

Creation: Living in Harmony

In this unit students investigate the Christian tradition of stewardship and the equitable use of the earth's resources. Students are invited to identify either a local or global environmental issue, and to analyse what causes this issue and how it affects human life. Students evaluate their values and beliefs about this issue in the light of Catholic social teaching and the Scriptures. They identify and plan ways that they can respond to this issue as stewards of creation.

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:

#280 Creation is the foundation of 'all God's saving plans', the 'beginning of the history of salvation' that culminates in Christ. Conversely, the mystery of Christ casts conclusive light on the mystery of creation and reveals the end for which 'in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth': from the beginning, God envisaged the glory of the new creation in Christ.
(See *Compendium #51 What is the importance of affirming 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth?'*)

#306 God is the sovereign master of his plan. But to carry it out he also makes use of his creatures' cooperation. For God grants his creatures not only their existence, but also the dignity of acting on their own, of being causes and principles for each other, and thus of cooperating in the accomplishment of his plan.
(See *Compendium #55 What is divine providence?*)

#2415 The seventh commandment enjoins respect for the integrity of creation. Animals, like plants and inanimate beings, are by nature destined for the common good of past, present, and future humanity.
(See *Compendium #506 What does the seventh commandment require?*)

#2452 The goods of creation are destined for the entire human race. The right to private property does not abolish the universal destination of goods.
(See *Compendium #53 Why was the world created?*)

SPIRITUAL REFLECTION FOR TEACHERS

God has given the fruit of the earth to sustain the entire human family, including future generations. 'The world is given to all, not only to the rich' (Pope Paul VI). 'Those who hold goods for use and consumption should use them with moderation, reserving the better part for guests, for the sick, and the poor' (*Catechism of the Catholic Church, #2405*).

The Church has a strong tradition of understanding all peoples as one human family, regardless of race, religion, gender or economic status. In the spirit of one family the resources of the earth are conserved, used and shared for the good of all, not only for those who can afford them. How is this way of living a challenge in modern society? Are there personal challenges for you in living this way?

Sometimes developed countries can use the world's resources in a way that leads to further injustice for poorer people. At the personal level our use of resources can affect people in other places without us even realising it. Think of the coffee we drink, the chocolate we eat or the clothes we wear. Sometimes the production of these can be at the expense of other people's rights and needs.

What individuals and organisations in the community embody a just way of thinking about and using the world's resources? At a global level think of the work of Caritas Australia, Aid to the Church in Need, Oxfam or the Fair Trade Association of Australia. Think of the work of religious orders in developing countries. At a local level think of community gardens and groups who clean up their local environment so that all can use it. Think of activities that deal with overuse of plastic bags. Or consider ways that families conserve water or recycle compost, or ways that schools recycle paper and conserve electricity and gas.

LINKS WITH STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES

The chocolate bars they eat, the sneakers they wear, the jacket they love, the plastic bag they throw away! Students live in the present moment and can unknowingly make some decisions that affect other children's lives in another suburb or another part of the globe. *What kind of products are attractive to students? What do students know about the products they use – where, how and by whom are they made? Where do they end up after they have been thrown out?*

Students are developing an understanding that the whole of creation is precious and needs to be cared for. They may have an awareness of unjust situations which affect people's lives. *How can students be assisted in their understanding of this reality as local and global?*

Students live in a world which generates an abundance of material possessions and waste. They are developing an awareness of the fragility of the environment which calls for a Christian response of justice, harmony and right relationship.

EXPLANATION OF SCRIPTURE

Psalm 148 Hymn of Praise

This hymn of praise calls all things on earth and in the heavens to give praise to God the Creator. The psalm invites praise and wonder and draws all things closer to the presence of God.

Lev 19: 9–10, Deut 26: 12–15

While the setting of this text is an agricultural society, the way of living it advocates is universal. The text calls people to alleviate the plight of the hungry. At harvest time, or at times of prosperity and abundance, the listener is challenged to share the goods of the earth with the poor and the stranger in their midst. Rather than possessing what one has worked for and harvested, one is challenged to share 'the gleanings' for the good of all, particularly those in poverty. This teaching is echoed in Deuteronomy 26: 12–15 in which the Israelites are instructed to give a portion of the first fruits of their harvest to strangers in their midst (aliens), to orphans and to widows.

Isa 58: 6–7

The Israelites encountered more prosperous times after their period of exile in Babylon came to an end. This text from Isaiah was developed during this period of prosperity. The prophet cautions the listener to be attuned to the poor, the hungry and

the homeless among them and to offer them their rightful share in God's blessings of freedom and abundance.

