



CATHOLIC EDUCATION THEME 2026


peace
be with
you all.

ROMANS 15:33



PRAYER SERVICE OR EUCHARISTIC LITURGY

Students will need to be prepared, and tasks completed in the weeks leading up to Catholic Education Week.

BACKGROUND FOR TEACHERS:

Our guiding Scripture for Catholic Education Week 2026 is, **Jesus Appears to the Disciples** John 20:19-21, with the theme **“Peace be with you all.”** Refer to pg 11 for further

Introduction *(or adapt wording that best suits your local context)*

As we gather for this liturgy, we respond to the call of Pope Leo XIV to be people of peace in a world where challenges have multiplied, and our hope is often stretched to the breaking point. As people of peace, we recognise that current affairs do not define our end; instead, we look to Jesus, who calls us to justice and peace. Today, we open our hearts to the Risen Christ’s first gift to us: the grace to be both peacemakers and peace-sharers in our community and beyond.

Invite students into dialogue and wonder about the theme “Peace be with you all” (John 20:19-21) and develop some actions resulting from the discussion.

The following outline can be adapted to suit the needs and context of the school community when preparing for a Eucharistic Liturgy or Prayer service.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY:

*In recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s spiritual and cultural connection to Country, we acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land upon which we gather today – *(insert correct name)*.*

We recognise the continued care of the lands and waterways passed from generation to generation, wisdom that is shared, and life that is celebrated in harmony with the natural environment.

We honour the Elders, past and present, who have laid the foundations, traditions, and culture for emerging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and we commit to continue working together for reconciliation and justice.

WELCOME: Leader/Presider

Bringing to mind Pope Leo’s call for us to be people of peace, today we gather to celebrate Catholic Education Week and Jesus’ call for **“Peace be with you all.”**

Possible symbols to be brought forward: images of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove; images of shaking hands; images of extending hands in gestures of peace - e.g. when the Sign of Peace is offered at Mass. You might have a Peace Prayer regularly prayed with your community or ‘peace’ might figure in your school’s motto..

Nb., please exclude secular peace symbols.

- GATHERING HYMN:** Some Gathering Hymn Suggestions:
- *Radiating Hope* Michael Mangan
 - *The Peace of God* · Bernadette Farrell
 - [Celebrate, Let's Celebrate](#) Michael Mangan
 - [Stand Up](#) Michael Mangan
 - [Come and Pray](#) Michael Mangan
 - *Make Me a Channel of Your Peace* / Prayer fo St Francis of Assisi
 - Appropriate Song of own choice

Penitential Act:

Leader/Presider: Lord Jesus, you came to reconcile us to one another and to the Father:
Lord, have mercy.
All: Lord, have mercy.

Leader/Presider: Lord Jesus, you heal the wounds of sin and division:
Christ, have mercy.

All: Christ, have mercy.

Leader/Presider: Lord Jesus, you bring peace to a world torn by conflict:
Lord, have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

OPENING PRAYER:

Leader/Presider:

God of Peace, we come before you today, working for peace with each other, our families, our school communities and beyond. Open us to your presence and the peace you offer for our lives. Help us to see you in everyone we meet. Inspired by your example, make us people of justice and peace with compassion for others.

All: Amen.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

Leader/Presider:

1st READING: Romans 15:33 – "The God of peace be with you all"

The God of Peace Be With You All

As a response to the scripture from Romans 15:33 the school/college/or group could perform the following piece. A class or year group could choral read each line with illustrations or photos to go with each line that have been prepared by the students

The God of Peace be with you all,
Be with us, God, we hear your call.
In our hearts and in our hands,
We share your peace across the lands.
When we are kind, when we forgive,
Your peace is how we choose to live.
In every person, may we send,
Your love and peace that will never end.
The God of peace be with us all,
With every heart, everywhere.

Word of the Lord.

ALL: Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: (If Eucharistic Celebration)

Sung:

The Lord is My Shepherd (Brian Boniwell)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kor3ljrTd58>

Or

[Peace For All Time](#) by Michael Mangan

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 71:2-4, 7-8, 12-13, 17

R. Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace for ever.

