4.6 One with God’s Creation

We are all created in the image of God and are called to live in harmony with our world. In this unit, students will develop a deeper understanding of God as creator, and will appreciate more fully that creation is good. We are called to be one with each other and the earth community. The unit focuses on developing an understanding of our responsibility to care for God’s creation. It also explores our decisions to respect and care for the environment which will affect our world, both now and in the future.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Values & Attitudes**  *Students will demonstrate that they are:* | **Knowledge & Understandings**  *Students will demonstrate that they can:* | **Skills**  *Students will demonstrate that they can:* |
| CR2.1 aware of the importance of living in harmony with the earth community | identify Scriptures which invite people to live in harmony with the earth community | interpret Scriptures which invite people to live in harmony with the earth community |
| CR2.2 willing to care for all creation | describe ways in which all creation can be cared for | identify ways in which they can care for God’s creation |

Syllabus Outcomes  
Church – Stage 2

Classroom Outcomes

*Students will be able to:*

* recognise God as creator and appreciate the wonder, goodness and beauty of all creation
* demonstrate ways of living in harmony with and caring for God’s creation
* identify in the Scriptures prayers of praise, wonder and thanksgiving for God’s creation

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Scripture | Doctrine |
| Genesis 1 – 2:4 *The goodness of* *God’s creation*  Psalm 148:1-5 *Hymn of Praise*  Ecclesiasticus/ *The glory of the*  Sirach 43:11-12 *rainbow* | * God’s creation is good * God blesses us with the gift of creation * God entrusts us with the care of the earth community |

Spiritual Reflection for Teachers

“There is a growing awareness that world peace is threatened not only by the arms race, regional conflicts and continued injustice but also by a lack of due respect for nature. The ecological crisis is a moral issue”.

Pope John Paul II – World Day of Peace Message 1990

The earth exists for all people. Our call and challenge is to be one with God’s creation. We can do this by identifying our experiences of the presence of God in other people and in the natural world. God has called us to be co-creators in the fruitful development of the world. We are to be stewards of creation. We need the spirit of St. Francis with his “Brother Sun and Sister Moon” mentality, in which all things are gifts, given to us in trust. Our response then, to environmental issues and the dignity of human life should be one that reflects our desire to be one with the whole cosmos and our decisions and choices in life are crucial.

What choices do I make on a daily basis? How do they impact on other people and the natural world?

Catechism of the Catholic Church

**Excerpts from the Catechism of the Catholic Church are included below as information for teachers. They present the Church’s teachings contained in this unit.**

**288** Thus the revelation of creation is inseparable from the revelation and forging of the covenant of the one God with his people. Creation is revealed as the first step toward this covenant of the first and universal witness to God’s all-powerful love. And so, the truth of creation is also expressed with growing vigour in the message of the prophets, the prayer of the psalms and the liturgy, and in the wisdom sayings of the Chosen People.

1. Because God creates through wisdom, his creation is ordered: “You have arranged all things by measure and number and weight”. The universe, created in and by the eternal Word, the “image of the invisible God,” is destined for and addressed to man, himself created in the “image of God” and called to a personal relationship with God. Our human understanding, which shares in the light of this divine intellect, can understand what God tells us by means of his creation, though not without great effort and only in a spirit of humility and respect before the Creator and his work. Because creation comes forth from God’s goodness, it shares in that goodness – “And God saw that it was good…very good” – for God willed creation as a gift addressed to man, an inheritance destined for and entrusted to him. On many occasions the Church has had to defend the goodness of creation, including that of the physical world.

**357** Being in the image of God the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something, but someone. He is capable of self-knowledge, of self-possession and of freely giving himself and entering into communion with other persons. And he is called by grace to a covenant with his Creator, to offer him a response of faith and love that no other creature can give in his stead.

**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. Use of the mineral, vegetable and animal resources of the universe cannot be divorced from respect for moral imperatives. Man’s dominion over inanimate and other living beings granted by the Creator is not absolute; it is limited by concern for the quality of life of his neighbour, including generations to come; it requires a religious respect for the integrity of creation.

Scripture: Background Information

**Genesis Chapters 1-2 The Goodness of God’s Creation**

The narratives of Genesis 1-2 are full of colour. They can be disarmingly simple or psychologically complex as they deal with the big questions of the human condition – How did life begin? What is sexuality? Who is God? Who am I? What are relationships?

Genesis 1 – 2:4 is a majestic text, a poetic masterpiece centred on God. God simply speaks and creation happens in an ordered way, based on the 7 days of the week.

Many commentators suggest that Genesis 1 was a liturgical hymn. The refrain structures of the verses reinforce what seems like a rhythmic chant. “God said let there be … and so it was …” is repeated seven times. The word of creation in this first account is simple and easily accomplished.

