5.1 The Reign of God: Reaching Out in Justice

This unit explores the Church’s mission to build a just world. Justice is an important element in bringing about the Reign of God. Students will explore examples of injustice and how the Church continues the mission of Jesus by working for justice. In their exploration, students will need to look at decision-making and conscience.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Values & Attitudes**  *Students will demonstrate that they are:* | **Knowledge & Understandings**  *Students will demonstrate that they can:* | **Skills**  *Students will demonstrate that they can:* |
| S3.2 able to seek out ways in which they can live as Christians | explain the call to live as Christians to bring about the Reign of God | investigate ways in which they can live as Christians to bring about the Reign of God |
| O3.1 aware of the Church’s mission to each out to others | explain the Church’s mission to reach out to others | identify ways that they, as Church, can continue the mission of Jesus |

Syllabus Outcomes  
Self/Others – Stage 3

Classroom Outcomes

*Students will be able to:*

* identify the basic principles of Catholic Social Teaching
* relate Church teaching and Scripture to life situations
* describe how the Catholic community promotes justice

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Scripture | Doctrine |
| Matthew 22:34-39 *The Greatest Commandment*  Deuteronomy 30:15-20 *Choose life*  Matthew 25:31-46 *The Last Judgement*  Amos 5:21-24 *Let Justice Flow*  Isaiah 58:6-9 *Fasting and Integrity* | * Every person, created in the image and likeness of God has dignity and worth * Jesus calls us to act with justice and love * The Spirit of God empowers us to continue the mission of Jesus * Through Baptism we are called to live the Christian way of life * The Church continues the mission of Jesus |

Spiritual Reflection for Teachers

The world of everyday life, the ordinary world of our immediate experience is where the work for justice begins.

Justice is expressed in practical daily decisions and actions that affect others and our environment in both the local and global community.

Though some will be called by God to venture into wider realms, for most, the immediate worlds of home, school, work and neighbourhood will remain the principal arenas for action.

To do justice is to uphold every form of human dignity from birth to death, to promote sound human relationships, and to ensure that all have access to adequate living conditions.

The prophet Micah, in the Old Testament, reminded the people of his time and indeed of every time what is required of them –

“only this, to act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with your God.” (Micah 6:8)

What are the implications of Micah’s words in your life?

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.**

**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.

**1778** Conscience is a judgment of reason whereby the human person recognizes the moral quality of a concrete act that he is going to perform, is in the process of performing, or has already completed. In all he says and does, man is obliged to follow faithfully what he knows to be just and right. It is by the judgment of his conscience that man perceives and recognizes the prescriptions of the divine law:

Conscience is a law of the mind; yet [Christians] would not grant that it is nothing more; I mean that it was not a dictate, nor conveyed the notion of responsibility, of duty, of a threat and a promise. . . . [Conscience] is a messenger of him, who, both in nature and in grace, speaks to us behind a veil, and teaches and rules us by his representatives. Conscience is the aboriginal Vicar of Christ.

**1795** "Conscience is man's most secret core, and his sanctuary. There he is alone with God whose voice echoes in his depths" (*GS* 16).

**1807** Justice is the moral virtue that consists in the constant and firm will to give their due to God and neighbour. Justice toward God is called the "virtue of religion." Justice toward men disposes one to respect the rights of each and to establish in human relationships the harmony that promotes equity with regard to persons and to the common good. The just man, often mentioned in the Sacred Scriptures, is distinguished by habitual right thinking and the uprightness of his conduct toward his neighbour. "You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbour." "Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven."

**2304** Respect for and development of human life require peace. Peace is not merely the absence of war, and it is not limited to maintaining a balance of powers between adversaries. Peace cannot be attained on earth without safeguarding the goods of persons, free communication among men, respect for the dignity of persons and peoples, and the assiduous practice of fraternity. Peace is "the tranquillity of order." Peace is the work of justice and the effect of charity.

Scripture: Background Information

**Matthew 22: 34-39 The Greatest Commandment**

This passage continues a series of challenges to Jesus begun at Mt 21:23. Again the subject is Torah, the Jewish law and teaching. In response to the question about which commandment in the law is the greatest, Jesus draws not one, but two traditional Jewish summaries, which are inextricably linked and also represent the theme of his own words and actions.

The first of these is taken from Deuteronomy 6:5 ‘*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’*This love is not simply a feeling but a matter of willing and living completely one’s commitment to the covenant.  The second, ‘*Love your neighbour as yourself*’ is cited from Leviticus 19:18 and is a text that becomes particularly important in the New Testament. Together the two laws summarise the whole of the Decalogue (Ten Commandments). Whilst Matthew doesn’t elaborate on how the two laws relate to each other, it could be said that loving our neighbour is, in fact, loving God, because the image of God is in our neighbour. In Matthew’s Gospel we find this theme of ‘God in others’ also in Mt 25:31-46 (The Last Judgement) where Jesus, the incarnation of God, tells the people that “just as you did it to the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me (Mt 25:40).”   Matthew brings love of neighbour and love of God together in this passage as Jesus responds to the challenge presented to him by the lawyer[[1]](#footnote-1).

**Deuteronomy 30:15-20 Choose life**

The Book of Deuteronomy is the final book of the Pentateuch or Torah (law, teaching) – Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. It is presented as the last words of Moses to the people before they enter the land of Canaan: quite a few last words! The word ‘deuteronomy’ itself is based on Greek and means second law. In some sense it is a second law. It reiterates some of what has already been written.

In this challenging passage God gives us choices – seemingly easy choices – between life fully lived and death and disaster. We know of course which we would choose, but do we always choose life? We probably don’t. Why? Because we need wisdom, maturity and life experiences to inform our choices. These are the life skills we need to develop in our students and discuss with them over this text. We need to do this at every opportunity that occurs. Choosing life, we are told, consists in loving God, listening to God, clinging to God (Deuteronomy 30:20). Then we will be at home in our land, with each other and ourselves.