O God give your judgement to the king,
to a king's child your justice,
that they may judge your people in justice
and your poor in right judgement. **R.**

May the mountains bring forth peace for the people
and the hills, justice.

May he defend the poor of the people
and save the children of the needy. **R.**

In his days justice shall flourish
and peace till the moon fails.
He shall rule from sea to sea,
from the Great River to earth's bounds. **R.**

For he shall save the poor when they cry
and the needy who are helpless.
He will have pity on the weak
and save the lives of the poor. **R.**

May his name be blessed for ever
and endure like the sun.
Every tribe shall be blessed in him,
all nations bless his name. **R.**

or

Ps 84:9-14

R. The Lord speaks of peace to his people.

I will hear what the Lord God has to say,
a voice that speaks of peace.
His help is near for those who fear him
and his glory will dwell in our land. **R.**

Mercy and faithfulness have met;
justice and peace have embraced.
Faithfulness shall spring from the earth
and justice look down from heaven. **R.**

The Lord will make us prosper
and our earth shall yield its fruit.
Justice shall march before him
and peace shall follow his steps. **R.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION: Alleluia Response

Preferably, the Alleluia is to be sung to a known tune. The following verse could be chanted or spoken.

Matthew 5:9

Alleluia, alleluia!
Happy the peacemakers:
they shall be called children of God.
Alleluia!

or

John 14:27

Alleluia, alleluia!
Peace I leave with you, says the Lord,
my own peace I give you.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL: **Jesus Appears to the Disciples** (please note that if the Gospel is proclaimed directly out of the lectionary, please make the change from ‘fear of the Jews’ to ‘fear of the authorities’ in line with - [*Nostra Aetate*](#))

John 20:19-21

19 When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors were locked where the disciples were, for fear of the authorities, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you all.” **20** After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. **21** Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you all. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”

Gospel of the Lord

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Or the Gospel could be performed through the following Echo Mime with consultation of the celebrant if it is a Eucharistic celebration

Echo Mime – John 20:19–21

Leader: When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week,

Echo: The first day of the week.

Leader: And the doors were locked where the disciples were,

Echo: The doors were locked.

Leader: For fear,

Echo: For fear

Leader: Jesus came and stood among them

Echo: Stood among them

Leader: And said, “Peace be with you all.”

Echo: Peace be with you all

Leader: “Peace be with you all.”

HOMILY OR RESPONSE:

Reflection:

Students could make a PowerPoint as a reflection exploring the Gospel. Students are to use images from the world and from their community that highlight or speak to the deeper Gospel message. Encourage students to identify situations that go beyond the literal reading of the Gospel.

Reflective questions:

- *Australia is a plural country. Where does peace break down for us and our communities?*
- *Where does peace succeed?*
- *What can we do to enable peace?*

PRAYER OF FAITHFUL:

Please select four from the Prayers of the Faithful that follow or create your own for your community.

Leader/presider: Loving God, we gather the needs and concerns of all present and bring them to you.

Reader: For the leaders of the Church, that we will support them to lead with justice, compassion and peace. (pause)
God of Peace, hear us

All: God of Peace, hear our prayer

Reader: For the leaders of the world, that they will always work for peace. (pause)
God of Peace, hear us

All: God of Peace, hear our prayer

Reader: For all in Catholic Education, that we give witness to the God of Peace in all we do and say. (pause)
God of Peace, hear us

All: God of Peace, hear our prayer

Reader: For all of us gathered here, may our words and actions honour the dignity of others creating peace always. (pause)
God of Peace, hear us

All: God of Peace, hear our prayer

Reader: For students in all our schools, may they be inspired by the life and teachings of Jesus to bring peace to our world. (pause)
God of Peace, hear us

All: God of Peace, hear our prayer

Reader: For those suffering the effects of war and conflict worldwide, may they feel our compassion as we reach out in solidarity. (pause)

God of Peace, hear us

All: God of hope, hear our prayer

Reader: For those who are sick, may they feel your loving presence and find peace through us. (pause)