Another refrain feature of Genesis 1 is the repetition “evening came and morning came the first (second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth) day”. Such repeated sections point to an ancient and oral tradition even though the final editing of this text is relatively late, probably in the 6th century BC. In refrain mode again, the statement “and God called …” is reiterated, to emphasise the relationship between God and all created things. In this account God names everything. A final refrain “and God saw that it was good” is also repeated seven times (vv 4,10,12,18,21,25,31). The goodness of creation refrain culminates in the positive “and indeed it was very good” (Genesis 1:31).

An obvious meaning of the Genesis 1 creation account is the goodness of God’s creation. God effortlessly initiates everything and creates order out of chaos, especially out of the chaos of nothingness. The creation of humankind (Genesis 1:26) is in the image and likeness of God, “male and female God created them” (Genesis 1:27). God’s final act of creation on the seventh day is to rest.

**Psalm 148: 1-5, 7-14 Hymn of Praise**

This hymn of praise calls all things on earth and in the heavens to give praise to God the creator. It is an extract from the longer text which follows an interesting symmetrical pattern. It moves from the greatest above to the least below. The Psalm invites praise and wonder and draws all things closer to the presence of God.[[1]](#footnote-1)

**Ecclesiasticus 43:11-12 The Glory of the Rainbow**

The Book of Ecclesiasticus is part of the wisdom literature of the Old Testament. It was written by Jesus ben Sira and has a few different names that can cause confusion and thus need to be explained. It is sometimes called the Wisdom of ben Sira or Sirach and so goes by all three names – The Book of Ecclesiasticus, the Wisdom of Jesus ben Sira, and simply Sirach. There is another book of similar title that is also part of the wisdom literature of the Old Testament called Ecclesiastes. It is a very different text – quite cynical in parts and very challenging. The two verses of Ecclesiasticus are short and in praise of God the maker of the rainbow. In Genesis 9:12-17 the rainbow is the sign of the covenant that God has made with all creation. It is a sign of peace. The beauty of the rainbow that needs both rain and sun to exist is a metaphor for life that has sadness and happiness as part of its beauty and pain.

The Church’s Teaching and Lived Tradition

**In Tradition - *To Know, Worship and Love*, Year 4 -** *Nicene Creed*

The Nicene Creed was drawn up at the Council of Nicea in 325 to defend the faith against the heresy of Arianism (the belief that Jesus was not one with God the Creator). In this extract the focus is on God who created all things in heaven and on earth, all things seen and unseen. The Creed then goes on to affirm the oneness of Jesus with the Father and the Spirit.

This extract states our belief in a Trinitarian God that is the dynamic reality at the heart of all creation.

Celebration: Prayer and Liturgy

**Celebration is a key part of Religious Education. The following suggestions provide opportunities throughout the unit for celebration in prayer and liturgy. Most of these suggestions are included as ‘teaching/learning’ activities in Unit Content sections.**

* Guide the students through a meditation on the wonders of nature and creation. An example of this can be found in – *Enjoying Nature (A Brief Meditation)* in Prayers at your Fingertips. This book has a range of prayers and liturgies on the theme ‘In Praise of God’s Creation’. Ask the students how the meditation made them feel? Have the students reflect on whether they felt connected to God. Pray together ‘Our Prayer’ (from KWL Year 4, p9).
* Use the reflection *The Story of Creation* (Gen 1:1-24) from *Just Imagine 2 – More Creative Ways of Presenting Scripture* by Rina Wintour. This could be used in a liturgy at the end of the whole unit.
* Read through the first reflection from *Reflecting Together at Home and at School* (KWL Year 4, p19). Can you remember a time when God’s presence was very real for you? Why did you feel connected to God? What kinds of feelings did you have? Students write about their experience in a reflective environment (quiet music, working quietly and individually).
* Draw upon the *Word of God In Tradition* (KWL, Year 4, p16) to link these reflections with the Catholic Tradition.[[2]](#footnote-2) Students use the reflection to write their own prayer of praise or thanks to God.
* Use the reflection ‘The Story of Creation’ (Gen 1:1-24) from *Just Imagine 2 – More Creative Ways of Presenting Scripture* by Rina Wintour. This could be used in a Liturgy at the end of the unit.
* Lead the students through some stilling, relaxing, movement exercises. Allow the students to become aware of God’s presence in them and around them, becoming aware of their breathing and their interconnectedness with all of God’s creation. Through movement and breathing exercises, invite the students to be one with God within and in the world.
* Using a format similar to Psalm 148, students compose their own Hymn of Praise. Students identify areas of creation that express the praises of God. These could be published into a class book of Creation Prayers.
  + Jointly construct a class psalm that expresses the wonder, beauty and awe of God’s creation. Include in the psalm our call to live in harmony and be stewards and caretakers of creation.
* Students read Ecclesiasticus 43:11-12. Students choose one aspect of creation and write a short prayer of praise and thanks to God.
* In groups, students create a PowerPoint presentation using appropriate images to accompany the Prayer of St Francis: Canticle of the Sun. These could be used in a class reflection, with music.

