write a story about it.
- You can also follow the account of your local MP, who may wish to pay a visit to your school.
- Don't post too much, think about your audience and make sure access to the account is secure
- Make sure the content of your posts never reveals personal details of staff or students
- Look at and use trending topic hashtags in your posts to reach a wider community and join global conversations
- Don't forget to post about the religious aspects of your school - photos from Mass, collective worship or pilgrimages provide interesting content
- If you have photo and video content people are much more likely to engage with it if it has a visual component and isn't just a sentence
- Once your account is up and running, get ready to post about Education Sunday
- Repost @CathEdService's content, especially about Catholic education and school governance
- You could get individual staff and students to post about why they love their Catholic school
- Providing you have permission, post photos of all the events you run about Education Sunday