**Matthew 25:31-46 The Last Judgment**

This parable-like discourse is set in the context of the Last Judgement and tells us we will be judged on how well we have loved people indiscriminately. It is a familiar text that describes a practical religion. It is the religion of deeds of loving kindness and love of neighbour. It is interesting and important to note that the Pharisees, after the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD, also saw deeds of loving kindness and prayer as a substitute for the Temple sacrifices, especially the sacrifices of atonement. This is again showing Matthew’s gospel in deep discussion and dialogue with Judaism.

The title ‘Son of Man’ is a multi-meaning word. The basic meaning is ‘human being’. This is how it is used constantly in the book of Ezekiel, one of the prophets. In the Book of Daniel, which is an apocalyptic text about dreams, visions and strange revelations, the ‘Son of Man’ is used in reference to a heavenly being. Here, in the Gospel of Matthew, it refers to Jesus. Nonetheless this is a text that is unique to Matthew’s gospel and so the discourse obviously arose out of the teaching and prayer of the Matthean community as they reflected on the meaning and message of Jesus.

**Amos 5:21-24 Let justice flow**

The prophet Amos, although living and working in the southern kingdom of Judah, went north to Israel/Samaria to prophesy. He too speaks in the context of liturgy. The prophets often attack religious hypocrisy and meaningless ritual when the simplest principles of justice and neighbourly love are being neglected. Students in our classes today can become prophets by naming and discussing situations in schools, their own lives, parishes, churches and society that need to be challenged. Can they act on any of these situations to help remedy them? Such practical application of these texts makes the Bible very relevant to today.

**Isaiah 58:6-9 Fasting and integrity**

This text is from the third section of Isaiah. It is written after the Babylonian exile when some of the people had returned to their homes in Judah. They found much destruction and poverty in the late 6th century or early 5th century BC. Hence the words of the prophet address issues of social justice. Here the prophet challenges fasting for fasting sake. Rather, what God wants is a fast that undoes injustice. A fast that feeds the hungry, shelters the homeless, clothes the naked, and creates freedom. This of course is unfortunately still totally applicable to today’s world.

The Church’s Teaching and Lived Tradition

**In Tradition: *To Know, Worship and Love* Year 5, p102 & 39 - St Augustine’s Prayer of Love**

The solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus focuses on the love of God. The liturgy of this feast is a celebration of God’s faithful love for God’s people. It calls all followers of Jesus to show care and concern for all people in need.

In our Church many things are regarded as sacred. The word ‘sacred’ indicates the highest respect we can give to certain words, objects, actions and songs, as we celebrate the Christian way of life. Because we are created in God’s image, all human beings are to be regarded as sacred.[[2]](#footnote-2)

**Second Vatican Council**

The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are afflicted in any way, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the followers of Christ. (*Gaudium et Spes* no.1)

**Pope Paul VI**

Inequality in the sharing of our wealth is not the only scandal crying out for justice. Increasingly the scandal is inequality in the sharing of power. (Paul VI, 1967 *On the Development of Peoples*, no 9)

**Saint Teresa of Avila**

You are Christ’s hands. Christ has no body now on earth but yours, no hands but yours, no feet but yours. Yours are the eyes through which He is to look out on the world with compassion; yours are the feet with which He is to go about doing good; yours are the hands with which He is to bless people now.

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.**

* Set-up or change (depending on when you teach this unit) the classroom prayer place - see suggested story script ‘Our Prayer Place for Ordinary Time’ - Resource Sheet 1
* Use KWL Year 5 for morning and/or afternoon prayer:
* ‘Our Prayer’ p31 (In spontaneous prayer, students finish the statement: “We hope for…”)

p39 (a blessing)

p103 (during work on the Sacred Heart)

p112

* ‘In Tradition’, p39 and 102
* ‘In Scripture’, p30 (a blessing).
* Incorporate prayers, liturgies and songs from Prayer Box I and Prayer Box II (distributed by Catholic Mission Society). These resources have good suggestions for prayer, liturgy and justice/mission.
* Write a prayer about making choices that respond to Jesus message of love. Use these prayers and Deuteronomy 30:15-20 video clip (Unit Content 1) in a prayer celebration.
* Students compose a simple repetitive prayer based on Matt 25:31-46. Use in class prayer.
* Write a poem or prayer about justice and mission, thanking God for the prophets of our day. Use these in class prayer. Sing a suitable song, eg ‘Prophets of Hope’.
* Celebrate the ‘Litany of Blessing’ *Just Imagine: Creative Ways of Presenting Scripture* by Rina Wintour, p96-97.
* Use photo language to reflect on mission and justice. Students choose a photo that speaks to them about the Church’s mission to reach out in justice. This can be done as a reflection time or a prayer (see Photolanguage Kit in ‘Resources’).

- Share with class and explain your choice of photo.

- Write a journal explaining why you chose the photo.

* Celebrate a commitment liturgy. Read Matthew 25:31-46. Students reflect on their personal mission statements. Read St Teresa’s reflection in the ‘The Church’s Teaching and Lived Tradition’ section of this unit.

Assessment

**Interim Assessment Statement 2014**

The section identifying 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, Chapters 2iii, 10, and 11, (2003), James Goold House Publications, Melbourne, Victoria**

**Agencies and Websites**

The following agencies have many resources: guest-speakers, videos and kits. Some kits are published yearly for particular seasons and events.

* Catholic Mission: www.catholicmission.org.au. An example of a kit is ‘Personal Project’.
* Caritas Australia and Project Compassion kits: [www.caritas.org.au](http://www.caritas.org.au)
  + <http://www.caritas.org.au/learn/catholic-social-teaching> Catholic Social Teaching online
  + OzSpirit is an email magazine with links and ideas for teachers.

Topics include spirituality, social justice and church teachings.