Assessment

**Interim Assessment Statement 2014**

The identification of Teaching/Learning strategies as ‘suggested assessment’ has been removed from the 3-6 RE curriculum. The type of assessment activity and the way evidence of learning is gathered will vary, depending on such factors as; the outcomes being assessed, the evidence being gathered, the teaching and learning activity, context and students’ learning needs (NSW Board of Studies, <http://syllabus.bos.nsw.edu.au/support-materials/k-6-assessment-strategies/>) .

Assessment in Religious Education is based on the same principles as in other key learning areas. Please refer to the CEO Sydney site supporting the implementation of the Australian Curriculum in the context of the NSW BOS Syllabus. At this site <https://sites.google.com/a/syd.catholic.edu.au/professional-learning-modules/home> professional learning modules are provided to support teachers as they engage with the NSW BOS Syllabuses for the Australian Curriculum.

**Module 4, Assessment and Planning** explores the principles of effective assessment ***for***, ***as*** and ***of*** learning and considers a range of strategies and methods for assessing student learning. Activities focus on moving beyond assessment as an index of learning, towards assessment that motivates, enhances learning and achieves deeper understanding to meet the diverse learning needs of all as students. Participants are encouraged to reflect on assessment as a driver for improvement in teaching and learning.

**Religious Education Curriculum and Assessment**

In Year 3-6 Religious Education Curriculum, both Syllabus Outcomes and Classroom Outcomes are key reference points for decisions about students’ progress and achievement. Classroom outcomes are more specific to the unit content. Unit Content statement and *Students will learn* statements in each unit should also be taken into account in planning and developing learning and assessment opportunities. Outcomes and Unit Content Statements are derived from Syllabus objectives.

Effective Religious Education involves teaching the Catholic faith (Scripture, doctrine, traditions, prayer and sacraments) and nurturing the faith of the child. There is no attempt to assess the child’s faith. Assessment is concerned with skills, knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith taught in the curriculum and supported in the religious life of the school.

Resources

**To Know Worship and Love – Year 4, Chapter 2, (2003), James Goold House Publications, Melbourne, Victoria**

##### Books

Abbott M rsm, (2001), *Sparks of the Cosmos – Rituals for Seasonal Use,* MediaCom Education Inc, South Australia

Baker J, (1988), *Where the Forest Meets the Sea,* Walker Books, UK

Baker J, (2000), *The Hidden Forest*, Walker Books, UK

Baker J*,* (1991*), Window*s, Random House, UK

Bretherton B A, (1999), *Prayers at your Fingertips*, Social Science Press, Katoomba

Edwards D, (2002), ‘The Creator Spirit’, Catholic Earthcare Council Meeting, 24/11/02 (cf Catholic Earthcare website)

Edwards D, (2012), ‘Jesus and the Natural World’, Garrett Publishing, Australia

Greene R G, (2002), *The Beautiful World That God Made*, illustrated by Anne Wilson. Eerdmans

OlsonS A, (2002), *Tai Chi for Kids:* *Move with the Animals****,*** illustrated by Gregory Crawford, Bear Cub Books

RyanM& Brennan D, *Keystones – Book 4 Expressions (A Religion Series for Catholic Primary Schools)*

Walker K, (Oodgeroo Noonuccal), (1981), *Father Sky, Mother Earth,* Jacaranda Press

Wintour R, (2002), The Story of Creation (Gen 1:1-24 and Gen 2:5-25) from *Just Imagine 2 – More Creative Ways of Presenting Scripture,* Mountjoy Enterprises, Brisbane

Wood D, (1992), *Old Turtle,* Scholastic Press

**Videos**

Catholic Earthcare Australia, (2002), *The Garden Planet* & Study Guide, Bishops’ Commission for Justice, Development and Peace (Ph 02 99565800)

Powell J and Madeline Film Company, *St. Francis of Assisi* (available from PO Box 8622 Gold Coast Mail Centre, QLD 9726)

*St Francis of Assisi,* (1985), Don Bosco Films/Multimedia, USA

**Music**

‘All Things Bright and Beautiful’(Traditional), in *Abide with Me* (CD), (2000),Fastforward Music, England

Brown M, (1999), *Song of Creation,* Celebrating Our Journey and Praise and Blessings, Emmaus Production

Haugen M, (1993), *Song at the Centre,* Agape –The Stories at the Feast, GIA Publications

Haugen Marty, (1992), *Canticle of the Sun,* Anthology 1 1980 – 1984, GIA Publications, 1997 and also *As One Voice*, Willow Connection

