

Praying To Jesus the Good Shepherd

In this unit students learn about prayer as talking to and listening to God. They are introduced to the prayer space and the objects and symbols that make up this space. They learn some of the behaviours and actions of prayer, including making the Sign of the Cross. In this unit students are also introduced to the image of Jesus Christ as the Good Shepherd.

DOCTRINAL FOCUS

In planning to teach this unit the following references from the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church are recommended:

#2720 The Church invites the faithful to regular prayer: daily prayers, the Liturgy of the Hours, the Sunday Eucharist, the feasts of the liturgical year.
(See *Compendium #550 What are the essential forms of Christian Prayer?*)

#2721 The Christian tradition comprises three major expressions of the life of prayer: vocal prayer, meditation, and contemplative prayer. They have in common the recollection of the heart.
(See *Compendium #559 In the Church are there different ways of praying?*)

#2722 Vocal prayer, founded on the union of body and soul in human nature, associates the body with the interior prayer of the heart, following Christ's example of praying to his Father and teaching the 'Our Father' to his disciples.

#2723 Meditation is a prayerful quest engaging thought, imagination, emotion and desire. Its goal is to make our own faith the subject considered, by confronting it with the reality of our own lives.

#2724 Contemplative prayer is the simple expression of the mystery of prayer. It is a gaze of faith fixed on Jesus, an attentiveness to the Word of God, a silent love. It achieves real union with the prayer of Christ to the extent that it makes us share in his mystery.

#2665 The prayer of the Church, nourished by the Word of God and the celebration of the liturgy, teaches us to pray to the Lord Jesus. Even though her prayer is addressed above all to the Father, it includes in all the liturgical traditions forms of prayer addressed to Christ. Certain psalms, given their use in the Prayer of the Church and the New Testament, place on our lips and engrave in our hearts prayer to Christ in the form of invocations: Son of God, Word of God, Lord, Saviour, Lamb of God, King, Beloved Son, Son of the Virgin, Good Shepherd, our Life, our Light, our Hope, our Resurrection, Friend of mankind ...
(See *Compendium #560 What is the way of our prayer?*)

SPIRITUAL REFLECTION FOR TEACHERS

Being aware of God in one's life ... feeling close to God ... listening and talking to God ... being attentive to the Holy Spirit ... listening with the ear of one's heart ... communion ... These are different ways of naming the experience of prayer.

What is prayer for you? What place does it have in your life? Are there particular places where you pray? Do you have particular texts, music or symbols when you pray? Who do you pray to? Do you have your own particular rituals when you pray?

Gather together your sheep, Lord ...
Those who are lost – search out;
Those who have strayed – bring back;
Those who are wounded – bind their wounds;
Those who are sick – cure;
Those bearing young – watch over them;
All of your sheep – keep them safe in your flock (Lucien Deiss, 1976).

How does the image of the Good Shepherd resonate with your understanding or experience of Jesus Christ? When has God sought you out ... brought you back ... bound your wounds ... watched over you ... protected you ...?

In what ways does the role of the teacher embody some of these attributes of the Good Shepherd?

LINKS WITH STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES

Some students will be familiar with prayer in the family: saying grace; praying before bed time; praying with grandparents; lighting candles at church; praying at a grave for a deceased friend or family member. Many students will also be able to name times they feel close to God, and aspects of family life that they associate with God. *When do your students feel close to God? What experiences of prayer do they bring to this unit? What does prayer look like, sound like, feel like, for your students? What symbols and actions do students already associate with prayer? What times and events in family life do they associate with God?*

Are there children from other religious traditions in the grade? How do they experience or describe prayer? What symbols and actions do they associate with prayer? How do they imagine or describe God?

Exploring the imaginative world is integral to the growth of self awareness and learning in children. *What types of prayer experiences will be meaningful, engaging and reflective for students?*

EXPLANATION OF SCRIPTURE

Jn 10: 3–5, 14 The Good Shepherd

In this ancient yet contemporary parable Jesus Christ declares himself both as the 'door' (or gate) for the sheep and as the Good Shepherd. As the 'door', Jesus Christ is the gateway to the Kingdom of God. As the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ exists to save the sheep and lead them to abundant life. He has a profound and personal relationship with them, such that he is prepared to die for them.

Lk 6: 12 Our Prayer Place

In Luke's Gospel the writer continually reminds his audience that it is important to pray. Jesus always prayed before important events, and he is often shown as retiring to a quiet place to pray. Prayer is one of the themes that is prominent in Luke's Gospel.

