



Resources for Visiting a School with the Iec2012 Bell

The Visit of the Eucharistic Congress Bell to a School is an opportunity for all to be made aware of the upcoming International Eucharistic Congress.

The following could be used in the classroom or at an assembly in preparation for the arrival of the Eucharistic Congress Bell:

The discussion and reflection can focus on 3 elements:

- The Bell – ringing a bell for a purpose
- Pilgrimage – symbol of life's journey
- The Eucharistic Congress – a milestone in our life

Reflecting on bells

As we prepare for the visit of the Eucharistic Congress Bell, let us think about bells in general:

- What are bells for – what bells are you familiar with?
 - The bell that announces the start of class
 - Bell at lunch time
 - Alarm bells – fire alarm, burglar alarm, your alarm clock in the morning ...
 - The sound of a bell is sometimes compared to a voice.
- Some of these alarms cause us to scatter – a tsunami warning for example!
- Some to gather – the church bell on Sunday morning.

- **The Eucharistic Congress Bell**

The Eucharistic Congress Bell calls us to gather, but also calls us to reflect.

The silence that follows after the ringing of the bell is a time of prayer – it offers us time to think about things, especially the things that matter in life – this also includes the people we care about.

- **The Pilgrimage of the Bell**

What is a pilgrimage? – its a type of journey, a trip a person might decide to go on.

People sometimes go on pilgrimage to holy or sacred places – does anyone know the name of a holy place? – Lourdes etc., local places too might be named – a holy well, an abbey, a high cross, a mass rock etc.

While being in the holy place, a pilgrimage focuses more on the journey to the place. In the past people went on pilgrimage walking!

The journey was more important than just getting to the place, because the journey, the pilgrimage was a symbol of the person's life and gave the person time to think about their life, the people and the things that matter to them, and time to reflect on the presence of God in all of that.



When they arrived at the 'holy place' they now knew that every step of life is holy because God is present everywhere and not just in the holy place, but this place was a good place in which to celebrate God's presence in life.

Pilgrims are different from tourists, since tourists aim to get to the place, take pictures etc and move on to the next place. The pilgrim is on a different type of journey.

The visit of this pilgrim bell is a reminder to us that pilgrimage is a symbol for our lives, and when we get too caught up in the superficial things in life we miss the meaning and the value of places and events in our lives, and can't appreciate the people or the presence of God well either.

- **The Eucharistic Congress as a milestone in the life**

There are events in our lives that stand out when we look back at our past:

The best holiday we ever had, my first day in this school, ... – special moments in our lives.

They are also things that we look forward to in the future: our birthday, our summer holidays ...

The Eucharistic Congress is one of those events.

It will be a chance for Christians from all over the world to gather, to think about what the Eucharist means to them – by Eucharist we mean Mass, Adoration and the lifestyle that goes with belief in Jesus and the Gospel.

This is going to happen in June 2012, in the RDS in Dublin for a week, with it's Grande Finale in Croke Park. While this is a wonderful event for us in Ireland, without the pilgrim attitude – that recognises the presence of God everywhere and in every person – the Congress is not as meaningful. That's why the Bell is calling us to start thinking about the things that matter to us now, where God is in all things, and the important place of Mass, of our weekly meeting Jesus in the parish on Sunday.

Many years ago St. Patrick travelled through our country ringing a bell and calling the Irish people to faith in God, maybe this bell will offer a similar opportunity to us – let us pray for renewed faith in God for ourselves and for anyone else we can think of.

Using the Bell as an invitation to prayer:

- Sing the Chorus of the Eucharistic Congress Hymn
- Ring the Bell three times
- Wait for silence and tell everyone that there will be a minute of silence during which time they are to think of people they want to give thanks to God for – people who have helped them, loved them, both those living and those who have died.
- Ring the Bell three times to sound the beginning of the silence.
- Ring the Bell three times to mark the end of the silence.
- Pray the prayer that draws us all into one family – those present and all the people they prayed for – the Our Father.
- (Older students might be invited to pray the Congress Prayer)
- Sing the Congress Hymn - Chorus and a selection of verses.

- If the Bell is present at Midday or 6pm it could be rung to announce the Angelus.

- If present at Mass it could be the Bell that announces the beginning of Mass, the Consecration and at Communion time.