Kearney P,(1996), *All the World is Sacred*, All the World is Sacred, Crossover Music

Mangan M, 1998), *Holy Spirit Land,* Sing Jubilee, Litmus Productions

Mangan M, (1997), *Care For Life,* Sing Jubilee, Litmus Productions

Raue, M, (2003) or (2005), *Song of Creation*, can be found on Justice Cries, Justus Productions or Walk Lightly, Catholic Earthcare Australia

Robards, L, (2005), *Dream of the Creator*, Endless Sky, Soul Dream Productions

**Websites**

<http://www.request.org.uk/infants/world/world01.htm> Simple retelling of the creation story from Genesis

<http://www.catholicearthcareoz.net/> Catholic Earthcare Australia

<http://www.ea.gov.au/education/> Australian Environmental Education Network

<http://www.planetark.org/index.cfm> Planet Ark

<http://www.environet.ea.gov.au/> Environment

<http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/index.htm> Pope JP II’s 1990 Environment Message

[www.franciscanfriartor.com](http://whitman.webster.edu/~barrettb/canticle.htm) Prayer of St. Francis: Canticle of the Sun

<http://www.catholic.org.au/index.html> Australian Catholic Bishops Conference – Statements and Submissions (Justice and Peace), ‘A New Earth: The Environmental Challenge’

#### Education Kits

Planet Ark – (1998), *Do Something* Environmental Education in Action for Primary Schools, Australian Association for Environmental Education, Surry Hills, NSW

Key to Symbol

✪ denotes higher order activity

Unit Content 1

God is the creator of all things and all of creation is good.

*Students will learn:*

* about the presence of God revealed in all creation
* about the Creation story in Gen 1 - 2:4, and that they are created in the image of God

Unit Content: Background Information

God is the creator of all that is good and is the source of all being, things seen and unseen, the giver and sustainer of all creation. This creation is entrusted to the care of human beings, who are utterly dependent upon God. We believe that God created the universe and that God delights in all the creatures of the Earth and all creation. We can see the beauty of our world, and through this, God’s presence in our lives.

We are created in the image of God. As part of God’s creation we are connected with all creatures and the natural world. The two creation stories in Genesis express the belief that human beings are made in the image and likeness of God. All creation is indeed good and we are to be responsible for the care of it. This is a role given to us by God, and one which we must take seriously.

In many biblical translations the newly created human beings are told to ‘fill the earth and subdue it’ and they are given ‘dominion’ over other creatures (1:28). It is important that children are not led to think of this as meaning domination over. Fr Denis Edwards cautions about the use of these terms. He writes, “It seems that this was harsh language in the original Hebrew. We need to recognise the danger of these words in today’s context. When taken out of a fuller biblical context they can be misused to justify ecological destruction”. Within a fuller context they can be “interpreted as calling human beings, made in the image of God, to cooperate with the Creator, working with the natural world as God’s good creation.” (Denis Edwards, 2012, Jesus and the Natural World p11)

Suggested Teaching/Learning Strategies

* To begin this unit take the students outside the classroom environment and invite them to experience God’s creation in the natural world. Sit on the grass, look at a leaf, a tree, a bird, a plant, a flower and allow the students to just ‘be’ with it. Invite students to look at nature, reflect, touch, smell and engage with it. Creation is always before our eyes, but we so often miss it or do not have the time to look. Our senses are a gift from God, enabling us to fully engage with God’s creation. Students discuss the item or items that help them to experience the wonder and beauty of God’s creation. How does this enable us to appreciate the presence of God?.
* Tell the story ‘The Goodness of God’s Creation’ (Gen 1- 2:4) using visual materials and suggested script - Resource Sheet 1.
* Engage students in wondering. Suggested wondering statements are:

I wonder which part of creation you like best?

I wonder how you felt, when people were created in the story?

I wonder why, in this story people were created last?

I wonder why God thinks that creation is good?

I wonder what this story tells us about God.

I wonder why God gave humankind dominion over all the other creatures of the earth.

(Let students express their own ideas about this. You may need to explain the meaning of ‘dominion’. After doing this you might like to put this wondering statement to them.)

I wonder how a master or person in authority should act towards those for whom he/she is responsible.

