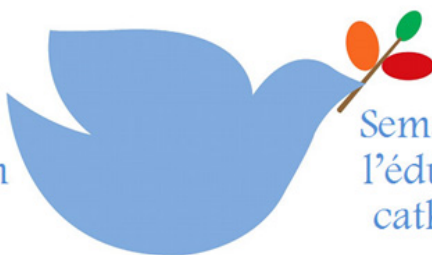


**Catholic Education Week 2017**  
*Prayer Services and Reflection Activities for 2016-2017*

**ADVANCE KIT**

CATHOLIC EDUCATION:  
**WALKING**  
forward  
together

Catholic  
Education  
Week



Semaine de  
l'éducation  
catholique

*“Do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with your God.” ~Micah 6:8*  
*“Accomplie la justice, aime la bonté et marche humblement avec ton Dieu” ~Michée 6,8*

L'ÉDUCATION CATHOLIQUE:  
**ALLER**  
DE L'AVANT  
ensemble

**Catholic Education Week**  
**April 30 – May 5, 2017**  
[www.goodnewsforall.ca](http://www.goodnewsforall.ca)



# **Catholic Education Week 2017**

***‘Catholic Education: Walking Forward Together’***  
***‘L’éducation catholique: Aller de l’avant ensemble’***  
**APRIL 30 – MAY 5, 2017**

## **Guidelines for using the Advance Kit**

### *What is Catholic Education Week?*

Each year the Catholic community of Ontario engages in a week-long celebration of the unique identity and distinctive contributions of Catholic education during Catholic Education Week.

### *What is the theme of Catholic Education Week?*

This year’s celebration entitled, “*Catholic Education: Walking Forward Together*” is scheduled for the week of April 30 – May 5, 2017. The scriptural passage that guides our theme is, “*Do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with your God.*” ~Micah 6:8

### *What is the Catholic Education Week Resource Kit?*

For a number of years OCSTA has developed and distributed a school-based Resource Kit of activities, prayer services and suggested resources based on the theme of the particular year. The Resource Kit is sent to Catholic school communities early in the year to assist them in their Catholic Education Week activities.

### *What is the Catholic Education Week Advance Kit?*

In order to help all Catholic educational partners engage in prayer and dialogue in preparation for Catholic Education Week 2017, OCSTA has prepared an Advance Kit of prayer services and reflection activities. Unlike the Resource Kit that is designed for students, the Advance Kit, sent early in the school year, is designed to help adult groups (trustees, school board staff, school staff groups, parent groups, parish groups, associations, etc.) reflect on the theme of Catholic Education Week with prayer services and reflection activities beginning in Advent and concluding in the month before Catholic Education Week.

### *What are the sub-themes of Catholic Education Week?*

The Advance Kit has five prayer and reflection activities for the five months preceding Catholic Education Week, each activity reflecting one of the five sub-themes of Catholic Education Week:

- 1. Advent:**           **“Walking Forward Together with God”**  
                              **“Aller de l’avant avec Dieu”**
- 2. January:**         **“Walking Forward Together with Our Families”**  
                              **“Aller de l’avant avec nos familles”**
- 3. February:**       **“Walking Forward Together with Others”**  
                              **“Aller de l’avant avec les autres”**
- 4. March:**           **“Walking Forward Together with Creation”**  
                              **“Aller de l’avant avec la Création”**
- 5. April:**            **“Walking Forward Together in Hope”**  
                              **“Aller de l’avant dans l’espérance”**

*How can the Advance Kit be used in a local Catholic educational community?*

Each service may be used to begin a meeting or gathering, or to provide an opportunity for the adult partners in a local Catholic education community to discuss the themes. Each prayer service includes...

- Prayers that reflect the theme;
- A scripture reading that connects with the theme;\*
- A personal reflection related to the scripture reading;
- A theme-related reading taken from the contemporary Catholic spiritual writings;
- Questions for discussion or reflection based on that reading.

*Does the format of these prayer services always have to be followed?*

The Advance Kit is a gift to be adapted and utilized in whatever way suits the needs of your local community. Feel free to use all, or any part, of the kit in the five months prior to Catholic Education Week 2017 beginning in Advent 2016.

*What approach should be taken to the discussion?*

The Advance Kit is designed in Catholic education to help adult groups to sit down together to pray and reflect. In discussing the reflection questions found in this Advance Kit, it is important to allow for the divergent views and experiences that may emerge. Reflection sharing or discussions should be conducted in a gospel atmosphere of respect. Conflicting points of view should be heard and accepted without feeling the need for them to be resolved.