* St. Vincent de Paul: <http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/>
* Office of Social Justice, The Archdiocese of St Paul and Minneapolis in the USA, have a very good website for information about the Catholic Social Teaching and current issues. It has a section for educators. <http://www.osjspm.org/catholic-social-teaching>
* Centacare: <http://www.centacare.aust.com/>
* National Council of Churches in Australia. (Force Ten) An example of a Kit is: Road to Refuge. Simply Sharing Kit 2002. Ph 1800025101
* Amnesty International: [www.amnesty.org.au](http://www.amnesty.org.au)
* Fair Wear Campaign: [www.fairwear.org.au](http://www.fairwear.org.au)

**Books**

Bolster P, “Catholic Social Teaching: Interpreting social realities in light of the Gospel” *Inform*, July 2001, No74

Catholic Education Office, Bathurst NSW, (1998), *Breathing Life into the RE Classroom: Creative Teaching Strategies for Religious Education*, CEO Bathurst, NSW

Catholic Mission, (1998), *Mission Mad: A Multimedia Mission Module*, Catholic Mission, Ashfield, NSW

Catholic Mission, (1995), *The Prayer Box I*, Catholic Mission, Ashfield, NSW

Catholic Mission, (1996), *The Prayer Box II*, Catholic Mission, Ashfield, NSW

(These are useful for prayers and celebrations and stimulus to use in activities.)

Cooney J and Burton K, (1986), *Photolanguage Australia. Human Values A and B*, Catholic Education Office, Sydney

Gilligan B, (2000), *Searching for Justice*, HarperCollins, Melbourne

Social Justice Bishops Council, *Social Justice Calendar*. The calendar has significant dates, websites, prayers, reflections and information concerning social justice issues

Wintour R, (2000), *Just Imagine: Creative Ways of Presenting Scripture*, Mountjoy Enterprises, Brisbane

Woods L, (1990), *A Dictionary for Catholics*, HarperCollins, Melbourne, Victoria

**Videos**

Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference, (1997), *“FACES”: The Mission of the Australian Church*, Catholic Mission, Sydney

**Music**

Kearney P, (1986), *Signs of Hope,* Crossover Music, Mittagong, NSW

Watts T, (1984), *Prophets of Hope,* Willow Connection, Thornleigh, NSW

Key to Symbol

✪ denotes higher order activity

Unit Content 1

We can learn to make decisions based on the life and teachings of Jesus and demonstrated by people of faith.

*Students will learn:*

* about the role of conscience in decision-making
* about the principles of the Catholic Church’s Social Teachings
* to use the life and teachings of Jesus to help us make decisions

Unit Content: Background Information

Decision-making is an everyday reality. Decisions have consequences and students need to look at effective processes for making decisions. These are also explored in Health and other Key Learning Areas. When making decisions students need to be able to explore the choices available and the consequences of each choice. There are many factors that influence our decision-making and limit our freedom. Students need to look at these influences eg peer group pressure, media, along with the values they hold and the teachings of the gospel. The goal here is to look at Christian beliefs that influence our decisions. Students need to look at the importance of Gospel and Church teachings in helping us make decisions. They provide a criterion.

Conscience is important. Our conscience is like an inner voice. It is a law deep within. Our conscience reveals to us what is right and wrong. The Church has always taught that we have a responsibility to follow our informed conscience. The formation of conscience is vital. Formation is an ongoing process. Conscience is our judgment that informs our actions. At the heart of Christian decision making and conscience is our relationship with God. God calls us to relationship, nurtured by prayer. Community is also important. What does the Church community believe? What does the Church teach?

In this unit conscience and decision-making are linked to the exploration of justice and the Church’s role. There are two sets of criteria that are interrelated:

* **Scripture**, particularly the teachings and life of Jesus. Students should be able to name values that Jesus taught and lived: e.g. love, compassion, forgiveness.
* **Tradition**: For the purpose of this unit, Catholic Social Teachings (CST).

The decisions we make as individuals or as a group can build justice or erode justice. Students could be taught to use a simple model for making decisions and evaluating situations to determine if they are just or unjust. See Resource Sheet 2 for a suggested approach.

In order to explore decisions the students will need to know something about CST. See Resource Sheet 4 for basic principles of CST. These can be used, at the students’ level, as criteria for basic discussions in this unit. Also see online resource on the Caritas Australia website <http://www.caritas.org.au/learn/catholic-social-teaching>

Note: Resource Sheet 1 provides a guide for setting the Prayer Place for Ordinary Time.

Suggested Teaching/Learning Strategies

* Explore decision-making using children’s literature. See Summary Curriculum Resource Year 5 for 5.1 on RE Online ‘Primary Curriculum and Resources’. What influences our decisions? In the literature explore choices and their possible consequences. What decision was made? Would you have made this decision? Why or why not?
* Define ‘Values’. What is a value? Give students a list of 10-20 values. Ask students to choose 5 values they think are most important. Students share and discuss these in groups and as a class. Students then choose the most important value. Share and discuss. Alternatively you may wish to use *Supporting Student Wellbeing Through Values Education: A Resource Package* which forms part of the *Values for Australian Schooling* series of resources to support schools in implementing the [National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools](http://www.curriculum.edu.au/values/val_national_framework_for_values_education,8757.html). Some of these resources can be downloaded from <http://www.curriculum.edu.au/verve/_resources/Values_PLP_intro.pdf>
* Explore and discuss with students the influence of the media. Choose a commercial, advertisement, or segment of a film or TV program. What is the purpose of the media segment? What is happening? What values are presented? How are these values presented? What other messages come across? Do these values and messages support Christian values?
* Students read KWL, Year 5, p102 ‘In Tradition’ and ‘In Scripture’, Mt 22:37-39. Who are we required to love? In pairs create a concept map to answer the questions: What do we know about love? How do we show love? Share responses.
* Present Dt 30:15-20 using a slow reflective reading of the passage. A video clip presentation has been prepared and can be accessed as follows:

Click this link [http://itunes.apple.com/itunes-u/religious-education-resources/id458273277](http://itunes.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewPodcast?id=458273277) and then click to view and download in itunes.