* Give students the opportunity to choose how they would like to respond to / focus on the story. The following could be offered as possibilities.
* Students write about their favourite place in God’s creation. Students use descriptive language to build a picture of their favourite place. These could be illustrated and displayed.
* In small groups, students retell the story and illustrate it. These can be published as class creation books, or they could be displayed.
* Students could develop their own PowerPoint presentations retelling the creation story, using scanned images or illustrations of the different parts of the story.
* Students write an exposition text to convince the reader that God’s creation is indeed good.
* Read *God is At Work In All of Creation* (KWL Year 4, p14&15) and discuss. In groups. students share their experiences of a favourite place in the natural world, e.g. beach, park, in a tree, etc.
* Guide the students through a meditation on the wonders of nature and creation. An example of this can be found in – *Enjoying Nature (A Brief Meditation)* in Prayers at your Fingertips. This book has a range of prayers and liturgies on the theme ‘In Praise of God’s Creation’. Ask the students how the meditation made them feel? Have the students reflect on whether they felt connected to God.
* Pray together ‘Our Prayer’ (from KWL Year 4, p9).
* Read through the first reflection from *Reflecting Together at Home and at School* (KWL Year 4, p19). Can you remember a time when God’s presence was very real for you? Why did you feel connected to God? What kinds of feelings did you have? Students write about their experience in a reflective environment (quiet music, working quietly and individually).
* Draw upon the *Word of God In Tradition* (KWL, Year 4, p16) to link these reflections with the Catholic Tradition.[[3]](#footnote-3) Students use the reflection to write their own prayer of praise or thanks to God.

*If you don’t have the updated version of the KWL books you will need to look up the new translation of the missal for the revised version of Preface of Sundays in Ordinary time V, the prayer referred to In KWL Book 4*

* Students learn to sing *All Things Bright and Beautiful* (Traditional) or *Song of Creation* by Monica Brown or *Song of Creation* by Mark Raue or *Dream of the Creator* by Louise Robards. Identify the gifts that God has given to us.
* Read, *The Beautiful World That God Made* by Rhonda Gowler Greene. The book presents Genesis 1:1-31; 2:1-4 as a chronological account of the creation.
* Use the reflection ‘The Story of Creation’ (Gen 1:1-24) from *Just Imagine 2 – More Creative Ways of Presenting Scripture* by Rina Wintour. This could be used in a Liturgy at the end of the unit.
* Sing *All the World is Sacred* by Peter Kearney. Define the meaning of ‘sacred’ and discuss why all the world is sacred? What impact does this have on the way we live in the world?

Unit Content 2

We are called by God to live in harmony with the earth community.

*Students will learn:*

* about the harmony of all creation as presented in Genesis1-2:4
* to explore how Aboriginal spirituality inspires us to live in harmony with the earth community

Unit Content: Background Information

We human beings and all of earth’s creatures and biological systems are interconnected. All of creation is *God with us.* As human beings we are called to respect and appreciate the dignity and beauty of all creation, and also acknowledge our call to live in harmony with the whole earth community.

As Denis Edwards asserts:

*“We are interconnected in a web of life, in symbiotic relationship, in food chains, in local ecosystems, in a biological community on Earth, in a community that stretches beyond the Earth to the solar system and beyond the solar system to the universe.”* (p4, 2002)

In the traditions of our indigenous brothers and sisters we can see how they recognise their interconnectedness with the land. The sense of connection with place and the land is an integral part of the spirituality of Aboriginal peoples. We can gain insight and inspiration from our indigenous brothers and sisters as we try to work out ways in which we can live in harmony with the world and its peoples. Through their dreamtime sacred stories, Aboriginal peoples have expressed the beauty and wonder of creation and their connection with the earth community. As Christians, our call is to recognise the beauty and wonder of creation and to live in harmony with the world and its peoples, to give praise to God for creation.

This unit lends itself to integration with a unit relating to the ‘Environment’ strand in HSIE. It might also be integrated with PDHPE and Science and Technology.

Suggested Teaching/Learning Strategies

* Read to the students *Father Sky, Mother Earth* by Oodgeroo Noonuccal (Kath Walker). In this book the author and illustrator explain how Father Sky and Mother Earth created an environment that existed happily in ecological balance, but was destroyed by the human animal. Students identify ways that human beings have contributed to the disharmony of the world.
* Sing *Holy Spirit Land* by Michael Mangan or *Song at the Centre* by Marty Haugen and link to Aboriginal spirituality, which recognises the sacredness of the land and the interconnectedness of all God’s creation. Discuss Aboriginal spiritual values, in particular, the sacredness of the land –
  + the land is sacred because of its links with God and the ancestors who have lived and died there
  + pollution desecrates the land
  + people must respect and take care of the land for future generations
  + each of us is connected with all of creation
  + all aspects of life are sacred: painting, hunting, food gathering, daily living.
* Investigate the meaning of the word ‘harmony’. How can we live in harmony with our world and with each other? Identify actions between people that create harmony and disharmony? Students role play some scenarios of harmony and disharmony.
* Brainstorm words that describe harmonious relationships and characteristics, e.g. care, trust, respect, belief, hope, confidence, reliance, connection, dignity, love. Students write about a harmonious relationship they have with someone.
* Using objects and items found in nature, students create a class or individual collage of Creation as depicted in Genesis 1-2:4. Use books by Jeannie Baker (*Where the Forest Meets the Sea, Window, The Hidden Forest*) to give the children ideas on how to create a collage. Students think of a short statement that accompanies the collage, e.g. ‘We are called to live in harmony with all creation’.
* Introduce the students to some Haiku poetry, which is a Japanese style of poetry that often reflects on the environment, the seasons and nature. Students write their own Haiku poem about harmony in creation.
* Lead the students through some stilling, relaxing, movement exercises. Allow the students to become aware of God’s presence in them and around them, becoming aware of their breathing and their interconnectedness with all of God’s creation. Through movement and breathing exercises, invite the students to be one with God within and in the world.
* Immerse students in stories, fact or fiction, which focus on aspects of the living world and the universe.
* Read Old Turtle by Douglas Wood. This is a parable about reverence for the earth and all its creatures and is a plea for understanding between people and nature.
* After reading Old Turtle, students write their own ‘beginning’ story, telling how the world should be (no pollution, no war, no hatred, all living beings and things living in harmony with each other).