*How can we help prepare for future Catholic Education Week activities?*

OCSTA encourages all its partners to let us know about your group's use of this Advance Kit by sending an email to OCSTA at the following email address: [ocsta@ocsta.on.ca](mailto:ocsta@ocsta.on.ca).

The Catholic Education Week Committee would also be pleased to receive your feedback on this Advance Kit as well as suggestions to improve its value to our partners in Catholic education. These and all other Catholic Education Week materials are available on the OCSTA website: [www.ocsta.on.ca](http://www.ocsta.on.ca).

---

\*Note that the scriptural reading has been provided for your convenience, however, scripture should normally be read from a Bible or Lectionary.

CATHOLIC EDUCATION:  
**WALKING**  
forward  
**together**

**Advent 2016**

*“Walking Forward Together with God”*

**SUGGESTED OPENING SONG**

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel ~BarlowGirl ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zzW\\_PmW-LzE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zzW_PmW-LzE))

The term “Advent” comes from the Latin root word “Adventus” which means “coming”. As Christians, we look to the Hebrew Scriptures as they prophesied the coming of God to humanity. “Emmanuel” means “God is with us”. As we enter this season and at this time of history, let us reflect on the reality that God is always with us. Jesus is the mystery of God with us today and yet to come.

**OPENING PRAYER**

O God of Comfort,  
We place our hope in you.  
In this Advent Season,  
may we walk with you  
into a future that will bring hope and peace to all the world.  
We are grateful  
that you are always present to us as our Redeemer.  
May this Advent season  
renew our hearts  
and strengthen us to bring this hope to others.  
We make this prayer in the name of Jesus,  
Emmanuel, God among us.  
Amen.

**READING (A Reading from the Book of Isaiah)**

*The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,  
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;  
like the crocus, it shall blossom abundantly  
and rejoice with joy and singing.  
The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it;  
the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.  
They shall see the glory of the Lord,  
the majesty of God.*

*Strengthen weak hands  
and make firm the feeble knees.  
Say to those who are of a fearful heart,  
“Be strong, do not fear!*

*Here is your God.  
He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense.  
He will come and save you.”*

*Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened  
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;  
then the lame shall leap like a deer  
and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.*

*And the ransomed of the Lord shall return  
and come to Zion with singing;  
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;  
they shall obtain joy and gladness  
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.*

The Word of the Lord. **R: Thanks be to God.**

### **QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION**

This passage from Isaiah in the Old Testament speaks of a time to come for joy and singing. The God that is yet to come is a source of hope.

Where do you see this hope in our world today? What could you do to reawaken this joy in your own walk of faith to strengthen your walk with God?

### **READING AND GUIDED REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

Gabriel

From: “*Voices of Christmas*” by Nikki Grimes (Zonderkidz ©2009, ISBN 978-0-310-71192-6)

*“In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth to a virgin.”  
Hush! The hour is late.*

*Nazareth lies sleeping and I wait for my Lord’s signal to once again go to earth below.*

*When last I went, my words were for Zechariah.*

*Now, I pace the halls of Heaven memorizing a message from Mary.*

*(Every archangel I see envies me!)*

*I must get the message right:*

*The Light of the World in on his way!*

*What will Mary say when I tell her?*

*I wonder what he’ll look like, God wrapped in baby’s skin, stepping from eternity into time.*

*How will he hide his glory?*

*How will he hold it all in?*

*Ah! There! The bells chime and I must go.*

*And so I spread my wings and spring from Heaven’s balcony.*

The angel Gabriel prepares to bring a message to Mary about the coming of the Saviour. How do we prepare our hearts during this Advent season to deepen our relationship with our God?

The Advent/Christmas season can become noisy and secular, leaving the hope of “God is with us” out of our thoughts. What can we do to silence the commercialism and come home to the peace of the Prince of Peace?

God entered humanity to be revealed to us. How can this reality deepen our faith?

**CLOSING PRAYER**

God of All Creation,

You walk with us in a special way

during this Advent season

reminding us that peace, love, hope and joy

come to us in the birth of your son.

Be with us as we walk this Advent season

reminding us that peace, love, hope and joy

come to us in the birth of your Son.

Be with us as we walk this Advent season

and help us to bring your light to all we meet.

We make this prayer in the name of Jesus, Emmanuel.

Amen.