POSSIBILITIES FOR PRAYER AND WORSHIP

- Praying with song and dance: Devise a circle dance to the song 'Sing Out! Earth and Skies!' (Marty Haugen, *Song of God Among Us*, GIA Publications). Alternatively, find a suitable musical translation of *The Canticle of the Sun*, e.g. 'Sacred Creation' (Rufino Zaragoza, *Love's Radiant Light*, OCP Publications) and celebrate it with dance or symbol.
- Pray together a formal Liturgy of the Hours. Invite someone who regularly prays the Liturgy of the Hours to speak to the class about it. It might be a parishioner or a religious sister, priest or brother. Pray with them the prayer that the class has prepared, following this pattern:
 1. Opening verse – Lord, open my lips. R: *And my mouth will sing your praise!*
 2. Hymn.
 3. Psalm (choose a psalm praising creation, e.g. Ps 148)
 4. *Glory be...*
 5. A short responsory prayer.
 6. *The Lord's Prayer*, followed by a Concluding prayer.
- Allow for a period of meditation out-of-doors. Guide the meditation to follow a simple pattern, such as:
 1. Becoming still and silent (3 minutes)
 2. Awareness of the breath (2 minutes)
 3. Awareness of the sounds of creation around us (2 minutes)Conclude with a prayer of thanksgiving.

Related Chapters – *KWL*, 2nd edn, Year 4: Chapter 2, God Is At Work In All Of Creation.

Faith concepts: creator, creation, stewardship, harmony, justice, sustainability.

Seeking understanding:

How do the choices we make about the environment affect people in other places?
Why is it important for Christians to use the earth justly?

Understandings:

The environment is given by God to be used and shared by all people.
Jesus Christ showed us how to live in harmony with God, creation and others.
The choices we make about how we use the environment can have positive or negative effects on people and environments in other places.
All people have a right to share in the goods of creation.
The choices we make about how we use the earth and its resources need to be just for all people.

Scripture Text: Ps 148: 1–4; Lk 14: 12–24.

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"> • The concept of stewardship in the Christian tradition. • The main elements of Lev 19: 9–10, Deut 26: 12–15 and Isa 58: 6–7 that include sharing equitably the world’s resources among all people. • The fragility of the environment and of human life which calls for the Christian response of stewardship. <p>Ways in which people can use and misuse the earth, and the consequences of this for the development of the earth and for human life.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyse the cause and effect of an environmental issue. • Apply the Christian understanding of stewardship to a contemporary environmental issue. • Identify ways in which they can use the earth’s resources justly and equitably. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness of ways in which misuse of the earth’s resources affects the environment and human life. • Plan an action to improve an environment that has been misused. • Plan an action that contributes to the lives of people affected by misuse of the earth’s resources.

PHASES OF STUDENT INQUIRY

Additional Reading for Teachers	Orientation to Inquiry <i>What do students already know, think or feel in relation to the topic? What are students' questions about the topic? What experiences and reflections can we offer students to become engaged with the topic?</i>	Assessment: for learning, as learning, of learning
<p>The Catholic tradition insists that Catholics show respect for their Creator through their stewardship of creation. Catholics are called to protect people and the planet, living their faith in relationship with all of creation. This way of living has moral and ethical dimensions and challenges.</p> <p>The developing world was once referred to as the Third World. It is a term for countries that are considered very poor. Developed countries were once referred to as First World countries. These countries are those considered to be economically rich and have an abundance of material possessions. They</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immersion Immerse students in literature that deals with change and development of the natural environment, e.g. <i>The Big Picture Book</i> by John Long; <i>Belonging</i> by Jeannie Baker; <i>The Dying Sea</i> by Michael Bright; <i>Green Fingers</i> by Emily Rodda. • Our Local Place Students view a diversity of images of Australian natural and urban landscapes. Identify places they would like to visit. List possible ways in which these places might be threatened or changed by development, e.g. pollution, waste, loss of ecosystem, overuse of resources. • Our Global Place View global images of natural and developed environments from both the developed and developing worlds. Show a range of positive and negative images of these environments. Ask students to sequence the pictures in order of most positive to most negative 	<p>Assessment for Learning This task will indicate students' prior knowledge of some of the effects of human involvement with the planet, and some of the possible ethical issues that arise from this involvement.</p> <p>Assessment for Learning This task will indicate the experiences, attitudes and values that students bring to this topic.</p>