Unit Content 3

Our decisions to respect and care for the environment affect the community now and in the future.

*Students will learn:*

* about the Church’s call to a change of heart and mind in relation to the environment and a greater respect for it
* about environmental issues that threaten the sacredness of God’s creation
* to identify some ways that they can care for and respect creation

Unit Content: Background Information

We all share a responsibility for stewardship or care of the environment. The things we do individually and as a society all have an effect on the world. It is our sacred duty to ensure that the choices we make individually and collectively show that we respect God and we respect God’s creation. Unfortunately, our history and some of our present economic, political and social structures do not adequately reflect this.

In 2001, Pope John Paul II stated that we must have an “ecological conversion”, and change our attitudes and habits so that connectedness between all created things in the environment can be restored. For us to respect God we must also respect what God has created. By showing disrespect for the land, sea or sky we violate and denigrate the sacredness of God’s creation. Pollution of the earth and seas is a violation and we are challenged to restore the sacredness of creation through our actions and choices. Our choice to recycle, reduce pollution, care for plants, animals and people, all contribute to the well-being of creation now and in the future.

Suggested Teaching/Learning Strategies

* Using Resource Sheet 2, students read through recent Papal statements which highlight the Church’s call to a change of heart and mind and greater respect for the environment. In groups students identify key ideas and find examples of how they might do this in their own home, school and local community.
* Students view the You Tube clip [*The Garden Planet*](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IvaEwmrNI2M)produced by Catholic Earthcare Australia with the cooperation of the Bishops’ Commission for Justice, Development and Peace. The clip can be used to generate class discussion about environmental issues and what our response as Christians should be. Suggested use: view in sections, stopping after each section and discussing pertinent points, i.e. what damage has been done to the environment in Australia? How does damaging the environment affect human beings? What do we need to do to care for our world now and for the future? What is the invitation and challenge of this clip? What does Catholic Earthcare do? What personal choices do I need to make for the environment? (The study guide lists other possible discussion questions for Primary students.)
* After viewing the You Tube clip, students might:
  + Create an environmental checklist of possible environmental issues around their school and home.
  + Brainstorm choices that can be made individually and collectively to care for the environment and live in harmony with God’s creation
* Read through ‘Living the Gospel’section (KWL, Year 4, p18) and discuss the many things that we can do around our homes and schools that show we are stewards of creation. Refer to points 3 and 5 in ‘Reflecting Together at Home and at School’ (KWL, Year 4, p19) and discuss.
* Design a plan that shows how people can be responsible for one part of God’s creation. (Plan is to focus on either Humankind, the Environment or Animals)
* Sing a related song e.g. *Care For Life* by Michael Mangan. In groups, illustrate the aspects of creation, for which we need to care, identified in the song.
* Using education kits such as *Do Something: Environmental Education in Action for Primary Schools* by Planet Ark and other appropriate materials, students identify some of the environmental concerns in our world.
* Students design a car sticker that has a slogan or message about caring for God’s creation. These stickers could be placed around the school, as a reminder that we all must respect our school environment as part of the sacredness of creation.

Unit Content 4

Psalms assist us in our prayers of praise, thanks and wonder of God’s creation.

*Students will learn:*

* about the Psalms of wonder, praise and thanksgiving for creation
* about St Francis of Assisi and the Canticle of Creation

Unit Content: Background Information

Creation is a free and gracious act of God, an outpouring of divine love and goodness that finds its expression in the extraordinary beauty and diversity of our universe. All the beauty, power and goodness of God are reflected in creation. Our response then to God’s creation should be one of thankfulness and celebration.