CATHOLIC EDUCATION:  
**WALKING**  
forward  
together

**January 2017**

*“Walking Forward Together with Our Families”*

**SUGGESTED OPENING SONGS**

Let the Children Come ~R. Cooney

All Are Welcome ~Marty Haugen (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mAZC65CwTEA>)

**OPENING PRAYER**

Lord our God,

You gather us as one family

to share in the abundant love that comes from you.

Help us to recognize the challenges of today’s families

and support them in the education of their children

so that they can come to know you more intimately.

We ask this through your Son, Jesus Christ.

Amen.

**READING (Luke 8:19-21)**

*A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke. R: Glory to You, O Lord.*

*The mother and brothers of Jesus came to him but were unable to join him because of the crowd. He was told, “Your mother and your brothers are standing outside and they wish to see you”. He said to them in reply, “My mother and my brothers are those who hear the Word of God and act on it”.*

The Gospel of the Lord. **R: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

**QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION**

The gospel reading invites us to reflect on belonging. Jesus’ words confirm that everyone “who hears and acts on the Word of God” is a privileged member of God’s family and that a relationship with Jesus is available to everyone.

Does my family (the domestic church) reflect a community of Christians to which everyone is welcomed and belongs?

Does my family take time to listen and discern God’s Word together?

Does my family practice the teachings of the gospels? How so?

How is my family called to grow in holiness together?

**READING: Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia – The Joy of Love*, #279**

*To help expand the parental relationship to broader realities, “Christian communities are called to offer support to the educational mission of families” particularly through the catechesis associated with Christian initiation. To foster an integral education, we need to “renew the covenant between the family and the Christian community”. The Synod wanted to emphasize the importance of Catholic schools which “play a vital role in assisting parents in their duty to raise their children... Catholic schools should be encouraged in their mission to help pupils grow into mature adults who can view the world with the love of Jesus and who can understand life as a call to serve God”.*

**QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION/REFLECTION**

How is our school community, together with the parish, supporting the educational mission of the families?

How are we, members of the school community, helping students discern the Word of God and their baptismal call to serve God?

**CLOSING PRAYER**

Jesus, Mary and Joseph,  
In you we contemplate the splendor of true love;  
to you we turn with trust.

Holy Family of Nazareth,  
Grant that our families too  
may be places of communion and prayer,  
authentic schools of the gospel  
and small domestic churches.

Holy Family of Nazareth,  
May families never again experience violence, rejection and division;  
may all who have been hurt or scandalized find ready comfort and healing.

Holy Family of Nazareth,  
Make us more mindful of the sacredness and inviolability of the family  
and its beauty in God’s plan.

Jesus, Mary and Joseph,  
Graciously hear our prayer.

Amen.

**SUGGESTED CLOSING SONGS**

We Are Called ~David Haas (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JQWtAY4VcsA>)

They’ll Know We Are Christians by Our Love ~Peter Scholtes  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zoENAD7OCiI>)

The Summons ~John Bell (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dKvwyKVHf10>)



CATHOLIC EDUCATION:  
**WALKING**  
forward  
**together**

**February 2017**

*“Walking Forward Together with Others”*

**SUGGESTED OPENING SONGS**

We Are Many Parts ~Marty Haugen (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zQPORMfs8Vg>)

All Are Welcome ~Marty Haugen (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mAZC65CwTEA>)

Send Us Your Spirit ~David Haas (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bOWRxnz97ms>)

**OPENING PRAYER**

Let us begin with the sign of our faith.

God our Father,

Your Son Jesus came to teach us that we should love one another as brothers and sisters and see your face in every person we meet.

Many times, people do not respect the traditions of others, oppress and despise their identity, because they are different.

I ask you to touch the hearts of leaders, to respect Indigenous peoples.

Let us take the opportunity to thank our Indigenous peoples for being the stewards of the sacred land on which we stand.

We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

*(Adapted prayer from the Pope’s Worldwide Prayer Network: Apostleship of Prayer, July 2016)*

**READING (2 Corinthians 5:18-20 – New Revised Standard Version, NRSV)**

*All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors of Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.*

**QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION**

The title “ambassador” is usually used by people who are authorized to represent their country while living as a resident in a foreign nation.

Paul tells us that we are reconciled – that is, united – with God through Christ and that God has now entrusted us with the ministry of helping others to be reconciled through Christ. Imagine that we are called ambassadors for Christ! Of all the ways God could be made known in the world, God chooses to use us. We are “authorized representatives”. We are God’s messengers. That might sound a bit intimidating. We might naturally wonder how we, broken and imperfect people, are supposed to represent God, who is completely holy and just. The reality is that God wants us, flaws and all. God does not need

perfect people – just willing people. Spend some time in prayer and share with God, your thoughts, feelings and fears about being invited to take this great role of ambassador of Christ.

