5.6 Creation – A Change of Heart

This unit explores creation as a gift from God, which we are called to care for and protect. Students will identify issues of misuse and mismanagement in the environment and explore how we, as stewards of creation, can respond appropriately and compassionately.

The unit will introduce the concept of ‘ecological conversion’ which calls us to change the ways in which we relate to each other and to the whole of God’s creation. The students will identify their call to challenge those ways and structures that oppress and exploit creation.

The concept of Sabbath and the need for Sabbath time in our lives will also be explored in the unit.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Values & Attitudes**  *Students will demonstrate that they are:* | **Knowledge & Understandings**  *Students will demonstrate that they can:* | **Skills**  *Students will demonstrate that they can:* |
| Cr3.1 able to value symbols from the earth community as expressions of God’s presence in all creation | identify how symbols from creation are used in Scriptures to communicate God’s presence | use symbols from the earth community to celebrate the presence of God in all creation |
| Cr3.2 able to identify actions of stewardship and carry them out | explain what is required of stewardship | examine practical ways of being stewards in the earth community | |

Syllabus Outcomes  
Creation – Stage 3

Classroom Outcomes

*Students will be able to:*

* describe all of creation as a gift of God
* identify how human beings have misused God’s creation and name some solutions to environmental concerns
* describe what Sabbath means and identify how they can rest, re-create and give praise to God
* explain the concept of ecological conversion and identify how human beings care for creation

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Scripture | Doctrine |
| Genesis 1-2:3 *Creation story*  Genesis 1:26 - 2:3 *Stewardship of humanity for creation*  Wisdom 9:1-4 *Rule creation with justice and wholeness* | * God created all living things * All of creation reveals the love of God * Creation reflects the wisdom, beauty and love of God * Christians are called to share in and care for the earth community |

Spiritual Reflection for Teachers

With the hectic pace of life today we can often be so busy that we do not allow ourselves time to stop and reflect on the wonder and beauty of creation and our place within it. We need to give ourselves permission to ‘rest’ and experience ‘sabbath’ time. In so doing we create a space to become aware of and acknowledge the God in whom we live and breathe and have our being.

Allowing for 'sabbath' time in our lives, enables us to rest and re-create; time when we can restore relationships, pursue social and cultural interests and simply relax. By caring for ourselves we are better able to care for all of creation.

Each of us needs to be a caretaker of God’s gifts to us, protecting our cosmos from abuse and challenging that which threatens the smallest part of it.

Where do I personally stand in my stewardship of the environment?

Do I really feel connected to the whole of creation and realise my responsibility to care for it?

Do I allow myself time in my life to stop, rest and re-create?

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.**

**302** Creation has its own goodness and proper perfection, but it did not spring forth complete from the hands of the Creator. The universe was created ‘in a state of journeying’ *(in statu viae)* toward an ultimate perfection yet to be attained, to which God has destined it. We call ‘divine providence’ the dispositions by which God guides his creation toward this perfection.

**340** God wills the interdependence of creatures. The sun and the moon, the cedar and the little flower, the eagle and the sparrow: the spectacle of their countless diversities and inequalities tells us that no creature is self-sufficient. Creatures exist only in dependence on each other, to complete each other, in the service of each other.

**345** The Sabbath – the end of the work of the six days. The sacred text says that “on the seventh day God finished his work which he had done,” that the “heavens and the earth were finished,” and that God “rested” on this day and sanctified and blessed it.

**2402** In the beginning God entrusted the earth and its resources to the common stewardship of mankind to take care of them, master them by labour and enjoy their fruits. The goods of creation are destined for the whole human race.

**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.

**2170** Scripture also reveals in the Lord's day a memorial of Israel's liberation from bondage in Egypt: "You shall remember that you were a servant in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out thence with mighty hand and outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the sabbath day."[[1]](#footnote-1)

**2172** God's action is the model for human action. If God "rested and was refreshed" on the seventh day, man too ought to "rest" and should let others, especially the poor, "be refreshed.[[2]](#footnote-2)" The sabbath brings everyday work to a halt and provides a respite. It is a day of protest against the servitude of work and the worship of money.

**2174** Jesus rose from the dead "on the first day of the week."[104](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/__P7O.HTM" \l "$29N) Because it is the "first day," the day of Christ's Resurrection recalls the first creation. Because it is the "eighth day" following the sabbath,[105](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/__P7O.HTM" \l "$29O) it symbolizes the new creation ushered in by Christ's Resurrection. For Christians it has become the first of all days, the first of all feasts, the Lord's Day (he kuriake hemera, dies dominica) Sunday:

We all gather on the day of the sun, for it is the first day [after the Jewish sabbath, but also the first day] when God, separating matter from darkness, made the world; and on this same day Jesus Christ our Savior rose from the dead.[106](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/__P7O.HTM" \l "$29P)

**2176** The celebration of Sunday observes the moral commandment inscribed by nature in the human heart to render to God an outward, visible, public, and regular worship "as a sign of his universal beneficence to all."[[3]](#footnote-3) Sunday worship fulfills the moral command of the Old Covenant, taking up its rhythm and spirit in the weekly celebration of the Creator and Redeemer of his people.

