


Presentation Day

A Short Guide




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leadership education
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'Leading with Faith in the Future'





Presentation Day

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(You are welcome to adapt material from this short guide for use on school websites, social media, school announcements, staff and parent emails, newsletters etc.

Use in whatever ways help you to promote the feast and educate about its' meaning).

When is Presentation Day?

It is the feast of the Presentation of Our Lady, and it takes place on 21 November.

What is meaning of the Feast of the Presentation?

Officially, the feast is called the Feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Temple. It celebrates the fact that Mary, as a young Jewish girl was 'presented' in the Temple of Jerusalem, the holiest site in Judaism. It signifies Mary offering her life to God.

So, Mary, presents her life to God. Later as a young Jewish woman, Mary becomes the mother of Jesus, the Saviour. Mary, so to speak, presents Jesus to the world and to us.

In a sense, this is the call of every Christian, to offer our gifts and talents to God, in the service of our fellow men and women. Like Mary, we present our lives to God and by our witness to the Gospel, we present Jesus to the world.

Why is the Feast important to us?

We are a school in the Presentation Brothers Schools Trust (P.B.S.T.). We are a Catholic School in the Presentation tradition of Edmund Rice education. We are part of the worldwide Presentation Family. Celebrating 'Presentation Day' marks our identity as a Catholic school/a gospel community in this tradition. It is a feast which encourages us to reflect on commitment, generosity, and service.



Does anyone else celebrate this Feast, outside of schools/groups in the Presentation Brothers tradition?

Yes indeed! The Feast of the Presentation is celebrated by the Presentation Sisters and the Nano Nagle Family throughout the world. The early Brothers followed the Rule of the Presentation Sisters (adapted for men). Later, when the majority of Edmund Rice's Brothers adopted a new rule, along the lines of the French De La Salle Rule, Br. Michael Augustine Riordan continued to follow the Presentation Rule in the South Monastery in Cork. He was joined by others, and therefore there continued within the Edmund Rice tradition, a group of Brothers who would follow the Presentation Rule – Presentation Brothers. Increasingly today, the feast of the Presentation is also celebrated in the Christian Brothers / Edmund Rice Network throughout the world as part of the common heritage of the Nagle-Rice Family.

How can we include staff/students of other faiths and of no religious faith in our celebration of Presentation Day?

Catholic Schools increasingly function in secular societies. It is important to acknowledge the presence of many people in our communities of other faiths and of no religious faith. All should be included and invited to be part of our celebration of Presentation Day to the extent that they wish. People of other faiths and of no faith will appreciate and respect an explanation of this feast and what it means to Catholics and Christians. They, too, bring their own gifts to our school communities and enrich our tradition. All can unite around celebrating the themes of 'gift giving', 'gift receiving', generosity and commitment to service.

Is this feast celebrated in the Church?

The Feast of the Presentation of Mary in the Temple is not a major Marian feast in the western Church. However, it is a major feast in the Eastern Orthodox tradition. It is celebrated by Greek Orthodox and Russian Orthodox Christians and features significantly in Orthodox icons.



How can we celebrate this feast meaningfully with people today, especially young people?