* Students refer to the above text in their Bible to explore the meaning of the passage. Suggested questions are:
* According to the passage, what behaviour gives life? What behaviour leads to death? What are the consequences of choosing life and the consequences of choosing death.
* What decisions do we make when we choose life? What decisions do we make that lead us towards ‘death’?
* Explore the notion of life and death with the students. Life – decisions that give life, promote the fullness of life, love, what is right. Death – decisions that lead to a lack of love, hurt, selfishness, sin, stifling life.
* Does the writer mean this literally? Explain.
* What is meant by choosing ‘life’/choosing ‘death’?
* Provide time to either
* Write a prayer of petition, thanks or sorrow around making choices that are life-giving. Use these prayers and the passage of Deuteronomy in a prayer celebration.
* Illustrate challenges to making life-giving choices.
* To introduce the notion of conscience use a DVD or children’s literature. Find a situation where students would be able to make a spontaneous response, eg *Boss of the Pool*. Alternatively, use role-plays of games students play, where one person is not playing by the rules and disturbing the game. Question students: What do you think? Why? How do you know this is right/wrong? Explore with students what conscience is and the importance of informing our conscience. Introduce a model for informing our conscience and making good decisions. Resource Sheet 2 could be modified.
* As a class brainstorm values and teachings of Jesus that could help us make decisions.
* Introduce Catholic Social Teaching to students. You may like to give students a copy of Resource Sheet 4. Explore broad basic themes or principles with students. Discuss words and ideas. Engage students in dialogue about the principles. Some are easier than others.
  + 1. Find an example of each principle in life. e.g: respecting others.
    2. What situations do not uphold one or more of these principles? Focus on local situations but accept situations on a global level. Local situations could include school, neighbourhood or city. Unit Content 2 and 3 then expand the notion into global situations.
* Give students one or two scenarios of potential injustice, and ask students to list the possible choices and consequences. What teachings might help us make a life-giving decision in this situation? Discuss with the class. You could use the schema below. Also see Resource Sheet 4.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **SEE** | What is the situation? Who is involved? |  | **POSSIBLE SITUATIONS**   * a situation of racism in the school * a scenario about bullying * an example of human rights being disrespected.   *Make sure it is relevant and/or of interest to the students.* |
| **JUDGE** | What can the Scriptures tell us about this situation? What Church teachings are relevant?  Is the situation life-giving or life-denying? |
| **ACT** | What is your opinion, based on the information you have gained?  What should be done? Why?  How can we reach out in justice in this situation? |

Unit Content 2

The Catholic Church in Australia reaches out to people who struggle to live with dignity.

*Students will learn:*

* about situations of injustice, local and global
* about the Church’s response to injustice through its institutions and organisations
* to review situations of injustice in light of Scripture and Church teaching

Unit Content: Background Information

The concept of the ‘reign of God’ is complex. It is proclaimed by the prophets of the Old Testament and ushered in by the life, death and Resurrection of Jesus, so in one sense it is here and now. Yet in another sense the reign of God looks to the end of time for its fulfilment. The reign of God is, put simply, the whole of creation conforming to God’s plan. It is about love and compassion, justice and peace and right relationship. The Church’s mission is to respond to the Spirit in proclaiming the reign of God and making it a reality here and now.

The Church proclaims the Good News by its witness: its words and actions. Witness is given by individuals and by communities. It is the Spirit that lives in both individuals and the community. We respond to the Spirit in our lives. Jesus’ greatest teaching was his own life, his relationships and actions, his response to the Spirit. Following the example of Jesus, the Church reaches out to others in a spirit of service. The Church has many organisations and institutions that do this. Its work is twofold: worship and service. Both are essential and enliven each other with the grace of the Holy Spirit. One example of the relationship between liturgy and service is the Feast of the Sacred Heart. The feast celebrates the love of Jesus. Traditionally, we celebrate this feast by helping those in need. Many parishes may still have the ‘Mass for the Poor’ where people are encouraged to bring non-perishable foods for St Vincent de Paul. The feast of the Sacred Heart is an appropriate time for the class or school to demonstrate the value of service in the form of action for justice and charity.

There are structures and realities in the world that deny the dignity of the person and there are those that promote human dignity. Any institution or agency that promotes human dignity and justice works in cooperation with the Holy Spirit in building the reign of God. However, the focus here is on how the Church reaches out in justice. Students explore how Catholic agencies reach out in justice and respond to realities that deny human dignity.

This Unit Content focuses on the Catholic Church’s work in groups, organisations and institutions. Unit Content 3 will focus on how individuals, inspired by the Holy Spirit, reach out in justice. Below are some possible Church agencies and situations of injustice.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **SOME CHURCH AGENCIES** |  | **SOME SITUATIONS** | |
| 1. Caritas Australia 2. Catholic Mission 3. PALMS 4. St Vincent de Paul 5. Australian Catholic Social Justice Council (ACSJC) 6. Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office 7. Centacare/Catholic Welfare Australia 8. There are also projects run at a local level by Catholic religious orders and groups |  | *Try to remain as specific as possible.*   1. ‘sweat shop’ conditions in some work places 2. distribution of wealth and/or resources and its effects in one community/country 3. a situation where there is abuse of human rights | |
|  | 1. refugees 2. child slavery 3. a case of oppression | 1. landmines 2. poverty 3. war |

Suggested Teaching/Learning Strategies

* Focus students’ attention on a particular contemporary justice issue. Suggested ways to do this are:

- Review news clippings.

- Watch a video showing injustices, eg videos produced by Caritas Australia or Catholic Mission.