**2177** The Sunday celebration of the Lord's Day and his Eucharist is at the heart of the Church's life.   
"Sunday is the day on which the paschal mystery is celebrated in light of the apostolic tradition and is to be observed as the foremost holy day of obligation in the universal Church."[[4]](#footnote-4)

**2180** The precept of the Church specifies the law of the Lord more precisely: "On Sundays and other holy days of obligation the faithful are bound to participate in the Mass."[[5]](#footnote-5) "The precept of participating in the Mass is satisfied by assistance at a Mass which is celebrated anywhere in a Catholic rite either on the holy day or on the evening of the preceding day.

**2184** Just as God "rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done,"[[6]](#footnote-6) human life has a rhythm of work and rest. The institution of the Lord's Day helps everyone enjoy adequate rest and leisure to cultivate their familial, cultural, social, and religious lives.

**2185** On Sundays and other holy days of obligation, the faithful are to refrain from engaging in work or activities that hinder the worship owed to God, the joy proper to the Lord's Day, the performance of the works of mercy, and the appropriate relaxation of mind and body.[123](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/__P7O.HTM" \l "$2A6) Family needs or important social service can legitimately excuse from the obligation of Sunday rest. the faithful should see to it that legitimate excuses do not lead to habits prejudicial to religion, family life, and health.

The charity of truth seeks holy leisure - the necessity of charity accepts just work.[124](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/__P7O.HTM" \l "$2A7)

**2186** Those Christians who have leisure should be mindful of their brethren who have the same needs and the same rights, yet cannot rest from work because of poverty and misery. Sunday is traditionally consecrated by Christian piety to good works and humble service of the sick, the infirm, and the elderly. Christians will also sanctify Sunday by devoting time and care to their families and relatives, often difficult to do on other days of the week. Sunday is a time for reflection, silence, cultivation of the mind, and meditation which furthers the growth of the Christian interior life.

Scripture: Background Information

## Genesis 1: 26 - 2:3 Stewardship of Humanity for Creation

These verses are at the end of the first account of creation. The priestly editors of this text assure us that humanity is created in the image and likeness of God – both male and female. The logic follows that if humankind is given dominion over the earth, then like God we should be creators and not destroyers of the earth. Be conservers of the created order. “Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and conquer it” 1:28 does sound as though we have the right to control and do what we want. This is how the text has been interpreted in the past, but today we see that a different understanding is necessary. We now realise that if we continue to treat the earth thoughtlessly we will destroy it, which of course is contradictory to the image of a life-giving God. Verses 2:2-3 describe God resting – God keeps the Sabbath. This of course is a predictable message from the priestly editors but it contains a wisdom that we need to recall here. The need to rest is not only beneficial to humans but to the earth as well. All life requires the chance to recover and re-create itself.

**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.

**Wisdom 9: 1-4 Rule Creation with Justice and Wholeness**

This very late book of the Old Testament is influenced by Greek thought even though it is still a very Jewish text. It contains some rather radical theology in its later chapters; however what we have here links into the two previous readings. Wisdom is needed to care for our world. And wisdom brings holiness or wholeness and justice. Thus what the world needs from us is wholeness and justice that are guided by wisdom.

The Church’s Teaching and Lived Tradition

**In Tradition: *To Know, Worship and Love,* Year 5, p7**

**Apostles’ Creed**

The Apostles’ Creed was written between AD 150 and AD 400 as a summary of Christian faith required before baptism. This compact creed is derived from the apostles, in the sense that it contains their teachings recorded in the New Testament.

**Nicene Creed**

The longer and more technical Nicene Creedwas proclaimed by the Council of Nicea in 325 and contains a summary of the great truths of the Catholic Faith. In 381 the section on the Holy Spirit was added by the Council of Constantinople. This is the creed we say or sing at Mass on Sundays and solemnities.

We are empowered as human beings to be responsible for God’s creation. God’s plan in caring for us and for all creation is called **Divine Providence.**

**St. Augustine, Confessions**

St. Augustine was born 354, in North Africa. After being baptised in Milan, this great scholar returned to his native land and became Bishop of Hippo in 396, where he established communities of priests. He is regarded as the greatest theologian of the early Church. Among his many books, the ‘Confessions’ continue to attract many readers in our own age, because here is a personal account of his early life, his moral and spiritual struggles, and his dramatic conversion to Catholic Christianity.[[7]](#footnote-7)

