ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Moscow, Idaho | Diocese of Boise

Catholic Identity in Every Learning Space

2026–2027

> *Faith belongs at the center of learning, not its margins. Every room should make it unmistakable, whether or not it includes a prayer table, that this is a Catholic school.*

Part 1: Our Position

A Jesuit school we visited before opening St. Mary's had no traditional prayer tables — yet its Catholic identity was unmistakable, carried by student art, saint dedications, virtue language on every wall, and a crucifix in every room. That's our standard: not whether a room has a prayer table, but whether a visitor who covered it with a sheet would still know, without a doubt, this is a Catholic school.

So our norm is Catholic identity, not a prayer table. A prayer table is one of the best tools for building it — Part 4 is a guide for any teacher who wants one — but it isn't the requirement. The requirement is broader: every room shows, unmistakably, that it's Catholic — through its saint, its language, its walls, its rhythms — with or without a table.

Part 2: The Two Layers

Layer 1 — The Classroom Environment

The Whole Room as Witness

Catholic identity woven into the curriculum, the walls, the language, and the daily rhythms of the class — faith as the air in the room, not a corner of it.

REQUIRED — the floor

Layer 2 — The Prayer Space

A Sacred Focal Point

A visible, seasonal, tended place that says: this is holy ground. A powerful tool — for teachers who choose to build one.

OPTIONAL — not a requirement

Every room must meet Layer 1. Layer 2 is optional — Part 4 is your guide if you want one.

Part 3: What's Required in Every Room

If a visitor walked into your classroom — prayer table or not — would they still know, without a doubt, this is a Catholic school? Every teacher meets at least three of the following, plus the crucifix.

The Crucifix	Required in every learning space (Diocese of Boise). Place of honor — not hidden, not tucked away.
Classroom Saint	A patron saint chosen with students; image, brief bio, and intercessory prayer displayed.
Virtue Language	Catholic virtue language in daily use — ‘We practice prudence here,’ not just ‘Think before you speak.’
Student Faith Work	Scripture reflections, saint portraits, Examen responses — displayed with the same prominence as academic work.
Scripture Displayed	A verse from the Sunday reading or season, visible daily and changed regularly.
Reflection	Daily or weekly reflection questions (5–7 especially): ‘Where did you find God today?’
Catholic Social Teaching	Service and justice work connected to CST, visible in the room or curriculum.

Part 4: The Prayer Space (Optional)

Prayer spaces aren't required, but many teachers find them a meaningful anchor. If you build one, here's what makes it come alive:

Bible	Opened to the Sunday reading or a passage the class is praying with — referenced, not decorative.
Crucifix	Placed prominently within the space.
Candle (no live flame)	Lit only during prayer time (battery acceptable); lighting signals prayer's start.

Liturgical Cloth	Color changes with the season — the most visible cue to the Church year.
Plant / Flowers	Living things signal faith is alive; replaced by the Advent wreath in December.
Image of a Saint	Rotates with the calendar, feast days, or the class patron.
Rosary	Present and accessible — used by classes that pray it together.
Prayer / Prayer Book	A prayer the class is learning or has composed; changes regularly.
Student Element	The living heart of the space — intentions, art, or written prayers, however the class chooses.

Liturgical seasons at a glance:

Advent	Violet cloth, Advent wreath — hope, waiting
Christmas	White & gold, crèche — joy, Incarnation
Ordinary Time	Green — growth, everyday holiness
Lent	Violet, no flowers — penance, journey to Easter
Holy Week / Easter	Red → white — Passion, then Resurrection joy
Pentecost	Red, flame/dove imagery — the Spirit, the Church's birth

Student contributions can be as simple as gratitude drawings and prayer-request boxes in the primary grades, up to student-composed prayers, Examen slips, and service-project boards in 5–7. Let each class develop its own practice.

Part 5: Self-Assessment Checklist

Use at the start of each semester and before major liturgical transitions — a planning tool, not a compliance form.

REQUIRED — meet at least 3, plus the crucifix
☐ A crucifix is displayed in a place of honor
☐ My classroom is dedicated to a patron saint
☐ Catholic virtue or mission language is part of my classroom norms
☐ Student faith work is displayed prominently
☐ A Scripture verse is visible and changes regularly
☐ Catholic reflection is part of my classroom routines
☐ Catholic Social Teaching connections are visible

OPTIONAL — if I have a prayer space
☐ The space is current, tended, and reflects the season
☐ My class prays there each morning, with a consistent ritual
☐ Students have a role — leader, reader, intention-sharer
☐ Students contribute to it (box, basket, artwork)

Part 6: Handbook Language

Faculty & Staff Handbook — Catholic Identity in Learning Spaces
Every learning space at St. Mary's reflects clear, unmistakable Catholic identity. At minimum, every classroom displays a crucifix in a place of honor (required throughout the Diocese of Boise) and demonstrates Catholic identity in at least three additional ways — a saint dedication, virtue language, student faith work, Scripture on display, Ignatian reflection, or a Catholic Social Teaching connection. Many teachers also build a prayer space; it's not required, but it's one of the most effective ways to meet the expectation above. The Principal supports teachers in this through resources, walkthroughs, and the August Inservice.

Parent-Student Handbook — Catholic Identity in the Classroom
At St. Mary's, every classroom reflects our Catholic identity in visible, everyday ways — a crucifix in a place of honor, a classroom patron saint, Scripture on display, and the language of our faith woven into daily life. Many classrooms also maintain a prayer space. Faith is not something that happens in Religion class and stops — you'll see it in the way our rooms look, our teachers speak, and our students pray.