- Show students a collection of photos and images of injustice, and discuss these.

- Visit the website of Amnesty International, Caritas Australia, UNICEF … and gather information. Organise the information into a retrieval chart on the wall.

- Participate in a Pauper’s Banquet. See p22 of *Mission Mad*.

- Using the Internet and Jacaranda mapping resources, draw diagrams, maps and graphs displaying the distribution of wealth in our world, eg doctors, schools, food, fresh water, access to different services. Students discuss findings and decide if this reality is just or unjust. Looking at our Christian values and CST evaluate the situation.

- Media Watch: Students bring in clippings etc that demonstrate an injustice, individuals or groups working for justice, acts of love, mission etc. Create a retrieval chart on the wall and categorise news into what issues are addressed: distribution of wealth, abuse of human rights. This could be ongoing throughout the unit. Keep referring students to the retrieval chart and reviewing the issues in light of CST and Christian values. What is our response as Church based on CST?

* Read KWL Year 5, p101-102 ‘A Heart to Love’. Discuss the Feast of the Sacred Heart and the associated Catholic tradition. Highlight the feast as a reminder to reach out to those in need. Discuss the tradition of helping the needy, acts of charity and justice, and decide on a class action for the feast. Plan to do this class action on the feast day.
* Matt 25:31-46.

- What is happening in this narrative? What images are used?

- Put the narrative to drama: Frozen Statues or Mime Freeze Sculpture. Break narratives into parts: I was hungry, I was sick……

- Students compose a simple, reflective, repetitive prayer based on the Scripture passage. Use in class prayer.

- Why do you think Jesus told this story? What does it say about Jesus’ mission? About our mission as Christians?

- List what the righteous people do. Give examples of the Church’s response to situations of injustice today. You could begin a matrix as below. Encourage the students to be as concrete as possible.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Scripture** | **Today’s World** | |
| **The Righteous** | **Problem or Situation –**  **(Who / What?)** | **Church Response** |
| I was hungry and you gave me food. | People who lack food. | Caritas funds: Emergency food aid, Seed cooperatives… |
| Hunger for knowledge (education) | Setting up schools… |
| I was thirsty and you gave me to drink | Lack adequate water supply. | Catholic Missions….. |
| Thirst for justice, fairness… | ACSJC….. |

* Exploring agencies that help us reach out in justice.

Part A: Investigate one agency with the students. Invite a guest speaker to tell the class about the agency. Use videos, books, internet to explore the agency and the issues to which it responds.

- What does the organisation or agency do?

- How does the organisation promote the mission of Jesus / how does it support Catholics in reaching out in justice?

- Name principles and values that might influence the organisation.

- What support does it need/get from the Church community (local or universal)?

Part B: Students in small groups research the work of one organisation. Use the class work (Part A) as a model.

- What does the organisation or agency do?

- How does the organisation promote the mission of Jesus / how does it support Catholics in reaching out in justice?

- Name principles and values that might influence the organisation.

- What support does it need/get from the Church community (local or universal)?

Students organise their research and present it to the class. Presentations could take the form of posters, information reports, PowerPoint presentations, pamphlets, video presentations.

* Invite the Parish Priest or Parish Associate to speak to the class about how the parish reaches out in justice. Does it support the agencies studied? How?

Unit Content 3

Modern day prophets continue the tradition of justice found in the Old and New Testaments, by working to create a more just world.

*Students will learn:*

* about prophets and their role in the Church and society
* about the situation of injustice, local and global
* to review situations of injustice in light of Scripture and Church teaching

Unit Content: Background Information

Israel needed prophets to call people back to the covenant. It takes courage to be a prophet. Prophets are counter-cultural. That is, they challenge the status quo of the community when that status quo is not authentic and life-giving. In this way they reveal the truth where the truth is not fashionable. We need prophets today. God sends us prophets to remind us of the truth. Prophets remind us to act justly, to love our neighbour. They remind us that there is something more than materialism and individualism. Prophets reveal God in our midst. Prophets touch our hearts and our imaginations. Prophets have a deep relationship with God. Their work is a response to this relationship.

This section looks at individuals who reach out in justice. Inspired by God they face injustice and take up their call to respond to the Spirit, as Jesus did. We are called to be prophets for our times. We are called to live the teachings and values of our faith in our life situation.

Suggested Teaching/Learning Strategies

* Tell the story of the prophet Amos (5:21-24) using script and suggested resources in Resource   
  Sheet 5.
* Engage students in wondering using the following wondering statements as a guide.

I wonder why God might hate and despise the festivals put on by the wealthy.

I wonder what Amos was telling the people that God really wanted.

I wonder how justice can roll down like waters

I wonder what it means to say that righteousness is like an ever-flowing stream.

I wonder what the rich people would need to do to act with justice.

I wonder why people did not always like the messages of the prophets.

I wonder if you know anyone else in the Bible who was a prophet.

* Explore what it means to be a prophet. As a class, define what a prophet is and name some prophets. Read about the prophet Amos. What are the characteristics of a prophet?
* Sing and discuss the meaning of a hymn/song about prophets, or justice. For example ‘Prophets of Hope’. Students choose a poem, or song, that demonstrates the values of justice. Let the class listen to the song and discuss its message. Contemporary music that the students listen to often that contains a message of justice or love could be used.
* Use the information about Mother Teresa of Calcutta (KWL Year 5, p40-41) in a dictogloss. Discuss the important facts.
* View a DVD about Mother Teresa or find more information about her and her congregation. How did Mother Teresa reach out in justice or charity? Discuss the difference between reaching out in justice and charity. Both are important in the Church’s mission to reach out in service. As a class gather information:

- Biographical information.

- What need/issue did she respond to?

- How did she respond?

- What did she teach us about respect for others?

* What values of Jesus and Church teachings did she demonstrate?
* Students find information about another person who reaches out in justice. Use the work on Mother Teresa as a model.