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.**

* Pray throughout the unit *A Psalm to our Provident Creator* from Our Prayer section (KWL Year 5, p8)
* Use *Prayers at your Fingertips* by Barbara Ann Bretherton throughout the unit. This book has a range of prayers and liturgies on the theme ‘In Praise of God’s Creation’.
* Sing, *Song at the Centre* by Marty Haugen and discuss how we are all interconnected with the whole cosmos. Students devise movements and sacred dance that reflect the idea that all of creation is graced by God.
* Invite the students to participate in a guided meditation on the theme of creation. A good example of one is in *Be Still – Creation Meditations* by Jill Gowdie and Michael Mangan which includes a CD as well as the written text.
* Class ritual, celebrating creation – Use ‘Spiral Walk: Story of Creation’ p26 & 27 from *Sparks of the Cosmos – Rituals for Seasonal Use* by Margie Abbott rsm. Students experience a ritual, honouring the ‘birth’ of the universe. Sing *Song at the Centre* accompanied by sacred movements and dance from previous activity.
* As a class, students write a penitential prayer of sorrow for humanity’s misuse and mismanagement of God’s creation. Use in a class reconciliation prayer for the environment.
* Sing *Mother Earth* by Monica Brown and devise movements to accompany the lyrics. Students draw or paint their response to the song. Use in a class prayer focussing on reconciliation between humankind and the environment.
* Students paint, colour or draw a mandala. A Christian mandala is a reflective and artistic response to a meditation or Scripture reading. It is based on a circle, which is a symbol of wholeness and often features at the centre the connecting points of the cross. (See Appendix.)

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 5, Chapter 1,* (2003), James Goold House Publications, Melbourne, Victoria**

**Books**

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

Bretherton B A, (1997), *You and Me God – Prayers and Guided Meditations for Children,* Social Science Press, Katoomba, NSW

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

Gold A and Perlman M,(2001), *Where Does God Live?*, Skylight Paths Publishing

Gowdie J and Mangan M, (2002), *Be Still – Creation Meditations* (CD & Book), Litmus Productions

Ryan M and Brennan D, *Keystones – Book 7 Prospects (A Religion Series for Catholic Primary Schools)*

**Music**

Armstrong L, *What a Wonderful World*

Brown M, (2001), *Mother Earth,* ‘One People, One Land’, Emmaus Productions

Brown M, (1992), *As One Voice*, Willow Connection

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

Kearney P, (1996), *All Thank God,* ‘All the World is Sacred’, Crossover Music

Lennon J, *Saltwater*

McAuley, (1995), *Song of Cosmic Praise,* Gather Australia, NLMC Publications & GIA Publications, Inc

Mangan M, (1997), *Free the World,* ‘Sing Jubilee’, Litmus Productions

Mangan M, (1997), *This is the Time,* ‘Sing Jubilee’, Litmus Productions

Raue M, (2003), *Song of Creation,* ‘Justice Cries’, Justus Music

Watts T, (1992), *Canticle of Creation, ‘A*rise! Awake! Collection’, Willow Connection

**Videos**

*Saving Hieronymous*,‘Saving Hieronymous’ - An educational kit for students aged 9-11 on saving energy and the greenhouse effect. Video, poster, teaching guide, fact sheets, student activities, blackline masters

GionoJ, (1987), *The Man Who Planted Trees,* Canadian Broadcasting Corporation

**Websites**

Catholic Earthcare Australia <http://www.catholicearthcare.org.au/>

The Awesome Cosmic Story – new resource soon to be released by Catholic Earthcare Australia (see link above.)

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

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

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

Catholic Conservation Centre <http://conservation.catholic.org/>

YouTube clip: What A Wonderful World <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B8WHKRzkCOY>

John Paul II’s statements on the Environment <http://conservation.catholic.org/john_paul_ii.htm>

Action Group For Kids: [www.learningpeace.com/pages/rtp\_actionkids.html](http://www.learningpeace.com/pages/rtp_actionkids.html)

Kids Can Make A Difference: [www.kidscanmakeadifference.org/cando.htm](http://www.kidscanmakeadifference.org/cando.htm)

Free The Children: [www.freethechildren.org](http://www.freethechildren.org)

We Can Make A Difference: [www.epa.gov/globalwarming/kids/difference.html](http://www.epa.gov/globalwarming/kids/difference.html)

Australian Catholic Bishops Conference: Submissions and Statements ‘A New Earth: The Environmental Challenge’ <http://www.catholic.org.au/>

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

**Education Kits**

Australian Catholic Social Justice Council - *Sustaining Creation: An Ecumenical Environment Action Kit*

Catholic Education Office, Sydney, (1990), *Earth Community Education,* CEO Sydney, NSW

Earthcare Australia – CD Rom *Freshwater is Sacred Water, (*2003), Catholic Earthcare Australia

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

*Saving Hieronymous*  - An educational kit for students aged 9-11 on saving energy and the greenhouse effect. Video, poster, teaching guide, fact sheets, student activities, blackline masters (produced by Marje Prior and Associates Pty Ltd for the Department of Primary Industry & Energy, Sydney, NSW, 1993

Key to Symbol

✪ denotes higher order activity

Unit Content 1

Creation is a gift from God to all people.

*Students will learn:*

* about creation as graced by God and a gift to all people
* about the inter-connectedness of creation
* to reflect with thanksgiving on all of God’s creation

Unit Content: Background Information

Creation is graced by God and is a gift that is valuable, sacred and reveals the glory and goodness of God. We depend on God utterly as God upholds every moment of our existence. Because of this we respect and reverence the gift of God’s creation.

