

Catholic School's Week celebrates the rich history, proud tradition, and contribution of Catholic schools in the United States. This year we celebrate the theme: Dividends for Life—Faith, Knowledge, Discipline, Morals.

As an administrator or teacher in a Catholic school, you know as well as anybody how the culture or “way of life” of your school nurtures *faith*, treasures the acquisition of *knowledge*, instills *discipline*, and guides young people in making life-giving *moral* choices.

For your reflection

Dividends for Life

Faith A Catholic school is a place where a young person's faith is supported and nurtured, and most of all treasured. In a Catholic school, faith is a priority. You are a significant adult in the lives of your students. How you teach about faith extends beyond what is written in your lesson plans to what your students learn by your example.

- What are the simple ways you demonstrate to your students that your faith is a priority?
- How is your classroom a “Catholic classroom?”

Knowledge A Catholic-centered education is so much more than facts and figures, tests and assessments. Embedded in the curriculum of a Catholic school is the truth about God and his plan for us. Yes, your students experience the rigor and expectations of excellence that Catholic schools are known for, and they also experience knowledge through the lens of core beliefs—that God has created each person in his image and likeness, that God has been revealing himself to us throughout all of history, that each person has basic God-given dignity. Being Catholic shapes how we see the world, as we learn about the world.

- Look at your curriculum through a “Catholic” lens. What do you see?

Discipline Many parents will acknowledge that one of the main reasons they invest in a Catholic education for their children is the discipline that such an education represents. You are a partner with parents in helping children understand the value of hard work, and in developing habits that will help them achieve their goals. Catholic schools consider the whole person—body, mind, and spirit. No student benefits from a teacher or a parent who has meager expectations for a child's learning or behavior.

- How do you hold your students accountable for their learning, for their attitudes, and for their actions?
- How do you help them learn discipline not only for their intellectual lives, but for their spiritual lives as well?
- How are Catholic disciplines or practices a part of your classroom?

Morals Christian morality is conduct or behavior that reflects faith in Jesus Christ and his principles. Morals are habits for a lifetime, guided by the Law of Love: “Love one another as I love you” (John 13:34). Some people would say that we are living in amoral times, or in times lacking any sort of moral compass. Morality is faith lived, living what we believe. As Catholics, we have many role models in what it means to live a moral life. Saints and holy people, past and present, help us grow in our Catholic faith. For your students, significant adults in their lives such as their parents and you, their teachers, demonstrate through word and actions what it means to be a moral person. Catholic schools are formation in a Catholic way of life, which is a moral way of life.

- Morals are habits for a lifetime. How are you helping your students develop these habits?

Ideas for Catholic School Week in your Classroom and School

Catholic School's Week Liturgy Use the resources provided by the NCEA to celebrate a school and parish-wide liturgy to kick-off Catholic school's week.

Catholic School's Week Family Night. Have a special night of celebration with families and parishioners. For example, enjoy a potluck meal where every classroom is responsible for a course for the meal; involve the students in skits and presentations about their classes and school activities; invite the school organizations to each lend their creativity to the evening's program; invite alumni to share how their Catholic education has truly been a "Dividend for Life".

Create a special Prayer Space that reflects this year's theme. Involve the students in decorating the space with symbols that represent Faith, Knowledge, Discipline, and Morals. Gather around the prayer space during the week to pray the special prayer for the week. Each day, have the students offer prayers of thanksgiving for those people who make their Catholic school experience possible.

Who is our school's patron saint? Have the students research the patron saint of your school and/or parish. Ask them to focus on how that person lived his or her faith, and on the virtues or morals which guided his or her life.

Catholic Jeopardy. Involve the students in creating their own Classroom Jeopardy game. Use four categories to align with the theme: What Catholics **believe** (faith), Catholic Facts (knowledge), What Catholics Do (Discipline), and Living as Catholics (Morals). Divide the class into groups and assign each group one of the categories. Have the groups come up with statements and corresponding answers. Have the students write their statements on note cards, with the corresponding question on the opposite side. Then have fun playing the game with your class!

Top Ten Reasons We Love our Catholic School Develop a Top Ten list with your students. What are the Top Ten reasons your class and school are the best around?

Create a Commercial Involve your students in a project where they create a commercial advertising their school. If you are having a Catholic School Week Family Night, have your students present their commercials during the evening's events.