Information could be organised into a pamphlet, poster, written report, PowerPoint…

Possible people:

* Catholics: Dorothy Day, Oscar Romero, Irene McCormack, Dom Helder Camara, John Paul II
* Non-Catholic Christians: Martin Luther King, Fred Hollows

In pairs or small groups, give an oral presentation to the class.

* Design a poster using Amos 5:24 to promote reaching out in justice.
* Write a poem or prayer about justice and mission, thanking God for the prophets of our day. Use these in class prayer. Sing a suitable song such as ‘Prophets of Hope*’.*

Unit Content 4

Empowered and strengthened by the Holy Spirit we respond to Jesus’ challenge to reach out in justice.

*Students will learn:*

* about ways they can reach out in justice
* to reflect on, and evaluate situations and decide on responses that promote justice, locally and globally

Unit Content: Background Information

As Christians we are called to holiness – to be prophets for our time. The call to holiness is a radical call to live our relationship with God, as Jesus did, in our ordinary lives. By doing this we build a more just world. An important dynamic here is transformation. Prophets, inspired by the Scriptures, call us to a conversion of heart. As our relationship with God grows we change. Prayer is essential. In prayer we are transformed. Then, filled with the Spirit of God, we transform the world.

As we reach out in justice we participate in the transformation of society. Personal and social transformation are interconnected. Conversion and transformation occur when we participate with the Holy Spirit who transforms all things. The reason we practise fasting, prayer and almsgiving during Lent is to help us in the conversion and transformation process. Our actions also help us in the process. It is a continuous process of small steps.

We, like prophets, are empowered and strengthened by the Holy Spirit to reach out in justice. This unit content builds on the work in units 3.4 and 4.4 on the Holy Spirit’s gifts of courage and strength.

Suggested Teaching/Learning Strategies

* Celebrate the ‘Litany of Blessing’, *Just Imagine: Creative Ways of Presenting Scripture* by Rina Wintour, p96-97.
* Isaiah 58:6-9: Use group and thinking strategies to:

- Define the word ‘fast’. How do we fast? When do we fast? Why do we fast?

- Read the Isaiah passage. What is Isaiah asking of us? What is Isaiah’s attitude to fasting? What type of fasting is he promoting?

- Compare this Isaiah passage with Matthew 25:31-46. What do they have in common?

- In light of Matthew’s passage and this passage of Isaiah, what does God want of us?

* Class discussion: Our fasting and our prayers should lead to justice? Students could write an exposition after the discussion.
* Read the excerpt from St Augustine’s Song of Love ‘In Tradition’, KWL Year 5, p39. Then engage students in wondering about the song e.g.

I wonder what love really is.

I wonder what helped St Augustine love God so much.

I wonder how God’s word penetrates our hearts.

* Use the song of love in prayer.
* Look at the global issues raised in this unit and local situations in the lives of students. Are there issues of injustice in our school?

Students explore the issues and investigate ways they can take action. Use the See, Judge, Act process to reflect on these local situations. Why is the situation unjust?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **SEE** | * What is the situation? * Who is involved? |
| **JUDGE** | * What can the Scriptures tell us about this situation? * What Church teachings are relevant here? * Is the situation life-giving or life-denying? |
| **ACT** | * What is your opinion based on the information you have gained? * What should be done? Why? * How can we reach out in justice in this situation? |

* Plan a practical project in which the class reaches out in justice. Kits distributed by Catholic Mission and Caritas Australia have many helpful ideas. For example:

- Promote the ‘Fair Wear’ campaign as a class. See resource list for website. Decide not to wear clothes that exploit workers during mufti days. And/or discuss the question: Why do we advertise fashion labels on our bodies through the clothes we wear? Or debate: Fashion labels are a form of free advertising.

- Have a simple rice lunch.

- Draw up posters and pamphlets to identify and communicate the Human Rights abuses against children.

- Find a way of raising awareness in your community about the issue of landmines.

- Write to organisations or individual missionaries to show them your support for their work.

- Contact Catholic Mission, Caritas Australia, Amnesty International and ask what your class can do to support them.

- Make a class pledge to treat each other with justice and respect at school. Allow the students to decide on one or two specific actions.

Allow time to explore issues first before acting. Use the Model: See Judge Act.

* Use photo language to reflect on mission and justice. Students choose a photo that speaks to them about the Church’s mission to reach out in justice. This can be done as a reflection time or a prayer.

- Share with the class and explain your choice of photo.

- Write a journal entry explaining why you chose the photo.

* Students read Matthew 25:31-46 again. Compose your own mission statement as a Christian. Apply this statement to your life now.[[3]](#footnote-3) You might like to use the sentence stems: “I believe…. Therefore I will…”
* Celebrate a commitment liturgy. Read Matthew 25:31-46. Students reflect on their personal mission statements. Read St Teresa of Avila’s reflection in the ‘The Church’s Teaching and Lived Tradition’ section in this unit.
* Design and administer a written test: Give students a choice of a variety of people and agencies studied in this unit. Students choose one person or agency and answer the following questions.

- Describe the work carried out.

* What issues or situations are addressed?

- How does the agency/person reach out in justice?

- What values and principles of the Catholic Social Teaching are being promoted?