*God calls creatures into existence by a fully free and sovereign decision. In a real, though limited and partial way, they participate in the perfection of God’s absolute fullness. The ensemble of creatures constitutes the universe. In its totality as well as its parts, the visible and invisible cosmos reflects eternal Wisdom and expresses the inexhaustible love of the Creator*.

Pope John Paul II General Audience March 12, 1986

To feel in the depths of our being that we are part and parcel of the evolutionary ecosystem of our cosmos is a prerequisite for contemporary Christian theology. God has given us life and in return we are called to respect and be thankful for the complexity and beauty of God’s gift of creation.

Suggested Teaching/Learning Strategies

* As an introduction to the unit students listen to the song *What a Wonderful World* by Louis Armstrong or show YouTube clip <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B8WHKRzkCOY> and reflect on the words and images. Invite the children to name examples of wonder in the world.
  + Use *Prayers at your Fingertips* by Barbara Ann Bretherton throughout the unit. This book has a range of prayers and liturgies on the theme ‘In Praise of God’s Creation’.
  + Read through beginning chapter, ‘God the Creator” from KWL Year 5, p5-6. Discuss.
  + Class discussion about the word ‘grace’. See above Unit Content: Background Information. Discuss the word ‘awe’ and link it to our response to creation.
  + Invite the students to think about aspects of creation that give them a sense of awe and wonder. For example:

- the intricate beauty of a flower or plant,

- the variety of life in all its forms

- the beauty of a sunrise or sunset

- the beach and ocean

- the smell of a rose,

- the way the earth provides for the growth of food

- the birth of a new baby

- the vastness of rivers, lakes and mountains

- the individuality of your hand and fingerprints

* ✪ - In pairs, students share the ways that they see their ‘aspect’ as being graced by God. Students express their ideas of creation being graced by God in a medium of their own choosing e.g. painting, drawing, PowerPoint. As students work, play *Song at the Centre* by Marty Haugen and ask the students to work in a reflective way.
* Sing *Song at the Centre* by Marty Haugen. Reflect on the words and discuss how we are all interconnected as part of the cosmos. Students devise movements and sacred dance that reflect the idea that all of creation is graced by God or use abstract art to represent the idea of interconnectedness.
* Invite the students to participate in a guided meditation on the theme of creation. A good example is in *Be Still – Creation Meditations* by Jill Gowdie and Michael Mangan which includes a CD as well as the written text.
* Read the book, *Where Does God Live?* by August Gold and Matthew J Perlman. Students to write own examples of where they think God lives. Publish into a class book.
* Sing *All Thank God* by Peter Kearney or *Song of Cosmic Praise* by James McAuley and identify those parts of creation for which we are thankful.
* Read *In Tradition* KWL Year 5, p7. Discuss the excerpts from the Apostles’ Creed and Nicene Creed and identify the differences. Read the words of St. Augustine *“When I asked the earth…* Students to write down some of the ways that they can show their love and wonder of God through God’s creation.
* Class ritual celebrating creation – Use ‘Spiral Walk: Story of Creation’ p26 & 27 from *Sparks of the Cosmos – Rituals for Seasonal Use* by Margie Abbott rsm. Students experience a ritual, honouring the ‘birth’ of the Universe. Sing *Song at the Centre* accompanied by sacred movements and dance from previous activity.
* Pray throughout the unit *A Psalm to our Provident Creator* from ‘Our Prayer’ section KWL Year 5, p8.

Unit Content 2

The environment is sometimes misused and mismanaged.

*Students will learn:*

* about ways human beings have mismanaged and misused God’s creation
* about some of the positive and negative consequences of technology

Unit Content: Background Information

According to the Judaeo-Christian conviction, the earth is created as a place of extraordinary beauty and richness. Human beings are created of the earth and though they are given stewardship of all that exists, there is no suggestion that this permits them to ravish the natural world. In Genesis we read of the disruption to creation symbolised by the sin of Adam and Eve. This sinfulness dislocated human relationship to the earth so that from then on human beings have had to earn their living from the earth by the sweat of their brows.

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)

Throughout humankind’s history there has been a misuse and mismanagement of the environment; the plant, land and animal life, as well as a failure to live in harmony with our fellow human brothers and sisters. If we are to take seriously the words of Pope John Paul II *“to stimulate and sustain the “ecological conversion”, which over these last decades has made humanity more sensitive when facing the catastrophe toward which it was moving”* we must acknowledge where we have failed in our relationships with the environment and with each other. Only when we recognise and take responsibility for past and present mistakes are we able to take positive steps to change attitudes and behaviours affecting our world and everything in it.