God of Hope, hear us

All: God of hope, hear our prayer

Reader: For those who have lost loved ones, may they find peace and be comforted by our words and actions. (pause)

God of Peace, hear us

All: God of Peace, hear our prayer

Leader/Presider: In hope and peace, we bring our prayers to our loving God. Through Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

Insert Liturgy of Eucharist here if celebrating with Eucharist. (See pg 10 below)

POSSIBLE RITUAL ACTIONS *for celebrations other than Eucharist*

1. In the leadup to the celebration, students could make a collage representing both signs of disharmony and subsequent peaceful resolutions. This would be brought to the Liturgy.
2. Each student writes or draws one way they will bring peace to the school community. Each class/year level brings these forward in baskets. When students return to school they create a “**Peace Path**” with each idea being drawn on a piece of paper representing a brick. These will be displayed at school/around the college/or in each classroom in the form of a path.
3. ***Before we go, let us focus on the paschal candle.*** Student representative/s come forward and stand pointing at/highlighting this important candle. ***This candle represents for Catholic Christians that Christ is present. That light will never be overcome by darkness. We light our classroom/homeroom/year level candles from the paschal candle.*** (a student representative from each group comes forward to collect their group's candle and hold it at the front while the following is read by a student/staff) ***This is a reminder that we are invited to share this light in our school/college community. May the light remind us that each of us can bring peace and light. We blow our candles out. This doesn't mean that Christ is no longer with***

4. *us. It means that light has changed, that we are invited to take this light from this place to all we meet, by being compassionate peacemakers as Jesus showed people of his time to do. May we all also do the same.*

THE CONCLUDING RITES

God Sends – We Go

Dismissal

Leader/Presider: Lord Jesus, strengthened by our gathering today, may we live as people of faith, hope and peace. Bringing your presence to all of creation. May Catholic Education in the Diocese of Ballarat always be a sign of you for all to see. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Recessional Hymn Song suggestions:

- [Let's Go](#) Michael Mangan
- *Justly, Tenderly, Humbly* – Michael Mangan
- *Live the Good News* – Andrew Chin
- *Justice and Freedom* – Michael Mangan
- *The School Song*
- *Bring Forth the Kingdom* - Marty Haugen (Spirit & Song)
- *Go make a Difference* - Steve Angrisano
- *Raise Your Voice for Justice* - John Burland (Lord Teach Me Your Ways)
- *Source of Life* - Andrew Chinn (Many Roads One Journey)
- *In the Footsteps of Jesus* - Andrew Chinn.
- *To the Ends of the Earth* - Fr Rob Galea
- *We are God's Hands* - Andrew Chinn
- *Jesus is the Light* – Michael Mangan (Setting Hearts on Fire)
- *Alive Again* - Matt Maher
- *Rising* - Stephen Kirk
- *Thank You* - Stephen Kirk
- *People of God* - Andrew Chinn
- *Hearts on Fire* - Michael Mangan (Setting Hearts on Fire)

Appropriate Song of own choice

LITURGY OF EUCHARIST

Eucharistic Prayer

Depending on the context and in consultation with the Presider, a decision would be made about which of the Eucharistic Prayers would be best suited for this celebration of Mass. Eucharistic responses are most appropriately sung ie Holy, Holy, Holy; Acclamation; Amen; Lamb of God.

Suggested Mass Settings:

- Mass Jubilee and Mass of Celebration by Michael Mangan (PRIMARY)
- Mass for God's Children by Andrew Chinn (People of Peace) (PRIMARY)
- Mass of St Francis (Paul Taylor)
- Mass of Alphonsus (Paul Bird)
- Mass Shalom (Colin Smith)

Communion Hymn Suggestions:

- *This Is My Body* - Andrew Chinn (People of Peace)
- *One Bread One Body* - John Michael Talbot
- *I Am The Bread of Life* - Andrew Chinn (Welcome to All)
- *Offering* - Stephen Kirk
- *Come to the Table* - John Burland (Lord Teach Me Your Ways)
- *The Bread of Life* - Michael Mangan (Setting Hearts of Fire)
- *Do This in Memory of Me* - John Burland (Celebrating the Sacraments)
- *When We Eat This Bread* - Andrew Chinn (These Hands and Together As One)
- *One Body, One People* - Michael Mangan (Setting Hearts On Fire)
- *Take and Eat* - Michael Mangan (This Is The Time)
- *We Gather at Your Table* - Andrew Chinn (People of Peace)
- *Emmaus Song* - Monica Brown
- *Everything is Grace* - Matt Maher (Saints and Sinners)
- *Your Grace is Enough* - Matt Maher (All the People Said Amen)
- *I am the Bread of Life* - Steve Angrisano (High Above Our Way)
- *Clean Heart* - Matt Maher (Echoes)
- *Sing Over Your Children* - Matt Maher (Alive Again)
- *Remembrance (Communion song)* - Matt Maher (Alive Again)
- *All the people said Amen* - Matt Maher (All the people said Amen)

Appropriate Song of own choice

Background reading that may be useful for adults when exploring the theme ***Peace be with you All***

Catholic Schools Opening Mass Homily Bishop Paul Bird CSsR

St. Patrick's Cathedral, Ballarat 27th January 2026

Last May, tens of thousands of people were gathered in St Peter's square in Rome. They were waiting for the election of the Pope. Then they saw white smoke coming from the chimney above the Sistine chapel – the traditional sign to say that the cardinals had completed the election. Soon after that, Pope Leo came out onto the balcony of St Peter's Basilica. He came to greet the people in St Peter's Square and the millions watching on television. He stretched out his arms and said, "Peace be with you all." He recalled that a greeting of peace was the first greeting of Jesus when he met his disciples after his resurrection. Pope Leo then said, "I would like this greeting of peace to enter your hearts, to reach your families, and all people, wherever they are, all of the people, all over the earth. Peace!"

Pope Leo began with a message of peace, and he has repeated that message many times since. Peace has been one of Pope Leo's main themes. It's also our theme for Catholic Education for 2026.

On the booklet for our Mass this morning we have the words of St Paul, "Peace be with you all." In taking this as the theme for Catholic Education this year, we're in tune with St Paul. We're in tune with Pope Leo. We're in tune with Jesus himself. After he'd risen from the dead, Jesus appeared to his disciples and he said to them, "Peace be with you." The disciples had been thrown into confusion when Jesus had been arrested. They were devastated when he died on the cross. They were fearful of what might happen to them. But Jesus rose from the dead and he came to reassure his disciples with this greeting of peace. "Peace be with you."

This greeting of Jesus can be reassuring to us as well. We might sometimes be anxious. As we start a new school year, we might be anxious about how the year will unfold. We might be unsure whether we'll be able to meet the challenges that the year will bring. In our anxieties, in our uncertainties, the greeting of Jesus can be a source of calm. "Peace be with you."

The peace that we're referring to is the peace of Christ, the peace that Jesus came to bring. In the full text from the letter to the Romans, St Paul does not only say, "Peace be with you all." He says, "May the God of peace be with you all." The peace we're referring to is the peace that comes from the God of peace, the peace that comes to us as a gift of God. This is the peace that Jesus offers us. This is the peace we pray for in the Mass.

Just before communion, we offer one another a sign of peace. And just before that, we have a prayer for peace. It's a prayer addressed to Jesus. "Lord Jesus Christ who said to your Apostles: Peace I leave you, my peace I give you, look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church, and graciously grant her peace and unity in accordance with your will." Jesus is the Prince of Peace. He wishes to share that peace with us. May our hearts be open to receive that peace.

May we also share that peace with those around us. In our Mass, we'll offer a sign of peace to those who are near us. As we move into the new school year, may we share the peace of Christ with our colleagues on our school staff and in the Catholic Education office. May we share the peace of Christ with our students and their families.

Peace be with you all. This is a theme that runs through the prayers of this Mass. May this be a theme that runs through our whole year.

Bishop Paul Bird CSsR