**Resource Sheet 1**

**5.1 Our Prayer Place for Ordinary Time**

**YOU WILL NEED:**

\* small table

\* ***green*** cloth, liturgical calendar (see links at end of script), Bible, bookstand, candle, cross, card with the word ‘justice’ placed in a box or basket

*Invite children to sit reverently in a circle in the part of the classroom where you intend to set up a prayer place.   
This is a liturgical story, so students can be invited to participate by placing the symbols and objects on the prayer place.*

*Begin by saying…***We are going to make a special prayer place. It is a place where we can be quiet with God. We can listen to God and talk with God. We’ll use some symbols and objects to help us be with God at this time in the Church’s year.**

*Place table in the prayer place. Hold the green fabric.***At this time of the Church’s year we place green fabric on the table. Green is seen everywhere. It symbolizes life, growth and hope and is used by the Church during the season of Ordinary Time.***Cover the table with a green fabric.*

*Place the Liturgical calendar on the wall behind the prayer place or on the prayer place. Point to the first season of Ordinary Time.*

**The first part of Ordinary Time begins after the season of Christmas and lasts until the beginning of Lent. Ordinary Time doesn’t mean average. It means the time outside the major seasons of Lent, Easter, Advent and Christmas. It gives us a long breathing space to examine and ‘order’ our lives.**

*Hold the Bible up for all children to see. Be conscious of handling the Bible in a reverent manner.*

**This is our class Bible. At this time in the Church’s year we remember and tell the stories about what Jesus said and did during his life on earth. We’ll continue to do this until the beginning of the next season, Lent.**

*Place the Bible on the bookstand.*

*Take out the candle.*

**The light of the candle reminds us that Jesus is always with us. Jesus is the light of the world. We’ll light the candle each time we pray or when we’re listening to the stories from the Bible.**

*Place the candle on the prayer place.*

*Hold the cross.*

**This is our class cross. The cross is a symbol of Jesus, and of our Christian faith and hope.** *Place the cross on the prayer place.*

*Hold the justice card.*

**During the next few weeks, with Jesus as our guide, we’re going to explore together the concept of justice, that every person, created in the image and likeness of God, has dignity and worth.***Place the card on the prayer place.*

**Other symbols appropriate to Unit 5.1 can also be added here.**

**This is our prayer place for Ordinary Time.**

*Point to the symbols and objects as you name them again:*

**It has green fabric, a liturgical calendar, a Bible, a candle, a cross and the word justice.**

*You could finish this story with an appropriate prayer, for example from To Know Worship and Love or the opening prayer for the Mass of the day.*

**Links to liturgical calendars:**

http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/liturgicalyear/calendar/season.cfm?y=2003&m=10

<http://www.cyberfaith.com/calendar_index.html>

<http://smvparish.org/liturgy/liturgical_calendar.gif>

<http://sesnaperville.org/sesmain/wp-content/uploads/2009/07/liturgical.gif>

<http://www.marypages.com/LiturgicalCalendar.htm> or

<http://www.getreligion.org/2008/08/pericopal-politics/>

**Link to image for ‘justice’ card:**

<https://scsreonline.files.wordpress.com/2017/12/justice-card.pdf>

**Resource Sheet 2**

**Model**

**See**

**Judge**

**Act**

*This model can be used to* ***evaluate*** *a situation and make a* ***decision*** *based on beliefs and values. The process can help in the* ***formation of conscience*** *and in making a decision or judgment based on* ***informed conscience****.*

**SEE**

*Gather information needed.*

Get the facts. What is the situation? Who is involved?

Listen to the ‘experts’.

What are the other issues that may be connected?

What are the options or choices?

**JUDGE**

*Spend time with the information gathered.*

Think about all the information: facts and opinions.

Reflect on the values, Scripture and Church teachings that are relevant.

Speak to people you trust for their opinion.

What are the implications or consequences of each possible choice/option?

Pray: ask God to be with you in making your decision/judgment.

Make your decision or judgment.

**ACT**

*Act on your decision.*

Always follow through with your decision in compassion, charity and love.

What action needs to be taken and how?

Who can help?

**Resource Sheet 3**

**Teacher Resource**

*Basic Principles of Catholic Social Teaching*

Values of justice and peace are evident throughout the Bible and teachings of the Church since the earliest times. Explicit teachings in the form of statements and encyclicals began with *Rerum Novarum* in 1891*,* byPope Leo XIII on the condition of labour. Since then, popes and councils of bishops have written statements and encyclicals to make explicit the social teachings of the Church and address a particular situation. The following are some principles that are developed in statements and encyclicals that make up the Catholic social teachings. This list of principles is not exhaustive.

1. **Human Dignity**

Every person is made in the image of God. This alone makes each person precious and sacred. A person must be treated with dignity and respect. Nothing takes away this dignity. Human dignity can be recognised and protected only within the context of community.

1. **Human Rights and Responsibilities**

We are made in the image of God. Because of this we have dignity. Each person has rights, as well as responsibilities to protect those rights. People need community. These rights must be respected by all structures of society and find their full meaning in community.

1. **Love and Justice**

Love of neighbour is a demand for justice and charity. Love demands respect for human dignity and promotion of human rights and development. The promotion of justice means transforming unjust social structures.

1. **Religious and Social dimensions of life linked.**

The reign of God covers all aspects of life: social, economic, political and religious. Faith and justice are linked in the promotion of the reign of God.

1. **Participation in society**

All people must be able to participate in society. This is best done in a democratic process of decision making which allows all people to contribute to the development of the community.

1. **The Role of Work**

People have a right to work. Work must promote the person’s humanity and dignity. Through work we participate in society and in the activity of God (co-creators). People have the right to a fair and just wage, to be treated fairly at work and to take part in unions.

1. **Economic Justice**

The economy is for the people. The interest of people comes before the interest of the structures of the economy. The resources of the earth are to be shared equitably by all (distribution of wealth).

1. **Option for the Poor**

Jesus’ actions and interactions were directed to the vulnerable, the poor, the outcast. We are called to have a preference for such people. Catholics are called to stand with and for the poor, the weak, those who are powerless. In any action taken we must ask how does this affect the most vulnerable.

1. **Solidarity**

All people are connected by their humanity. They depend on one another for survival and development. Community is important. Love of neighbour demands that we promote the dignity and respect of all people.

1. **Stewardship**

People are to respect and care for the earth and its resources. Natural and manufactured resources are for all to share according to the common good.