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

Suggested Teaching/Learning Strategies

* + Tell the story ‘Stewards of Creation’ (based on Genesis 1 - 2:3) using 2D felt and laminated materials. See Resource Sheet 1. Note: This story recalls the Creation story in Genesis 1 which was told in Unit 4.6 and adds a focus on stewardship of the environment (1:26 – 2:3).
  + Engage students in wondering. The following wondering statements are a guide.
* I wonder which part of the story you liked best.
* I wonder how we can be co-creators with God.
* I wonder what it means to be given *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.
* I wonder how you feel about God’s creation being damaged.
* I wonder what you think we could do to stop the destruction.
* I wonder why God took Sabbath time and rested.
* I wonder how you take Sabbath time.
* I wonder how the earth gets time to rest and restore itself.
* Use Catholic Earthcare Australia resource, ’The Awesome Cosmic Story’. This is an interactive digital resource that brings together the theological teachings of Genesis and the discoveries of science such as astronomy, cosmology and biology. Students can work individually or in groups to explore the five sections that take them on an ‘Awesome Cosmic journey’. This resource can be accessed at <http://www.catholicearthcare.org.au/>
* Show the students the PowerPoint presentation about God’s creation from Catholic Earthcare Australia – CD Rom *Freshwater is Sacred Water.* (This can be adapted for specific use) Discuss astronaut Michael Collins’ comment about the “fragility of the earth”. Identify what ‘fragile’ means and how the earth has suffered because of humankind’s thoughtlessness and carelessness.
* Using education kits and sites such as Catholic Earthcare and Planet Ark, explore some of the areas where humankind has mismanaged and misused creation. Possible areas to explore: water, land, air, soil erosion, pollution, animal extinction, use of fossil fuels and harmful energy sources, littering, etc.
* Students to complete a research project on one aspect of creation that has been harmed due to human intervention or contact.
* ✪ - Students reflect on the statement, “Human beings have had a positive and negative effect on God’s creation”. In groups students record and compare what they regard as the positive and negative effects human beings have had upon God’s creation.
* Identify positive and negative effects of technology on the environment. Select issues of interest to the students. Critique some of these issues using De Bono’s Thinking Hats as a framework e.g.:
* White hat: the facts – Consider the facts about the issue. Using a variety of sources, locate and share four interesting facts you have discovered about the issue.
* Black hat: bad points – List the negative consequences.
* Red hat: emotions – Communicate how the issue makes you feel.
* Green hat: creative points – Present some creative solutions to this issue.
* Yellow hat: the good points – Outline the positive consequences in suggesting possible solutions to this issue.
* Blue hat: thinking – As a result of all your thinking, summarise in three sentences the importance of this issue for you. Propose one thing you might now do about this issue.[[8]](#footnote-8)
* ✪ -As a class brainstorm the advances in science and technology over the last century. Conduct a debate about whether humankind has developed science and technology according to God’s plan.[[9]](#footnote-9)
* Sing *Free the World* by Michael Mangan.
* Read Wisdom 9:1-4. Identify in this passage, those words of scripture that indicate how we should live in accordance with God’s plan. Recognise where humankind has failed to live up to expectations and responsibilities. As a class, students write a penitential prayer of sorrow for humanity’s misuse and mismanagement of God’s creation. Use in a class reconciliation prayer for the environment.
* Sing *Mother Earth* by Monica Brown and devise movements to accompany the lyrics. Students choose a means of responding to the song using e.g. drawing, painting, journaling… Use in a class prayer focusing on reconciliation between humankind and the environment.

Unit Content 3

Stewardship calls us to take responsibility for the protection and care of the earth community by exploring and developing better ways to live in peace with all creation.

*Students will learn:*

* to define the concept of ecological conversion and come to an understanding of the need to change attitudes and actions
* about the Sabbath and the need for Sabbath time in their lives
* about what the Church calls Catholics to do on the Lord’s Day

Unit Content: Background Information

Human greed, selfishness and violence all have a destructive influence and impact on people and the environment. The consequence of these sins is to fracture our relationship with God, with others, in fact with the whole of creation. Therefore reconciliation is needed. Pope John Paul II has said that humankind is in need of an “ecological conversion”, a change of attitude and a change of heart.

To experience ecological conversion we must be open to God’s transforming Spirit. Taking ‘sabbath’ time is an important way of tuning in and responding to the promptings of the Holy Spirit in our lives. We need time when work is put aside to gain a respite and to relax, to nourish our relationships with others and with the environment. Spending quality time with family and friends, enjoying cultural, social and leisure pursuits is a means of doing this. We need to experience recreation time so we can ‘re-create’.

The Church requires Catholics on the Lord’s Day, following the Jewish Sabbath, to participate in the Eucharist (CCC 2180) and ‘refrain from engaging in work or activities that hinder the worship owed to God’ (CCC 2185). For further information on the ‘Sunday observance’ see also CCC 2180 and 2184-2186 which is included in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) section of this unit.

As Christians we are called to be reconciled with all creation and to take seriously our responsibility as stewards of God’s creation. We must be prepared to examine our actions and their effects on others and on the environment.