POSSIBILITIES FOR PRAYER AND WORSHIP

- Introduce each element of the prayer place as you set it on the table – cloth, cross, candle, Bible – e.g:

*Here is the **cloth** that we will put on the table. Every now and again we will change the colour of the cloth, but today we are putting a _____(colour) cloth on the table.*

*Here is the **cross** that we will put on the table. One day soon we will learn about the cross and why it is so important for us.*

*Here is the **candle** that we will put on the table. Every time we gather here in the prayer place we will light this candle. It will remind us of Jesus Christ.*

*Here is the **Bible** that we will put on the table. This is a very special and holy book. From this book we will listen to stories about Jesus Christ.*

- Hold up the cross. Demonstrate that this is the ‘sign’ we make over ourselves as a blessing. At first, demonstrate it without words. Invite the children to imitate you. (You may need to bless yourself with your left hand, so that the children can copy you as a mirror-image.) Then slowly pray the Sign of the Cross with the children, phrase by phrase, as they echo the prayer and action of blessing.
- Arrange the shepherd and sheep models as a central focus in the prayer place. Proclaim Jn 10: 3–5, 14. Children respond with ‘Jesus Christ is my Shepherd’. See the prayer in *KWL*, 2nd edn, Prep, Chapter 2, p. 15.
- Songs that may be helpful for class prayer include: ‘We Will Make a Place Ready’ (Damien Halloran, *As One Voice For Kids*); ‘The Good Shepherd’ (Christopher Walker, *Stories and Songs of Jesus*, OCP Publications); ‘I Am the Good Shepherd’ (Christopher Walker, *Music For Children’s Liturgy of the Word, Year B*, OCP Publications).

Related Chapters – *KWL*, 2nd edn, Prep/Kindergarten, Chapter 1, Our Prayer Place; Chapter 2, The Good Shepherd.

Faith concepts: relationship, love, reverence, prayer, symbol, ritual.

Understandings:

When people pray they talk to and listen to God.

People pray to God for different reasons, in different places and in different ways.

Special symbols and objects are used in prayer spaces.

Rituals are special actions used in prayer.

People can pray to Jesus the Good Shepherd.

Jesus teaches Christians how to be kind and loving towards others.

Unit specific learning:

Students will learn about	Students will learn to	Students will undertake to
<i>Knowledge and Understanding</i>	<i>Reasoning & Responding</i>	<i>Personal & Communal Engagement</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prayer as listening and talking to God. • Ways we can communicate with God in prayer. • Elements of a prayer space, including crucifix, bible, candle, symbols (e.g. stones, sheep, sand, and water) and cloths in the colour of the liturgical season • Ritual actions of prayer, including gathering, lighting of the candle, appropriate prayer posture, and silence. • The gesture of the Sign of the Cross. • The characteristics of Jesus Christ as the Good Shepherd. • Prayer as a way of building their friendship with God. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate with God through vocal and contemplative prayer. • Be respectful and reverent while praying. • Express their feelings and thoughts in response to the story of the Good Shepherd. • Wonder about how Jesus Christ is present in their lives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate and lead in class prayer sessions. • Organise and contribute to the classroom prayer place.

Part 1: We Pray to God

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
<p>Young children are aware of sacred space. We draw on their sense of mystery, and they discover sanctuary or holy ground in the Good Shepherd experience. The symbols found in the prayer place may reflect religious objects at home. Later, the students may wish to set up their own small prayer space at home. That is a tradition stretching back to the earliest Christian times, reminding us that the family is the domestic Church.</p>	<p>Telling the Story Students identify people who are special to them, love them, and care for them.</p>	
	<p>Wondering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students wonder about who God is and why God is their friend. • Students wonder what they might like to talk to God about. • Ask the students how and where they may talk to God. Record their responses in pictures and words as a shared text on a class chart. Students illustrate, write about or make a playdough model of their favourite place to talk to God. Students share their work with the whole class. 	<p>Assessment for Learning This activity will indicate students' prior knowledge and experiences of prayer.</p>
	<p>Telling the Story Introduce each element of the prayer place (see 'Possibilities for Prayer and Worship' above). <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edn, Prep/Kindergarten, Chapter 1, pp. 4–5, 7.</p>	

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
	<p>Responding: Students choose from the following responses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a feely bag filled with items which may or may not be appropriate in a prayer place. Students take turns to select an object, describe it, and give reasons for deciding whether or not to place the object in the classroom prayer place. • Teach the students songs about talking to and listening to God, e.g. 'Quiet Times with Jesus' (Abba, K, Abrahams, J & O'Brien, M, <i>Great Times with Jesus</i>). • In small groups students use 2D or 3D representations to recreate a classroom prayer place. • Students decorate an outline of a cross with art material, e.g. sequins, glitter. <p>Suggested Home Activity Invite students to take the cross home and place it in a prayer place made by the family.</p>	<p>Assessment of Learning These tasks will allow students to identify the objects, texts, signs and symbols that make up a prayer place.</p>