<p>also generate an enormous amount of waste in terms of food and manufactured goods.</p>	<p>images of the environment in a way that makes most sense to them.</p> <p>Ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Why did you place the pictures in this position? – How does that image cause you to feel or think? – What does that picture tell you? – Are there any pictures that concern or worry you? 	
<p>Additional Reading for Teachers</p>	<p>Development</p> <p><i>What experiences and religious texts will provide new learning for students? What skills will students need in order to work with these resources? What strategies and tools will enable students to think and reflect on these experiences and texts? How will students process their thinking and learning?</i></p>	<p>Assessment: for learning, as learning, of learning</p>
<p>Since Vatican II the methodology promoted for reading and analysing the issues of the day is the ‘see, judge, act’ method that Cardinal Cardijn made popular. It asks Catholics to look at a social justice issue as it exists in the community (see), to assess what is happening and what is at stake in light of Catholic teaching (judge), and to discern what action to undertake (act) (Sandie Cornish).</p> <p>Catholic Social Teaching sums up the Church’s teaching on social justice. Related to this unit are the teachings on Stewardship and the Universal Purpose of Goods.</p> <p>‘The Catholic tradition insists that we show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysing An Environmental Issue <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Who are the people who enjoy the earth’s resources? – Who are the people who miss out? – How does this affect how they live? – What are some of the ways people misuse the environment? What effects does this have on others’ lives? – Am I using resources carefully? – Is this a need or a want? – What impact do my decisions have on the environment and on others’ lives? 	

<p>of creation' (Reflections, p. 6). The steward is a manager, not an owner. In an era of rising consciousness about our physical environment, our Tradition is calling us to a sense of moral responsibility for the protection of the environment – croplands, grasslands, woodlands, air, water, minerals and other natural deposits. Stewardship responsibilities also look towards our use of our personal talents, our attention to personal health and our use of personal property (William J. Byron, 1998).</p> <p>In Catholic social teaching the goods of the world are meant for all. God's gifts are meant to be shared equally. We have a responsibility to care for the world, not merely as consumers and users. Everyone has the right to access the goods of creation to meet their basic needs. People and nations have no right to squander or damage resources when others are in need.</p>	<p>Use some of these questions to investigate one specific issue concerned with how the earth's resources are used, and the consequences of this for people's lives. This could be done at a local or global context.</p> <p>Global context: Global issues include access to water in developing countries, famine, and how natural disasters affect people's livelihoods and lives. The websites for Caritas Australia, Oz Spirit and United Nations Cyber School Bus have excellent information and resources for students to use.</p> <p>Local context: At a local level students could look at the cause and effect of environmental issues on people's lives, such as the use of water and energy at school, plastic bags in the environment, pollution, or packaging and waste (see websites below).</p> <p>The Kids Footprint website is a useful tool that enables students to measure their ecological footprint, i.e. the amount of nature required to sustain each student's daily living choices (see the 'Resources' section for web addresses).</p> <p>In collaborative groups or individually students record what they have</p>	
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	<p>learned about this issue, what causes the situation and how people's lives are affected, through one of the following modes (students choose the mode):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – flow chart showing how use of the environment affects people's lives – diorama or 3D model showing cause and effect – written explanation 	
<p>St Francis of Assisi is honoured by the Catholic Church as the patron saint of ecology and animals. He lived a life of simplicity, poverty and humility with a strong commitment to the poor. Francis considered the animals his friends; the sun and moon as members of his family; and he gave all he had to the poor. His love and respect for creation was deep as it always led him to God the Creator. <i>Everything</i> was created for the glory of God; <i>everything</i> should render to God this glory.</p> <p>The 'Canticle of Brother Sun' shows Francis' love for creation and the Creator.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stewardship: Prayer Explore and pray a hymn, prayer or psalm that focuses on stewardship, e.g. Psalm 148, Canticle of Brother Sun by St Francis of Assisi (<i>KWL</i>, 2nd edn, Year 4, Chapter 2, pp. 2–3). <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – What does this prayer/song say to you about treating oneself, others and the world? – What does it say to you about the issue you investigated? <p>In their journals students respond through word and/or image to these questions.</p>	<p>Assessment as Learning</p> <p>The journal will enable students to reflect upon and monitor their learning in relation to their attitudes, values and beliefs.</p>
<p>A steward is someone entrusted to take great care of a household. In New Testament times the steward supervised the servants, looked after the buying of food and supplies, and kept things in good order. Being a steward entails responsibility.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stewardship and Creation Read 'Living the Gospel' (<i>KWL</i>, 2nd edn, Year 4, Chapter 2, pp. 14 and 18). Discuss with the students what it is to be a steward. 	