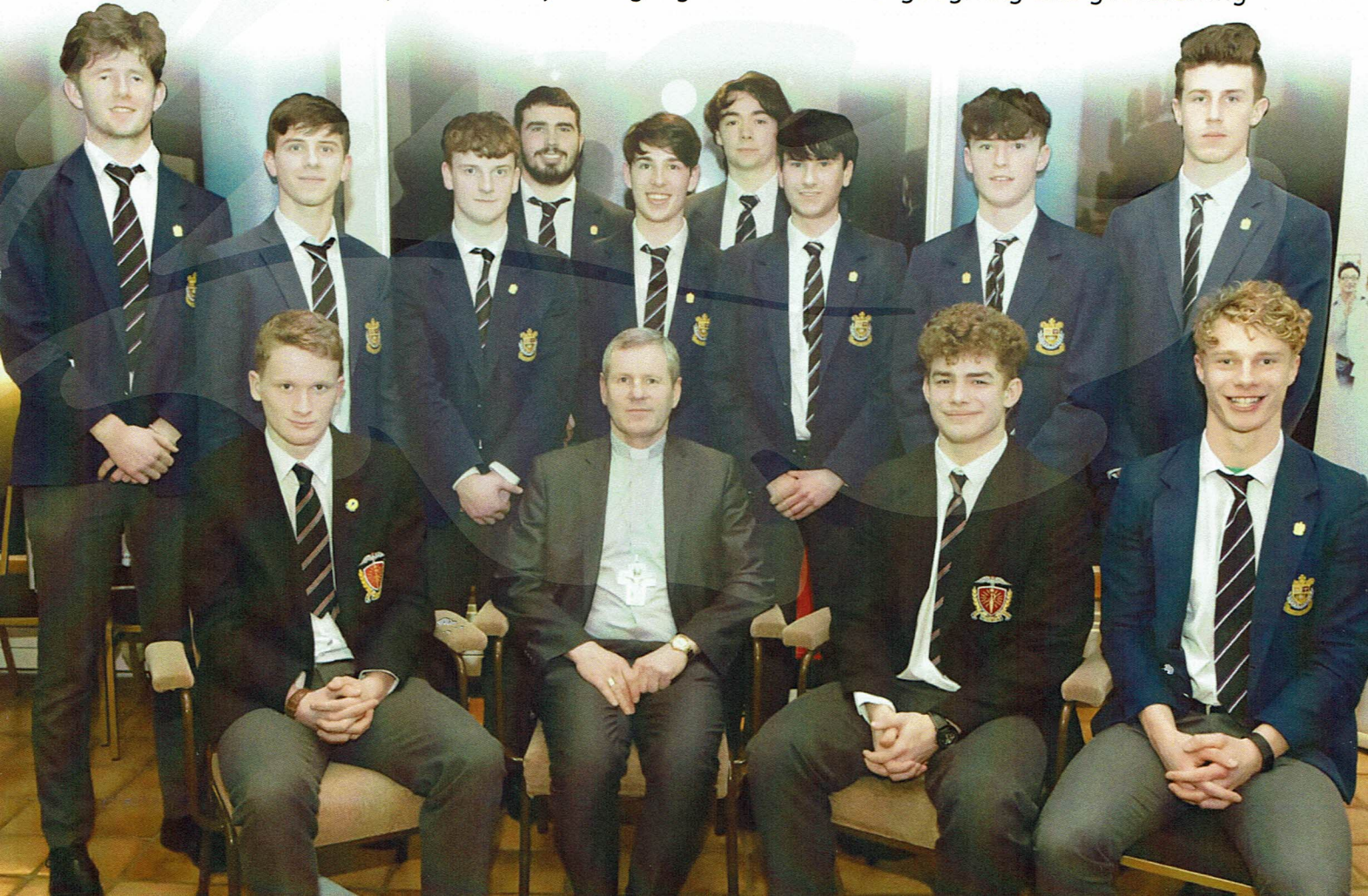
We can adapt the celebration to the age level and understanding of the group with whom we are dealing.

Even very young children will understand the theme of 'gift giving' and 'gift receiving' and this might be a good way to move into exploring the meaning of the feast. Here is one possible introduction:

This week, we will be celebrating the Feast of the Presentation in our school. Presentation Day is on November 21. When you tell people, you go to a Presentation school, they may wonder what that means. Normally, when we use the word 'presentation', it means that somebody is receiving a special gift!! And this is exactly what the feast of the Presentation of Mary means. Mary, as a young woman said 'yes' to God's plan, she made a gift of her life to God, she presented her life to God. Later, as the mother of Jesus, she presented Jesus to the world, to us! So, this is what 'presentation' means. Each of us, who is a Christian, is called to say 'yes' to God and to present Jesus to the world of our time, to put into practice Jesus' message of love in our families, our schools and our life today.

Many of you who are in first year may have received the Sacrament of Confirmation last year. Those in sixth class in primary school may be preparing to receive Confirmation. You will receive God's Holy Spirit and you will be asked to be witnesses to Jesus and his message. So, this feast of the Presentation of Mary which we are celebrating is very relevant to your lives as young Christians. Like Mary, you are asked to present Jesus to the world. And it comes down to how we live, how we show kindness, how we help those in need, how we co-operate with our parents and teachers and friends.

Schools will find many creative ways to highlight the themes of 'gift giving' and 'gift receiving'



You Tube Clips – Another Route into this Theme



1. Irish Donate to Native American people During the Pandemic - Returning an Act of Kindness from Famine Times

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PVaKXr87sQE>



2. Harrison Craig – The Voice Australia

<https://youtu.be/kgflbGzICeY>

The first clip tells the story of a group of Irish people who donated money to help a group of Native American people during the Pandemic. This was in remembrance of a similar act of kindness from a native American tribe during the Great Famine in Ireland.