Whenever we see beauty in the world we discover that God is present, and this calls us to acknowledge and thank God for all that we have been given. It is appropriate that we take the time to stop and admire God’s creation and reflect on our place in it. We can be filled with joy and admiration at the amazing world we live in and our natural response is one of praise and thanksgiving. Through prayer and ritual, our imaginations are enlivened and we are called to action, to praise and give reverence to God who is present in all that we see, hear, say, feel and do.

We can find this celebration of the beauty and wonder of creation in the Psalms. The Psalms are expressions or songs from the heart of people struggling to live a life of faith. They enable us to express our own experience of life in the light of our relationship with God and all of creation. The Psalms draw us more deeply into a life of faith and help us to articulate our gratitude and praise for the gifts that God has given.

In the life and prayers of St. Francis of Assisi we find that a relationship of kinship exists among all of God's creatures. This is what St. Francis of Assisi, patron saint for ecology, celebrated in his life and in his Canticle of Creation. He sang of the sun, the moon, the stars, the wind, the water and fire as brothers and sisters, and of our sister, Mother Earth. We can learn much about ecological conversion from the life and message of St. Francis.

Suggested Teaching/Learning Strategies

* Read ‘The Word of God – In Scripture’in KWL Year 4, p16, Hymn of praise (Psalm 148:1-5,7-14) and discuss the importance of recognising and praising God’s act of creation. Identify the areas of creation that praise God. Lead the students to understand that through praising and thanking God we can truly appreciate the great gift of creation. We can be inspired and empowered to look after and live in harmony with creation.
* Using a format similar to Psalm 148, students compose their own Hymn of Praise. Students identify areas of creation that express the praises of God. These could be published into a class book of Creation Prayers.
* Introduce students to the Prayer of St. Francis: Canticle of the Sun. Excerpt in KWL, Year 4, p17 ‘Our Prayer’section. Complete text can be found on <http://www.franciscanfriarstor.com/archive/stfrancis/stf_canticle_of_the_sun.htm>
* In groups, students create a PowerPoint presentation using appropriate images to accompany the Prayer of St Francis: Canticle of the Sun. These could be used in a class reflection, with music.
  + Explain to students that in 1979 Pope John Paul II named St. Francis of Assisi the patron saint of ecologists and those who work to protect the earth. Make reference to Pope Francis and why he chose the name Francis (see Resource Sheet 2 of Papal Quotes). View a DVD on the life of St. Francis, and identify Francis’ message of justice and care for all of creation.
  + Students identify ways that St. Francis of Assisi displayed the Christian calling to be a caretaker of God’s creation. What are some ways that we can be like St. Francis and care for creation?
  + Jointly construct a class psalm that expresses the wonder, beauty and awe of God’s creation. Include in the psalm our call to live in harmony and be stewards and caretakers of creation.
  + Sing *Canticle of the Sun* by Marty Haugen. Students devise movements and prayerful gestures to accompany the song.
  + Students read Ecclesiasticus 43:11-12. Students choose one aspect of creation and write a short prayer of praise and thanks to God.
  + Prepare a class celebration focusing on the theme of creation. Use the songs, prayers, prayer gestures and readings that the students are familiar with and have used throughout the unit. The class could share its celebration with the school community, to raise consciousness and awareness of the need for all of us to appreciate the gift of God’s creation.

**Resource Sheet 1**

**The Goodness of God’s Creation**

**(Genesis 1 - 2:4)**

**YOU WILL NEED:**

A large piece of black fabric to represent the universe (at least 1m x 1m)

Stars- Sequins or pre-packaged foil stars

A large blue fabric circle- Earth (approx 70cm in diameter)

See *‘Unit 4.6 templates and images for Creation story’* online in Religious Education Primary for the following:

Templates – use white felt in the shape of clouds; pieces of brown felt representing the continents; 2 pieces of white felt representing the Arctic and Antarctica;

2D images to laminate – sun, moon, fish, plants, animals, birds, people.

*Children are seated in a semi-circle ready to listen to the story.*

*Place the black felt background into the middle of the story space.*

**In the Bible there is a very old story which the people of God told to explain how God made all of creation.**

*Sprinkle the stars and sequins over the fabric representing the universe.*

**This story has been told for thousands of years and we are going to hear it today.**

*Roll out a large blue circle of fabric over the black fabric.*

**In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered it, while the wind swept over the face of the waters.**

**Then God said, “Let there be light” … and there was light.**

**God saw that the light was good. God called the light Day and the darkness Night.**

*Place clouds onto one part of the circle to represent the sky.*

**Then God said, ‘Let there be a dome over the waters.’ So God made the dome and called the dome ‘Sky’.**

**God said, ‘Let the waters of the earth become, lakes and rivers, seas and oceans so that the land can appear.’**

*Place the brown patches of felt over the blue fabric to represent the continents, use white pieces to represent the Arctic and Antarctica.*