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
<p>The Sign of the Cross is a prayerful action that acknowledges God as Trinity. It is a form of blessing, making the <i>self</i> a sanctuary or sacred place for God’s dwelling.</p> <p>Each time we trace this sign over ourselves we are reminded of the cross of Jesus. It is a sign of our relationship with Jesus Christ, and thus with the whole Christian family.</p> <p>The Sign of the Cross is the first and most basic prayer in our Christian tradition.</p> <p>Prayer is an essential part of the Christian tradition. It is a ‘gathering’ of the mind, heart and body which brings us into God’s presence. It can take several forms and can occur in several places.</p> <p>We introduce the students to vocal prayer – praying with the spoken word and with song:</p> <p>Meditation – focusing on a word, chant or image, usually in a reflective atmosphere;</p> <p>Contemplation – learning the language of silence and resting in God’s presence.</p> <p>Prayers of Intercession</p> <p>These prayers usually take place within a liturgical framework. They give us the opportunity to pray for our own needs and the needs of the wider world. Each prayer is followed by a spoken or sung response.</p>	<p>Praying the Word</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach the Sign of the Cross. Draw students’ attention to the cross on the prayer place and explain its significance (see ‘Possibilities for Prayer and Worship’). • Establish the routines for entering into classroom prayer, e.g. posture, reverence, silence and prayer place as a focus (<i>KWL</i>, 2nd edn, Prep/Kindergarten, Chapter 1, p. 8 or Lk 6: 12). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Light the candle. – Students make the Sign of the Cross. – Use quiet, reflective music to introduce the students to contemplative prayer, enabling students to experience the presence of God in their lives through stillness and listening to readings about Jesus Christ. • Guide the students in making spontaneous oral prayers of intercession and thanks. 	<p>Assessment for Learning</p> <p>This may demonstrate if students know the words and gestures of the Sign of the Cross.</p>

Part 2: Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
<p>Shepherds In Jesus' time shepherds were extremely poor, and generally lived and travelled with their animals. Shepherds spent most of their time caring for and protecting their sheep from harm. Jesus, as the Good Shepherd, is the embodiment of God's care, protection and nurturing of all aspects of our lives.</p> <p>The Good Shepherd Of all the images of Christ, the one that attracts the child is the Good Shepherd. Careful observation of children from all cultures has confirmed this. Why are children attracted to this particular image? Perhaps the Good Shepherd relates directly to the needs of the growing child; above all to the need for nourishment and protection from danger.</p>	<p>Telling the Story Dress a wooden figure or use pictures/felt figure to represent a shepherd. Tell the story of the Good Shepherd using 2D or 3D materials.</p> <p>Responding Students create their own sheep using a sheep outline. Decorate with cotton wool. Create a wall display with sheep gathered around the Good Shepherd.</p> <p>Telling the Story Read the story from <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edn, Prep/Kindergarten, Chapter 2, pp. 10–13.</p> <p>Wondering On sheep shapes write 'I wonder' questions from <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edn, Prep/Kindergarten, Chapter 2, p. 14. Scatter the sheep in the sheep fold.</p> <p>Students choose a sheep each. Questions are read and discussed by the class. Students are given the opportunity to ask their own wonderings.</p>	

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
<p>The Church as the 'flock' With the image of the Good Shepherd and the sheep we are already beginning our catechesis about the Church. The Church is the gathering of all who relate to Jesus and become his 'flock'. The child can begin to appreciate the life of the Church in family, parish and school by beginning to discover the roles of people who guide, protect and love them in all these dimensions of their lives.</p>	<p>Praying the Word Introduce the Good Shepherd and sheep figurines to the prayer place. Read Jn 10: 3–5,14.</p> <p>Wondering Invite students to wonder with you: I wonder why Jesus told this story? I wonder who is kind and loving towards you? I wonder who is like Jesus in your life? I wonder when there have been times when you've been like Jesus?</p>	

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
	<p>Responding Students choose from the following tasks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In small groups students retell the story of the Good Shepherd using 3D Godly Play materials. • Create a small group Y-chart (looks like, feels like, sounds like) of the attributes of the Good Shepherd. These attributes of the Good Shepherd are the attributes of Jesus Christ. Label the class Y-chart 'Jesus Christ is the Good Shepherd'. • Within an outline of a sheep students draw or paint an image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd. • Within an outline of a person students draw themselves. Use these images to replace the sheep on the existing wall display of the Good Shepherd. Add the title 'Jesus the Good Shepherd looks after me'. • Students discuss and illustrate a person who is like Jesus in their lives. 	<p>Assessment of Learning These tasks will indicate students' ability to identify some of the qualities of Jesus as the Good Shepherd. They will also indicate ways in which students can make a personal response to Scripture through art and play.</p> <p>Assessment of Learning This task may indicate a student's ability to make connections between Scripture and their own life.</p>

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
	<p>Praying the Word With the class share the prayer from <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edn, Prep, Chapter 2, p. 15.</p> <p>Suggested Home Activity Invite students to take sheep home to put in the family prayer place and share the prayer with their families from <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edn, Prep/Kindergarten, Chapter 2, p. 15.</p>	

RESOURCES

To Know, Worship and Love, 2nd Edition

Prep/Kindergarten, Chapter 1, Our Prayer Place; Chapter 2, The Good Shepherd.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION STANDARDS

This unit may be used to assess some of the Level 1 standards.

Students relate to sacred story including the image of the Good Shepherd by making connections to their personal experiences. Students contemplate and reflect about God, themselves and the world by responding to their wondering, feelings and ideas through prayer and a range of media. Students describe sacred objects, signs and symbols in the Catholic tradition by explaining what they are, and when, where and how they are used.