This offers the possibility to explore the theme of kindness and generosity in a very contemporary way. How does Presentation Day/the Feast of the Presentation challenge us to be kind and generous people? What will we do in our school/class/group to celebrate the Feast?

The second clip is the story of Harrison Craig, a young Australian man with a speech impediment, who attains his dream and 'finds his voice' as a singer, on 'The Voice Australia'.

In the feast we celebrate, Mary too, 'finds her voice', finds her call in life, to be the mother of the Messiah. How can we help people find their true role in life and attain their dreams?

How can we respect the unique talents/gifts of each person in our school/community?

Linking with the Presentation Brothers

Celebrating Presentation Day offers an opportunity for school communities/groups to link with the Presentation Brothers. Visits, guest speakers, projects – there are many opportunities to build events around the feast, which have a particular focus on the work of the Presentation Brothers today.

For further information see:



'Leading with Faith in the Future'



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Prayers for Presentation Day

As we celebrate Presentation Day – the Feast of the Presentation of Our Lady, we now place our prayers and intentions before God at this special time:



1. We pray for Pope Francis and all those called to leadership in the Church. May they continue to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ and bring hope and encouragement to people today.
Lord, hear us...
2. We pray for those who suffer because of Covid 19. We remember all health care personnel and frontline workers who bring healing and hope to people at this time.
Lord, hear us...
3. We pray for those who suffer warfare and violence. We remember refugees, migrants and those who are homeless. We ask the Lord to bless all those individuals and organisations who are working to bring healing and hope to the suffering.
Lord, hear us...
4. We remember the bereaved, the lonely, the sick and the elderly. Lord, help each of us to be conscious of what we can do to reach out to those in need with a smile, a word of encouragement, a phone call and a helping hand.
Lord, hear us...
5. Lord, help us to respect the dignity of each person and value the precious gift of each human life. Let us pray especially for young people that they may experience the love of God and learn to live generous lives.
Lord, hear us.
6. During this month of November, we remember our deceased loved ones and friends. We remember especially deceased members of our own school community...
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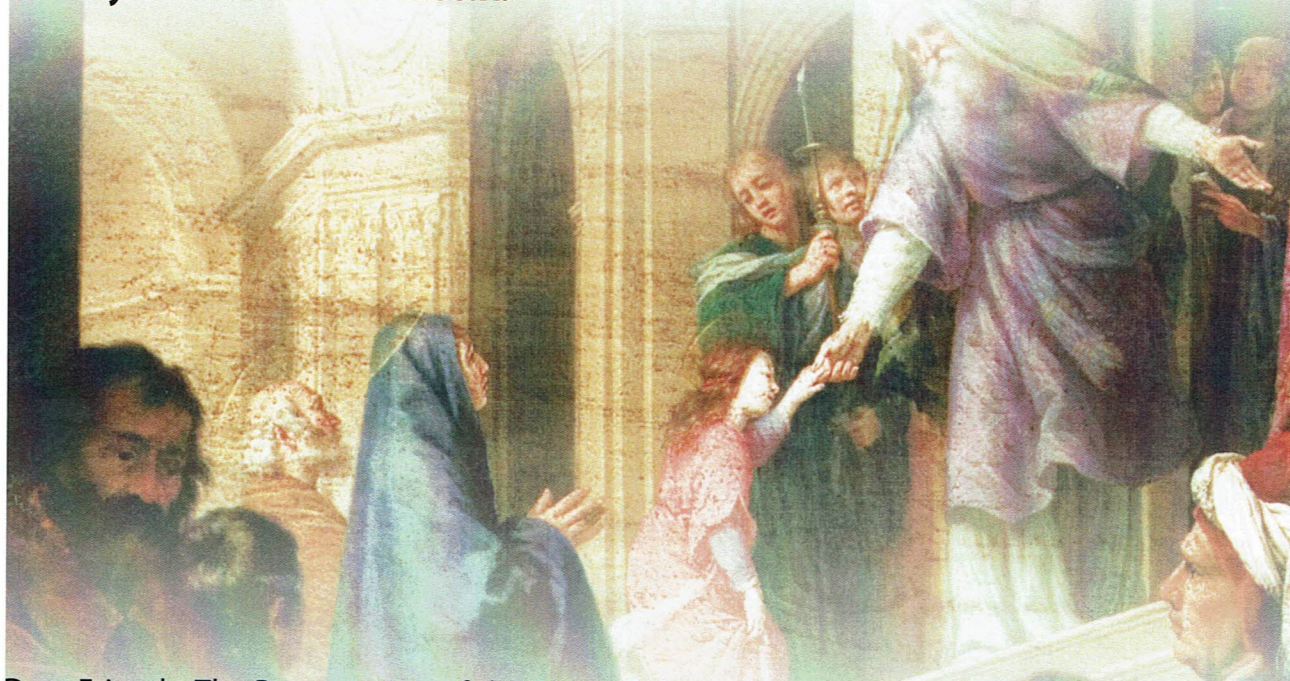
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7. We pray for world leaders in the aftermath of Cop 26 in Glasgow. May all of us be inspired by Pope Francis call in Laudato Si, to care for the Earth, our common home.
Lord, hear us...
8. We pray for all effected by the housing crisis and for those who find it almost impossible to find a home. May political leaders and civil society respond to this crisis with new creativity and generosity.
Lord, hear us...
9. We pray for our school community, students, staff, parents, and past pupils. May God bless all of us as today, as we strive to be a Presentation Family, truly at the service of each other and caring for those most in need.
Lord, hear us.
10. We pray for vocations to the Priesthood, the Religious Life. We pray for vocations to the Presentation Brothers Let us place all these prayers, along with the silent prayers of our hearts before Mary as we pray:
'Sé do bheatha Mhuire.../ Hail Mary...



The Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary – November 21st, 2020

Homily - Denis McBride C.Ss.R.



Dear Friends: The Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary is not recounted in any of the four Gospels, but it is in The Protoevangelium of James, also known as the Infancy Gospel of James. This is an apocryphal Gospel written towards the end of the second century. In the first section of the text, we are introduced to Joachim and Anna, the parents of Mary. As yet they have no child. One day an angel stands before Anna and calls her by name. The angel tells her that the Lord has heard her prayer and that soon she will conceive and that the whole world will know about her child.

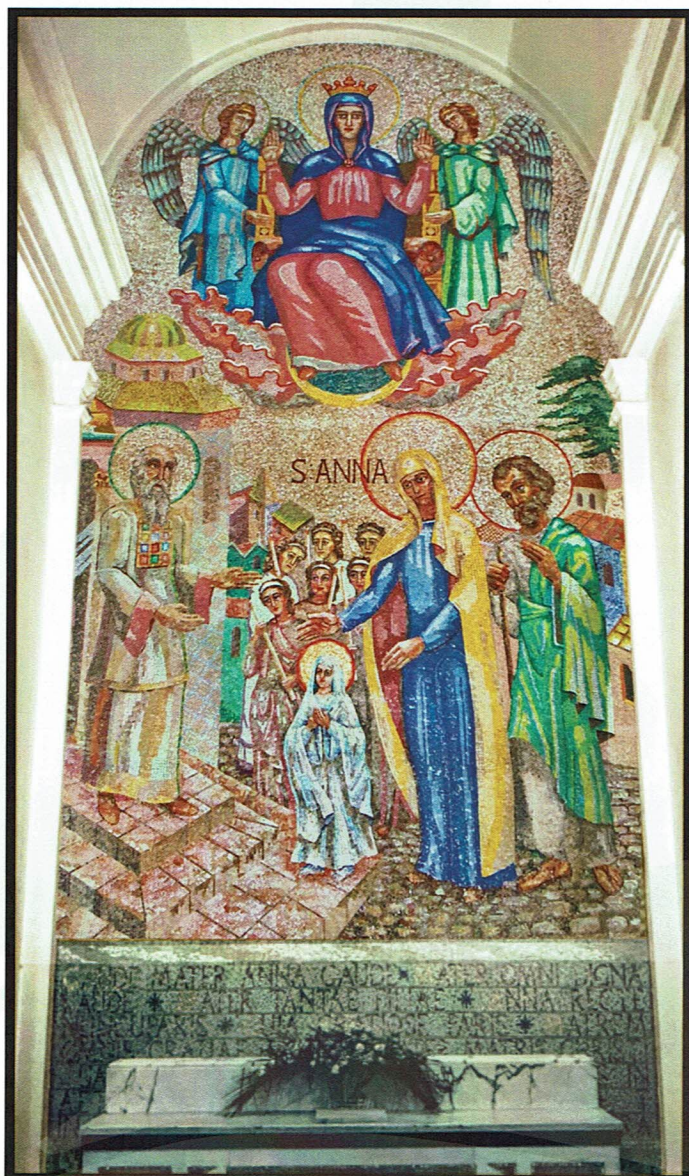
Anna promises to give the child as a gift to the Lord, whether it is male or female. Her child will minister to the Lord all the days of its life. What faith cannot answer, a sympathetic imagination is ready to supply, which has made this writing very popular for painting and icons, particularly in the Orthodox traditions.

