**Bishop Ray Browne reflects on Catholic Schools Week 2020**

Catholic Schools Week begins on Sunday 26th January. It is a week to celebrate our faith schools, the good work they do and their importance. Family, parish community and school work together seeking that the words of Jesus are fulfilled in the life of every child, “I have come that you may have life and have it in its fullness”.

Mindful that all our schools have recently renewed their Boards of Management, it is good to appreciate and say a sincere thanks to the Boards and all their members.

The theme this year is “Living in harmony with God’s Creation” (with God, Neighbour, All Generations, the Earth and in our Catholic School). Just to mention two of these areas that at the moment are topical:

* Think of the harmony of nature and the challenge as illustrated by the horrific fires in Australia.
* Think of harmony among people in terms of citizenship, the “one for all and all for one” of us as a people in Ireland as we hold our General Election.

Sincere thanks to and God’s blessing on every school community, staff, students and their families.

+ Ray Browne

Bishop of Kerry.

**This is Catholic Schools Week January 26th to February 2nd**

Catholic Schools Week provides an opportunity to reflect on how Catholic schools contribute to our collective goal of education. This year, the theme for Catholic Schools Week is; ‘Living in Harmony with God’s Creation.’ Catholic schools offer a view of the world as the gift of God’s creation. We are called to be co-creators of love and joy in the world, thus sharing God’s love. We are called to be stewards of the environment, with a responsibility to protect the environment around us for future generations. The Diocese of Kerry is currently preparing for this week through an engagement with a number of our Catholic Schools. This year, Bishop Ray Brown engaged with three post-primary schools. On Friday, January 17th Bishop Ray joined the school community of St. Joseph’s Presentation Secondary School, Castleisland. On Wednesday January 22nd he visited the CBS the Green in Tralee and on Thursday 23rd the final visit was made to the Intermediate Post-Primary School in Killorglin. He was accompanied on all three visits by Tomás Kenny, Post-Primary Diocesan Advisor for Religious Education.

On Friday 17th the celebration began at The Presentation Secondary School, Castleisland. The service began with a short introduction and welcoming address presented by Principal Katriona Broderick. This was followed by a short interview which highlighted the meaning and purpose of Catholic School’s Week and why it is important. This was followed by a Service of Prayer. Students from all first and second year classes participated in the service and a smaller number of senior students led the readings and prayers of intercession. They prepared their own service highlighting the Gospel values of Faith, Hope and Love. They also focused on the theme of creation through a reflection on the colours of the rainbow, using coloured flags to the different colours represent the different dimensions of God’s creation. Bishop Ray concluded the service by reflecting on the importance of faith in a secular world. Refreshments were served afterwards and Bishop Ray was given the opportunity to talk in small groups with the students and answer questions.

On Wednesday last, January 22nd, there was a warm welcome to Bishop Ray Browne from CBS, The Green, Tralee. Principal Ann O’ Callaghan welcomed Bishop Ray and had a student guard of honour in place to begin the ceremony. The student council was also present to welcome and chat to Bishop Ray on arrival. The service of prayer was led by the first year students at the school with music and singing provided by a mix of senior and junior students. The music provided was a mix of traditional Irish, pop and there was even music delivered on saxophone. The students paid tribute to Donal Walsh, a past pupil of the school. They highlighted his legacy in bringing about an awareness of Mental Health among young people and Bishop Ray also paid tribute to Donal. Bishop Ray highlighted the issues facing our environment and urged the students to do their part. A big thank you to Principal Ann O’ Callaghan and all the Religious Education Department for their work and gracious welcome.

On Thursday 23rd the final visit in preparation for Catholic Schools Week was paid to the Intermediate School in Killorglin. Mr. Joe O’ Dwyer welcomed Bishop Ray and the head of Religious Education Cathriona O’Dwyer had prepared their beautiful prayer room for the service. A variance of junior cycle students participated in the service. The group used the official prayer service from the Catholic Schools Week website placing significant focus on climate change and our regard for the environment. Traditional music was provided on violin and tin whistle. This was Bishop Ray’s first visit to the Intermediate in Killorglin.

Bishop Ray and the diocesan pastoral team would like to thank all three schools for their welcome and preparation for the services and for the continued support to Religious Education and Faith Formation in our Catholic Schools. The Catholic Ethos of each school ensures a welcoming, inclusive and faith filled environment for all the students. In an ever increasing secular world the school continues to play an important role in educating young people about their faith as well as inspiring young people into faith. Keep up the good work.

Sit Luceat Lux Vestra – Let your Light Shine.

**Tomás Kenny – Post-Primary Diocesan Advisor for Religious Education**