	<p>How can you be a steward in relation to the issue we have explored?</p> <p>Students record as many ideas as possible about ways they can respond as stewards of creation to the issues explored.</p>					
<p>Catholic social teaching also talks about the Common Good. This principle recognises that each person has a responsibility to contribute to the good of the whole society, to the common good. We are one body; when one suffers we all suffer (1 Cor 12: 26).</p> <p>Unrestrained selfishness and individualism can erode ways in which people live in peace and harmony in neighbourhoods, suburbs, regions and nations.</p> <p>Scripture</p> <p>Lev 19: 9–10 calls people to alleviate the plight of the hungry and to share.</p> <p>Deut 26: 12–15 calls the Israelites to give portions of the first harvest to strangers in their midst.</p> <p>Isa 58: 6–7 asks us to be attuned to the poor, the hungry and the homeless and offer them an alternative path.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My Responsibility as a Steward of Creation <p>If students have looked at an issue in which people live in poverty as a result of a damaged environment, explore what this might mean for them as Christian students living in a developed, affluent country.</p> <p>Deepen the exploration by reading the following texts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Lev 19: 9–10 – Deut 26: 12–15 – Isa 58: 6–7 <p>Students firstly capture the message of one of the texts in its original setting and time through pictures and a couple of sentences. Then students consider how this message relates to the issue that they have explored.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="835 1230 1413 1391"> <tr> <td data-bbox="835 1230 1126 1299">The message back then</td> <td data-bbox="1126 1230 1413 1299">The message now</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="835 1299 1126 1391"></td> <td data-bbox="1126 1299 1413 1391"></td> </tr> </table>	The message back then	The message now			<p>Assessment of Learning</p> <p>This task will allow students to demonstrate how they understand and interpret the specific text in the context of the issue under investigation.</p>
The message back then	The message now					

<p>Additional reading for Teachers</p>	<p>SYNTHESIS <i>How will students demonstrate their understandings, beliefs, values, skills and feelings in relation to the topic? How will students take action based on their learning? What strategies and tools will enable students to discern their action, to plan and implement action and to evaluate their action?</i></p>		<p>Assessment: for learning, as learning, of learning</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <p>Reflection Through de Bono’s Hats By using de Bono’s six thinking hats students reflect on their learning, e.g: Red Hat – How do you feel about the issue of ...? Yellow Hat – What are the positive things about how the earth’s resources are used in this situation? Black Hat – What are the negative things about how the earth’s resources are used in this issue? Green Hat – How could we improve or support the situation? Blue Hat – What have you learned about being a steward of creation? (Murdoch, <i>Classroom Connections</i>, p. 107).</p> <p>Taking Action As a class, students decide on what action they would like to take in relation to the issue they analysed. This could take the form of awareness-raising for others, initiating a project that restores the environment, or joining with others in the community who are already undertaking action to</p> 		<p>Assessment of/as Learning The reflection through de Bono’s Hats will enable students to monitor changes in their thinking, perceptions and learning. It will also provide teachers with evidence of students’ understanding and knowledge of the topic.</p>

	heal and protect the earth.	
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RESOURCES

To Know, Worship and Love, 2nd Edition

Year 4: Chapter 2, God Is At Work In All Of Creation.

Teacher Resources

Murdoch, K 1998, *Classroom Connections*, Eleanor Curtain, Armadale.

Ryan, M 2003, *Expressions Book 1*, Social Science Press, Riverwood.

Student Resources

Long, J, *The Big Picture Book*, Allen & Unwin.

Baker, J, *Belonging*, Walker Books.

Bright, M, *The Dying Sea*, Survival Series, Franklin Watts.

Rodda, E, *Green Fingers*, Omnibus, Norwood SA.

Websites

Sandie Cornish's article 'An Introduction to Catholic Social Teaching' is available at

http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/content/pdf/cst_intro.pdf

Saint Francis of Assisi

http://conservation.catholic.org/st_francis_of_assisi.htm

OZ Spirit

<http://www.ozspirit.info/>

Caritas Australia

<http://www.caritas.org.au/>

Earthday Network Kid's Ecological Footprint

<http://www.kidsfootprint.org/index.html>

United Nations Cyber School Bus

<http://www.un.org/cyberschoolbus/>

Australian Federal Government Department for Environment and Heritage

<http://www.deh.gov.au/education/students-teachers/index.html#school>

Gould League Water Wise Schools

<http://www.gould.edu.au/html/AboutWasteWiseSchools.asp>

Gould League Sustainable Schools



<http://www.sustainableschools.com.au/sustainableschools/default.asp>

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION STANDARDS

This unit may be used to assess some of the Level 3 standards.

Students evaluate their choices and actions by reflecting on Scripture and Church teaching.