You can see the story in the imaginative painting by Vittore Carpaccio. Born in Venice Carpaccio sets the story in the luscious background of a Venetian piazza. You see Mary, leaving her parents and relatives behind her, as she kneels on one of the steps that rise to the Temple entrance. She faces away from her family towards her new home. At the bottom of the steps, you can see Joachim and Anna with the other members of the family watch as Mary leaves them behind to enter the Temple. She kneels before the high priest who has come to welcome her. All her family have to let her go. In the bottom right-hand corner, a small boy holds his pet doe, a symbol of innocence, but is distracted and misses this great moment.

The feast followed the dedication of the Basilica of Saint Mary, built in 543 by the Byzantines. The Eastern Church took the feast to its heart, but it does appear in the West in the 11th century. In the 16th century it became a feast of the universal Church, celebrated on 21st November. Even though the feast has no basis in history, it stresses an important truth about Mary: that from the beginning of her life, she was wholly dedicated to God.

Of course, later on, Mary will become a greater temple than any constructed by hands. Let us now look at the great painting by Caravaggio, The Madonna of the Pilgrims.

Have a good look. It is beautiful, isn't it? In this painting we see Mary presenting Jesus to the little people, these two pilgrims, staff in hand, who have journeyed long and far in the hope of meeting the child Jesus. They are not celebrities, magi or kings from the east, just ordinary folk. And their destination is not a temple, not a palace, not a shrine. Their destination is a person, the person of Jesus.



Although like Mary Jesus was presented in the Temple, more importantly it is Mary who presents Jesus to those who seek him out. Mary is not clutching the child possessively to herself, saying through her body language: "He is mine, only mine."

No, she presents Jesus to those who seek him. She holds the child for others to see, for others to reach, for others to touch. Jesus is her own but not her own. He belongs to all who hunger for his presence.

Mary's vocation is not only to hold Jesus but also to let him go; let him become the person he must become; let him love the people he chooses to love and the friends he elects to call; let him choose the roads he must walk; let him follow the mysterious inner voice that speaks to him alone. All mothers must learn the painful act of letting go. Mothers must not only nurture the presence of the child within them; they must nurture the leaving of the child in time and let go.

Today we celebrate the Presentation of Mary; this feast challenges all of us to present Mary and Jesus not in a Temple building but in the hearts and minds of all of who live in a wounded world. We not only hold Mary and Jesus in our hearts, but because we love them, we share them. The people we love we should never keep possessively to ourselves.

Those we love should be presented to a wider world. That is today's lovely feast.

Final Reflection.

Cecil Day-Lewis, the Anglo-Irish writer and Poet Laureate reflects in his poem *Walking Away* the challenge of all parents to let go of their child. The poem is dedicated to Day-Lewis's first son, Séan and recalls a day when he was watching him play football and afterwards walk away.

WALKING AWAY

Cecil Day-Lewis

It is eighteen years ago, almost to the day –
A sunny day with leaves just turning,
The touch-lines new-ruled – since I watched you play
Your first game of football, then, like a satellite
Wrenched from its orbit, go drifting away

Behind a scatter of boys. I can see
You walking away from me towards the school
With the pathos of a half-fledged thing set free
Into a wilderness, the gait of one
Who finds no path where the path should be.

That hesitant figure, eddying away
Like a winged seed loosened from its parent stem,
Has something I never quite grasp to convey
About nature's give-and-take – the small, the scorching
Ordeals which fire one's irresolute clay.

I have had worse partings, but none that so
Gnaws at my mind still. Perhaps it is roughly
Saying what God alone could perfectly show –
How selfhood begins with a walking away,
And love is proved by letting go.





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