**And so it was.**

**The dry land was called earth and *God saw that it was good.***

*Sweeping action of the hands.*

**Then God said, ‘Let the earth be covered in plants with seeds, and fruit trees of every kind.’**

*Place the trees, bushes and flowers onto the land.*

**And so the land was covered in plants of every kind and *God saw that it was good.***

*Sweeping action of the hands.*

**God said, ‘Let there be lights in the sky to separate day from night and to shine on the earth and light it. Let them be signs to show the seasons, the days and the years.’**

*Place the sun onto the black cloth near the earth and the moon on the opposite side of the earth.*

**God made the two great lights, the sun to shine in the day and the moon for the night. And *God saw that it was good.*** *Sweeping action of the hands.*

**Then God said, ‘Let the waters be filled with living creatures…’**

*Place some of the sea creatures onto the water naming them as they are placed.*

**And God said, ‘Let birds fly across the sky.’**

*Place some of the birds on the sky near the clouds and in the trees. Name them as they are placed.*

**So God created sea creatures and birds of every kind. And *God saw that it was good.***

*Sweeping action of the hands.*

**Then, God blessed them, saying, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas and oceans and let birds multiply on the earth.’** *Add more birds and fish to the space.*

**God said, ‘Let there be living creatures of every kind, cattle and creeping things and wild animals.’** *Place the creatures onto the land.*

**And so it was, God created living creatures of every kind. And *God saw that it was good.***

*Sweeping action of the hands.*

**Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image and likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the cattle, all the wild beasts and all the reptiles that crawl on the earth.’**

*Place two people on the earth while saying…*

**And so God created humankind, in the image of God they were created, male and female God created them.**

*Raise hands in blessing over the people.*

**Then God blessed the people saying, ‘Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over all the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the cattle, and all the wild animals of the earth, and every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.**

*Place more people over every continent of the earth with the animals and plants.*

**God said, “See, I have given you every seed-bearing plant and every plant with seed in its fruit for food. And I have given green plants for food to every living creature.**

*Raise hands in blessing over the earth.*

**God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.**  *Sweeping action of the hands.*

**When God saw all that had been created, God rested from all the work that had been done.**

*Sit back and rest in a relaxed position*

**God gave us the gift of rest which we called sabbath.**

*Invite the students to rest for a moment where they are and ponder the story.*

*Direct the student’s attention back into the space and begin the ‘I wonder’ questions.*

**I wonder...**

I wonder which part of creation you like best?

I wonder how you felt when God created people in the story?

I wonder why people were created last in this story?

I wonder what this story tells us about God.

I wonder why God thinks that creation is good?

I wonder why God gave humankind *dominion* over all the other creatures of the earth.

*(Let students express their own ideas about this. You may need to explain the meaning of ‘dominion’. After doing this you might like to put this wondering statement to them.)*

I wonder how a master or person in authority should act towards those for whom he/she is responsible.

**Resource Sheet 2**

**4.6 ONE WITH GOD’S CREATION**

**Papal Quotes on the Environment**



Humanity has in its possession a gift that must be passed on to future generations, if possible, passed on in better condition.

*On the Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and the World (Christifideles Laici) Pope John Paul II, 1988*

As one called to till and look after the garden of the world (cf. Gen 2:15), humanity has a specific responsibility towards the environment in which we live, towards the creation which God has put at the service of our personal dignity, of our own life, not only for the present but also for future generations.

*Evangelium Vitae, Section 42, Pope John Paul II 1995*

It is the duty of Christians and of all who look to God as the Creator to protect the environment by restoring a sense of reverence for the whole of God's creation. It is the Creator's will that humanity should treat nature not as a ruthless exploiter but as an intelligent and responsible administrator.

*Ecclesia in Asia, Pope John Paul II, 1999*



Contemplating the beauty of creation inspires us to recognize the love of the Creator, that Love which “moves the sun and the other stars”.

*World Day of Peace, Pope Benedict XVI, 2010*

If you want to cultivate peace, protect creation. The quest for peace by people of good will surely would become easier if all acknowledge the indivisible relationship between God, human beings and the whole of creation.

*World Day of Peace, Pope Benedict XVI, 2010*

And so the name came to my heart: Francis of Assisi. For me he is the man of poverty, the man of peace, the man who loves and safeguards Creation. In this moment when our relationship with Creation is not so good—right?—He is the man who gives us this spirit of peace, the poor man … Oh, how I wish for a Church that is poor and for the poor!”



*First Address, Pope Francis, 2013*

Let us be ‘protectors’ of creation, protectors of God’s plan inscribed in nature, protectors of one another and of the environment. Let us not allow omens of destruction and death to accompany the advance of this world!

*Installation Mass Homily, Pope Francis, 2013*

1. KWL, Teaching Companion, 3b, p52 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. KWL, Teaching Companion, 3b, p54 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. KWL, Teaching Companion, 3b, p54 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)