1. **Subsidiarity**

Decision-making and responsibility for tasks are best suited in the smaller structures of communities. Larger structures take responsibility for tasks that are beyond the smaller structures. However, larger institutions must avoid taking over and controlling smaller ones.

1. **Common Good**

The purpose of the government is to promote the common good of all people and ensure economic, social and political justice for all. Governments and social structures and institutions should ensure adequate basic needs are met for all people: housing, food, health care, education …

1. **Promotion of Peace**

Peace comes only through justice. There needs to be right relationships among people and nations to build justice and to achieve peace. The arms race must cease.

1. **Liberation**

Liberation from oppressive structures is an important part of Church activity. Liberation must encompass the whole person: spiritual, social, political, etc.

**References:**

Gilligan Beth, *Searching for Justice*, HarperCollins, Australia 2000. This book has a good summary of principles on page 12-14. Some more capable students could manage the text.

Henriot Peter J (ed et all), *Catholic Social Teaching: Our Best Kept Secrets*, Collins Dove, Australia 1992. There is a summary of basic principles on p22-24. The book outlines the basic content of the major encyclicals between 1891 to 1991. Handy for teachers.

*Inform,* Catholic Social Teachings, No.74, July 2001.

**Resource Sheet 4**

*Basic Principles of Catholic Social Teaching*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. **Human Dignity** | Every person is made in the image of God. All people are precious/special. We must always treat each other with respect. |
| 1. **Human Rights and Responsibilities** | Each person has rights, as well as responsibilities to protect those rights. These rights must be respected by all structures of society. Our rights are set out in the *Universal Declaration on Human Rights*. Statements on children’s rights come from this. |
| 1. **Love** | Jesus taught his disciples to love others and to love their enemies – Love of neighbour. |
| 1. **The Role of Work** | People have a right to work. Work must promote and respect the person’s dignity. All people have the right to safe work environments and fair pay for their work. |
| 1. **Economic Justice** | The economy is for people. People should have enough to support themselves and their families – food, shelter, clothing, just working conditions… The resources of the earth are to be shared by all. |
| 1. **Option for the Poor** | Jesus showed love and compassion for the weak, the poor, and the outcast. We should take special care of those who are vulnerable in society. How does the action we take or decisions we make affect the most vulnerable in our community? |
| 1. **Solidarity** | We are all one community. All people are connected by their humanity. Love of neighbour requires that we promote the dignity and respect of all people. |
| 1. **Stewardship** | Creation is a gift. We do not own creation. People are to respect and care for the earth and its resources. |
| 1. **Common Good** | The community must look after all members of the community. The government must promote the common good of all people. All people should have enough to meet their basic needs. |
| 1. **Promotion of Peace** | Peace comes through justice and love. We must all strive for peace, justice and right relationships. |  |

**Resource Sheet 5**

let justice flow

**Unit 5.1 Amos 5: 21-24**

**You will need:**

* Felt: road (16cm x 90cm); small black or brown piece (2cm x 10cm)
* 3D figures: Amos, rich person, poor person,
* Objects: coins, scroll, one or two small blocks for an altar

*Children are seated in a semi-circle ready to listen to the story. When the children are ready, carry the materials carefully from the story shelf to the story area and place beside you.*

*Place class Bible, open at Luke, in front of you with your hand on it.*

**This story comes from the Book of Amos, which is in the Old Testament section of the Bible.**

*Reverently place Bible beside you on a book stand or special piece of fabric.*

*Place road on floor in front of you. Hold up figure of Amos.***This is Amos. Amos was a prophet. The word prophet means ‘one who speaks out’. A prophet was an ordinary person, called by God to speak the truth no matter the consequences.**

**Prophets paid attention to what was happening in their world and spoke out against anything which was not part of God’s law of love. People did not always like their messages.**

**So what did Amos see happening in his world?**

*Place Amos on the road to your right.*

*Hold rich person*

**Amos lived during a time when there was an increasing number of rich people. They were powerful and lived in luxury.**

*Place rich person on underlay to left of Amos.*

*Place poor person beside rich person. Place small piece of felt in front of the poor person.*

**The poor people had to work very hard as farmers.**

*Place money in front of poor person then slide it to the rich person.*

**They had to pay taxes to the rich leaders.**

*With your hands show no money.*

**When the poor didn’t have enough money to pay the taxes,***Move small piece of felt in front of rich man* **they had to sell their land.**

*With your hands show no money.* **When they had nothing left, they had to sell themselves as slaves.**

*Move poor person off the underlay back towards you*

**The rich became richer and the poor became poorer and poorer.**

*Build a little altar with blocks next on the underlay. Place rich person in front of altar. Turn Amos to face rich man.*  **Amos condemned the wealthy for their extravagant religious ceremonies, whilst not treating all people with justice.**

*Read from the scroll:*   
**Speaking for God, he said:   
 *I hate, I despise your festivals!***

*Place pebbles on altar outline.***Speaking for God he said:**

***Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings,***

***I will not accept them…***

***Take away from me the noise of your songs; I will not listen to the melody of your harps.***

*Move you hand in an outward flowing action.*

***But let justice roll down like waters,***

***and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.***

*Sit back, pause for a moment, then wonder about the story with the students*

I wonder why God might hate and despise the festivals put on by the wealthy.

I wonder what Amos was telling the people that God really wanted.

I wonder how justice can roll down like waters.

I wonder what it means to say that goodness (righteousness) is like an ever-flowing stream.

I wonder what the rich people would need to do to act with justice.

I wonder why people did not always like the messages of the prophets.

I wonder if you know anyone else in the Bible who was a prophet.

Poor person

Rich person



Amos

Layout of story

Altar of flat pebbles

Simple block/s

1. Barton J, Muddiman J (Ed), *The Oxford Bible Commentary*Oxford University Press p.874, 2001 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. KWL, Teaching Companion, 4a, p118 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. KWL, Teaching Companion, 4a, p127 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)