*The creator has placed humans in creation and given them care of it. We can therefore be certain that even a person’s tiny good actions have the mysterious effect of social change and contribute to the growth of all.* (Pope John Paul II)

Suggested Teaching/Learning Strategies

* Read Section 5 on Ecological Conversion from the Australian Catholic Bishops statement, ‘A New Earth: The Environmental Challenge’ A copy of this can be found on website <http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/content/pdf/2002_new_earth_environmental_challenge.PDF>. Discuss with students what ecological conversion means (see Background Information above). Also see Pope John Paul II - call to [ecological conversion](http://conservation.catholic.org/john_paul_ii.htm)
* Students write an exposition text about the need for ecological conversion in our world for the present and future well-being of all of God’s creation.
* Watch the video *The Man Who Planted* *Trees* by Jean Giono. This is an animated tale of one man’s determination to turn a wasteland into a flowering wilderness. After viewing, discuss the man’s attitude to God’s creation. How did the man’s actions, behaviour and attitudes inspire conversion in the people and the environment?
* Read the story *The Garden* from ‘Living the Gospel’ in KWL Year 5, p8-9. Discuss this story and identify how Corrie encouraged Sarah’s change of heart and attitude towards creation. Connect the story to the concept of ‘ecological conversion’.
* Recall the Genesis creation story from earlier in the unit and highlight the seventh day. Discuss that God rested and had ‘sabbath’ time. Point out to the students that we also need to do the same so that we are able to fully appreciate God’s creation and ourselves as part of it.
* Brainstorm a list of ‘sabbath’ experiences that the students are involved in. In groups, students share their experiences of rest and recreation and how it makes a difference in their lives. Report back to the whole class about the positive aspects of having ‘sabbath’ time in their lives and how it can help us live in peace and harmony with creation.
* Students interview family members about their own ‘busy-ness’ and the pace at which they live their lives. Find out their work schedule and how much ‘sabbath’ time they allow themselves to have. Ask the question – Would they like more time for rest and re-creation? Why?
* Students design an advertising campaign to promote the need for ‘sabbath’ time in our lives. In the campaign, include a jingle, a motto, the targeted audience and where the advertising campaign might appear. The students advertising campaigns could be published in the school newsletter as a way of raising awareness of the importance of 'sabbath' time in our lives.
* Students research the ways that the Jewish people celebrate the Sabbath (from sundown on Friday night to sundown on Saturday night). Find out the rituals and practices that they follow and the meanings behind them.
* What rituals and practices do Catholics have for the Lord’s Day? See information in Background Information above and in the Catechism references. Make available to students CCC paragraphs 2180, 2184 -2186 to further explore the Church’s requirements for the Lord’s Day.
* Sing *This is the Time* by Michael Mangan, which is a song exploring the need to stop, rest and experience 'sabbath' in our lives.
* Students read *Dame Julian’s Vision* in Our Heritage section of KWL Year 5, p10. Discuss Julian’s ideas and point out that we all need time to reflect, to give ourselves space in order that we can truly appreciate the wonder and beauty of God’s creation. If we do not allow ourselves time to be still and to fully engage with nature and people we can miss out on so much and take God’s creation for granted.
* Revisit the guided meditation on the theme of creation from earlier in the unit. *Be Still – Creation Meditations* by Jill Gowdie and Michael Mangan.
* Lead the students through some reflective, stilling movement exercises, focusing on breathing in the breath of God. Allow oneself to be one with God within, and in the world.
* Use reflective music and invite the students to have ‘sabbath’ time. This time could involve quiet reading, prayer, being still or doing absolutely nothing. Try to incorporate some weekly 'sabbath' time for the students in the class timetable.
* Students paint, colour or draw a mandala. A Christian mandala is a reflective and artistic response to a meditation or Scripture reading. It is based on a circle, which is a symbol of wholeness and often features at the centre the connecting points of the cross. See appendix for an example.

For examples of children’s mandalas visit the following websites:

<http://www.mandalaproject.org/Mandalas/index_new.html>

* Students compose a sabbath blessing.

Unit Content 4

The responsibility of Christian stewardship is to recognise and challenge poverty, oppression and exploitation as it exists within the earth community.

*Students will learn:*

* about how the Church affirms the integrity and goodness of creation through papal and Church teachings
* to exercise responsible stewardship for all of God’s creation by analysing and challenging those structures which cause harm to God’s creation

Unit Content: Background Information

Catholic Social Teaching reminds us that human beings are called to act as stewards safeguarding the integrity of creation. To do this means that we have to change the ways we view the world and change our thinking and behaving as we take on the responsibility of caring for the earth and all its creatures and natural systems.

This call to conversion and awareness-raising of social and environmental issues has been reflected in the teachings of the Church. Since the late 1970s Pope John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis have sought to stand in solidarity with the poor and marginalised of the world, as well as calling Christians to exercise good, appropriate stewardship of the fragile ecosystems that support life on earth.

*“Christians in particular, realise that their responsibility within creation and their duty towards nature and the Creator, are an essential part of their faith,”* Pope John Paul II, New Year Message, 1990.

*“If you want to cultivate peace, protect creation”,*  Pope Benedict XVI, World Day of Peace, 2010.

*“Let us be ‘protectors’ of creation, protectors of God’s plan inscribed in nature, protectors of one another and of the environment.”* Pope Francis, Installation Homily, 2013.