*(The Catholic Youth Bible; International Edition: New Revised Standard Version 2004, page. 1355, Winona, MN, St. Mary's Press)*

How will I create an attitude of respect for the traditions of my country and all other countries? How will I encourage others not to make derogatory comments towards different cultures, especially Indigenous peoples?

### **CLOSING PRAYER**

God Creator, Spirit,

Walk with us and give us the strength to stand for life,  
in the face of destruction  
and greed of the earth.

Teach us to be respectful and gracious  
for all that our land and waters provide.

Instill in us the spirit of unity  
with our Indigenous sisters and brothers from around the world.

Lord, with your grace,  
help us to endure the challenges placed before us and our earth.

Let us take time to reflect  
on the spiritual connection to our lands and fragility and beauty of mother earth.

With your love and spirit,  
let us walk together in unity, peace and harmony  
on these great lands.

We pray,  
as one global family,  
for a safe and just world  
for our children and our children's children.

Let us bring your love to all people.

Amen.

[www.caritas.org.au](http://www.caritas.org.au) > AC)

### **SUGGESTED CLOSING SONGS**

We Are One Body ~Millennium Three (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDUKehJqb5Q>)

Great is the Lord ~Michael W. Smith (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TdqfAkHCZnA>)

Christ be Our Light ~Bernadette Farrell (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZJq3bhdgQoc>)

CATHOLIC EDUCATION:  
**WALKING**  
forward  
together

**March 2017**

*“Walking Forward Together with Creation”*

**SUGGESTED OPENING SONGS**

Spirit Blowing Through Creation ~Marty Haugen (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HldjtDHniSI>;  
CBW III #415; Gather #555)

Before the Earth Had Yet Begun ~Herbert O’Driscoll (CBW III #540)

Let All Things Now Living ~Katherine Davis

(<https://ca.video.search.yahoo.com/search/video?fr=mcafee&p=Let+All+Things+Now+Living#id=1&vid=d9955cd51541c61adccee8bfa5c63439&action=click>; CBW III #534; Gather #635)

**OPENING PRAYER**

God of Love,  
Show us our place in this world  
as channels of your love for all the creatures of this earth,  
for not one of them is forgotten in your sight.  
Enlighten those who possess power and money,  
that they may avoid the sin of indifference,  
that they may love the common good,  
advance the weak  
and care for this world in which we live.

The poor and the earth are crying out.  
O Lord,  
Seize us with your power and light,  
help us to protect all life,  
to prepare for a better future,  
for the coming of your Kingdom  
of justice, peace, love and beauty.  
Praise be to you!

Amen.

*(Pope Francis from “A Christian Prayer in Union with Creation”, Laudato Si)*

**READING (Romans 8:18-24a)**

*I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but by the will of the one who subjected it in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now;*

*and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we were saved.*

### **QUESTION FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION**

In this reading from Paul's Letter to the Romans, there is a strong sense of waiting, of expectancy, both for creation and for ourselves. There is struggle, but also hope. During this season of Lent, how can I enter into both this struggle – that struggle against personal sinfulness, especially as it promotes the decay of creation – and the hope to which, with creation, we are called?

### **READING (Laudato Si)**

The notion of the common good also extends to future generations. The global economic crises have made painfully obvious, the detrimental effects of disregarding our common destiny which cannot exclude those who come after us. We can no longer speak of sustainable development apart from intergenerational solidarity. Once we start to think about the kind of world we are leaving to future generations, we look at things differently; we realize that the world is a gift which we have freely received and must share with others.

Many things have to change course, but it is we human beings above all who need to change. We lack an awareness of our common origin, of our mutual belonging and of a future to be shared with everyone. This basic awareness would enable the development of new convictions, attitudes and forms of life. A great cultural, spiritual and educational challenge stands before us and it will demand that we set out on the long path of renewal.

(Pope Francis, *Laudato Si: On Care for Our Common Home*, #158, 202)

### **QUESTION FOR DISCUSSION/REFLECTION**

It has been said that “we don't inherit the earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children”. What new convictions, attitudes and forms of life are we called to by this intergenerational solidarity of which Pope Francis speaks?

### **CLOSING PRAYER:**

Creator God,

We thank you for all of creation.

We ask your forgiveness

where we have failed to be just stewards.

And we now ask for your guidance

in restoring the face of the earth.