Our personal choices and actions are important, but these must be reflected in the way in which our economic and political systems are structured. As baptised people we are challenged to analyse the social, political and economic structures that allow millions to live in poverty, whilst a minority grow rich from exploiting people and the world’s natural resources. Our call is to be counter-cultural, that is, to challenge those structures in our everyday lives that oppress people and harm creation. We need to find new and creative ways of living that enliven and are regenerative rather than damaging and destructive.

Suggested Teaching/Learning Strategies

* Introduce students to the concept of the Pope as chief teacher and leader of the Catholic Church. As one who is called to prophetic action, the Pope makes statements and pronouncements through special letters and publications i.e. Encyclical Letters, Apostolic Exhortations, Declarations, Messages.
* Students explore what the Church teaches about the environment by reading some of the statements from Pope John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis. A range of these can be found in Resource Sheet 2 and also on the website <http://conservation.catholic.org/index.htm> which has a range of Papal quotations and Church teachings on our responsibility to protect and sustain creation.
* Read Pope John Paul II’s 1990 [Environment Message](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/messages/peace/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_19891208_xxiii-world-day-for-peace_en.html). This activity extends the students understanding of the issues and concerns raised in relation to the environment. Teachers will need to make appropriate selections from the message for use with students.
* Brainstorm groups in society that show care for God’s creation (Catholic Earthcare, Greenpeace, Planet Ark, RSPCA, etc.) In groups, students select a group to research. They identify the group’s aims, goals, projects, fund raising and other relevant information. Present research to the class.
* Read Genesis 1:26, 2:3 which speaks about the stewardship of humanity for creation. Make the connection between Catholic Social Teaching, Papal pronouncements and our call and responsibility to be stewards of creation.
* Using pp18&19 of Keystones Book 7, Prospects, ‘Creation and the Church’, in groups, students create an ‘Action Group’ that challenges those structures in our everyday lives that oppress people and harm creation. Examples of action groups can be found on the following websites:

<http://www.kidsforsavingearth.org/>

<http://www.kidscanmakeadifference.org/>

<http://www.freethechildren.com/>

<http://www.epa.gov/climatestudents/>

* Listen to the song, *Saltwater* by Julian Lennon and identify those areas of creation that are being harmed. Ask the students, “Why did Julian Lennon write a song like this?” Lead the students to an understanding that musicians, authors, artists and poets often use their art to express their feelings and emotions about different issues, in this case the environment and creation. Encourage the students to find other contemporary songs, novels, poems or paintings that explore the themes of the environment and creation, calling people to a change of heart, an ecological conversion.
* Using ‘Earth Care Prayer’ from *You and Me God – Prayers and Guided Meditations for Children,* p36-39 by Barbara Ann Bretherton and ‘An Australian Litany of Praise’from *Prayers at your Fingertips,* p35 by Barbara Ann Bretherton, students participate in a class liturgy. Sing some creation inspired hymns and songs learned during the unit. During the liturgy focus on Pope John Paul II’s quote,

*Humanity has in its possession a gift that must be passed onto future generations, and if possible, passed on in better condition. The person who believes in the essential goodness of all creation is capable of discovering all the secrets of creation.*

* Using the above quote, students write a reflection outlining how they personally can contribute to the care and stewardship of creation.

**Resource Sheet 1**

**Stewards of Creation**

**(Genesis 1:26-28, 2:3)**

**YOU WILL NEED:**

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

See *‘*Unit 5.6templates and images for ‘Stewards of Creation story’ online in Religious Education Primary for the following:

Templates for – cutting white felt in the shape of clouds; pieces of brown felt representing the continents; 2 pieces of white felt representing the Arctic and Antarctica and pieces of grey felt for 2 pollution clouds;

2D images to laminate and cut out – sun, moon, fish, trees & plants, animals, birds, people.

Small piece of blue fabric *(Used to represent flooding- Same colour as the waters of the earth- approx 15cmx4cm)*

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

**In the Bible there is a very old story about a great gift given by God. This story is about the beautiful and wonderful gift of all of creation and it has been told for thousands of years.**

**It is about how God created our earth;** *Roll out the large blue fabric circle.*

**The light and darkness, day and night.** *Place the sun and moon near the earth.*

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

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

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

**Sea Creatures.** *Place the sea creatures onto the water.*

**Birds.** *Place the birds on the sky near the clouds and in the trees.*

**Creeping things and wild animals.** *Place the animals on the land.*

**It is also a story about how humans were created. God gave humans a special place in the gift of creation and 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 animals of the earth, and every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.’** *Place people over every continent of the earth with the animals and plants.*

**We praise God** *(Stretch hands out with palms facing up in praise)* **and we give thanks to God** *(Join hands in prayer)* **for all the beauty and wonder of the gift of creation.**

**In the creation story, God blessed the people saying,** *Raise hands in blessing over the people.*

**‘Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over all the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and every other living thing that moves upon the earth.’** *Lower hands*

**We enjoy all the wonderful gifts of God’s creation.**

**The sun and moon. *Point to the sun and moon***

**The sky. *Point to the sky***

**The waters. *Point to the water***

**The plants and trees.  *Point to the plants***

**The fish of the sea. *Point to the fish***

**The birds of the air. *Point to the birds***

**The animals. *Point to the animals***

**God asks us to live in harmony with all of these gifts, to share them, to protect and care for them. We call this *stewardship*.**

**Being a steward of creation means we are one with God’s creation and co-creators with God. Not destroyers of the earth.** *(Place hands gently onto the earth)*

**Too much pollution from things like factories and cars is damaging the sky and the air we breathe.** *Place the 1st long grey pollution cloud above the city.*

**Our planet is warming up, causing our ice caps to melt and flood some land or even whole countries.** *Remove Antarctica and place small blue fabric over some of the land.*

**If we take too many fish from the sea, some fish may become extinct as some sea creatures already have.** *Remove some of the fish and sea creatures.*

**More and more forests are being cut down for timber to build our cities and homes. Some forests have completely disappeared.** *Remove some of the plants and trees.*

**In some places the water is so polluted that people can no longer drink it.** *Place the second grey pollution cloud over the water.*

**Some countries use more than their fair share of the earth’s resources such as oil. Some countries have enough to feed all their people and still have food left over, while others don’t have enough food.** *Remove a few people from the earth.*

**When I am one with creation, a good steward of creation, I become a co-creator with God and not a destroyer of the earth.**

**I care for it,** *Remove the grey pollution clouds and the small blue fabric from the land.*

**I protect it,** *Replace sea creatures. Replace white felt piece.*

**I share it,** *Replace the people.*

**I restore it***, Replace the plants.*

**When God saw what had been created in the universe, ‘God rested from all the work that had been done in creation.’** *Sweep hands over the scene and rest them in your lap.*

**This is called sabbath time. God gave to us, and to the earth, the gift of rest: time to recover, recreate, enjoy and to be one with God’s creation.** *Sit back and rest.*

**I wonder...**

* I wonder which part of the story you liked best.
* I wonder how we can be co-creators with God.
* I wonder what it means to be given *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.
* I wonder how you feel about God’s creation being damaged.
* I wonder what you think we could do to stop the destruction.
* I wonder why God took Sabbath time and rested.
* I wonder how you take Sabbath time.
* I wonder how the earth gets time to rest and restore itself.

**Resource Sheet 2**

**5.6 CREATION A CHANGE OF HEART**

**Papal Quotes on the Environment**



From the time that we were first able to see pictures of the world from space, a perceptible change has taken place in our understanding of our planet, and of its immense beauty and fragility.

*Message for the World Day of Peace, John Paul II, 1987*

Human behaviour sometimes is the cause of serious ecological imbalance, with particularly harmful and disastrous consequences in different countries and the globe as a whole....

The Creator has put human beings in creation, charging them to administer it for the sake of the good of all, thanks to their intelligence and reason. We can therefore be certain that even a person's tiny good actions have a mysterious effect of social change and contribute to the growth of all. On the basis of the covenant with the Creator, towards whom human beings are called over and over to return, each one is invited to a deep personal conversion in his or her relationship with others and with nature.

*Address on "Science for Survival and Sustainable Development, Pope John Paul II, 1999*

Nature therefore becomes a Gospel that speaks to us of God: 'For from the greatness and beauty of created things comes a corresponding perception of their Creator' (Wis 13:5). Paul teaches us that 'Ever since the creation of the world his (God's) eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made' (Rom 1:20). But this capacity for contemplation and knowledge, this discovery of a transcendent presence in creation, must also lead us also to rediscover our fraternity with the earth, to which we have been linked since creation (cf Gen 2:7).

*General Audience, Pope John Paul II, 2000*

It is imperative that humankind renew and strengthen “that covenant between human beings and the environment, which should mirror the creative love of God, from whom we come and towards whom we are journeying”



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

Respect for creation is of immense consequence, not least because “creation is the beginning and the foundation of all God’s works”, and its preservation has now become essential for the pacific coexistence of humankind.

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



The vocation of being a 'protector', however, is not just something involving us Christians alone; it also has a prior dimension which is simply human, involving everyone. It means protecting all creation, the beauty of the created world, as the Book of Genesis tells us and as Saint Francis of Assisi showed us. It means respecting each of God’s creatures and respecting the environment in which we live. It means protecting people, showing loving concern for each and every person, especially children, the elderly, those in need, who are often the last we think about. It means caring for one another in our families: husbands and wives first protect one another, and then, as parents, they care for their children, and children themselves, in time, protect their parents. It means building sincere friendships in which we protect one another in trust, respect, and goodness. In the end, everything has been entrusted to our protection, and all of us are responsible for it. Be protectors of God’s gifts! *Installation Mass Homily, Pope Francis, 2013*

1. Deut 5:15 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ex 31:17; cf.23:12 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. St Thomas Aquinas, *SSTh* 11-11,122,4 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. CIC,can.1246 1 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Gen 2:2 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. KWL, Teaching Companion, 4a, p46 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. KWL, Teaching Companion, 3b, p54,56 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. KWL, Teaching Companion, 4a, p48 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)