May we learn to live in harmony,

safety and just sharing of resources among all

so that we achieve the Kingdom of God.

Peace be to this community. Peace be to this land. Peace be to all people.

Amen.

(This prayer was adapted for Earth Day 2013 by the Catholic Health Association from a novena developed by the Mercy Justice Circle in New Jersey)

### **SUGGESTED CLOSING SONGS**

God Created Earth and Heaven (CBW III #512)

Let All Creation Bless the Lord ~Carl P. Daw (CBW III #556)

How Great Thou Art ~Stuart K. Hine

<https://ca.video.search.yahoo.com/search/video?fr=mcafee&p=How+Great+Thou+Art+hymn#id=5&vid=587b318b1501d27de80a547455a4b24b&action=click>; CBW III #555; Gather #578)

Stewards of Earth ~Omer Westendorf (CBW III #634)

CATHOLIC EDUCATION:  
**WALKING**  
forward  
together

**April 2017**

*“Walking Forward Together in Hope”*

**SUGGESTED OPENING SONGS**

Be Not Afraid ~Bob Dufford, SJ (CBW III #481)  
Blest Are They ~David Haas (CBW III #522)  
Sing A New Song ~Dan Schutte (CBW III #563)  
God is Alive ~David Haas (CBW III #591)  
We Are Called ~David Haas (Gather Hymnal #710)

**OPENING PRAYER**

God of hope,  
We celebrate the joy of this Easter season.  
Back when we were in the Lenten desert  
and our hearts in need of watering,  
we sustained ourselves with the hope that your love  
would nourish us and help our hearts to bloom again.  
We walked forward together in hope  
to arrive at a place of pure joy.  
And so today,  
we lift up our voices and our spirits to praise and glorify you.  
We make this prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord.  
Amen.

**READING (Jeremiah 29:11-13)**

*For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart.*

The Word of the Lord. **R: Thanks be to God.**

**QUESTION FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION**

This reading can provide comfort and strength to those in the midst of pain and confusion. Can you think of a time when God’s love sustained you during a difficult time? Who or what was the source of your hope?

How can we encourage students to “let go and let God” into their lives, to seek the Lord with all their hearts as part of their life journey?

Do you believe that hope can overcome any obstacle?

### **READING: Pope Francis on Holiness as Courage and Hope**

Holiness is a journey; holiness cannot be bought. It can't be sold. It cannot be given away. Holiness is a journey to God's presence that I must make; no one else can do it in my name. I can pray for someone to be holy, but he's the one who has to work towards holiness, not me. Walk in God's presence in an impeccable way.

Everyday holiness can also be "anonymous". And the first element needed to achieve it is courage; the path to holiness takes courage.

Jesus' Kingdom of Heaven is for those who have the courage to go forward and courage is generated by hope, the second element of the journey that leads to holiness, the kind of courage that hopes for an encounter with Jesus.

The third element of this journey towards holiness appears in Peter's words, "*Put all your hope in that grace*".

We cannot achieve holiness on our own. No, it is a grace. Being good, being saintly, going everyday a little step forward in the Christian life is a grace of God and we have to ask for it. Courage is a journey. A journey one must take with courage, with hope and with the willingness to receive this grace. And hope: the hope of the journey.

(Pope Francis' Homily at Mass in the Santa Marta Chapel in the Vatican, May 24, 2016

[http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2016/05/24/pope\\_francis\\_holiness\\_is\\_courage\\_hope\\_daily\\_conversion/1232033](http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2016/05/24/pope_francis_holiness_is_courage_hope_daily_conversion/1232033))

### **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION/REFLECTION**

What does it mean to "walk in God's presence in an impeccable way"? How can we help each other to become more willing to "put all our hope" in the grace of God?

### **CLOSING PRAYER:**

God of Easter bliss,  
Nurture us.  
Sustain us.  
Strengthen us.  
Empower us.  
Embolden us with courage  
so that we may seek you  
with open and trusting hearts  
and deepen our joy  
as we walk together in hope.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

### **SUGGESTED CLOSING SONGS**

You Are Mine ~David Haas (Gather Hymnal #649)  
Canticle of the Sun ~Marty Haugen (CBW III #542)  
City of God ~Dan Schutte (CBW III #345)  
Sing to the Mountains ~Bob Dufford, SJ (Gather Hymnal #435)  
You Are the Voice ~David Haas (CBW III #576)  
How Can I Keep from Singing? ~Robert W. Lowry (Gather Hymnal #603)