

Signs of God's Love

In this unit students are introduced to the ways in which God's love has been experienced through time. In Part 1 students explore the love of God discovered in family life. In Part 2 they learn about the love of God for His people as they ponder the journey from slavery to freedom in the Crossing of the Red Sea. In Part 3 they explore the Church as an expression of God's love; and in the final part they are introduced to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the supreme expression of God's love, as they contemplate the symbols and signs of the Eucharist.

DOCTRINAL FOCUS

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

#2206 The relationships within the family bring an affinity of feelings, affections and interests, arising above all from the members' respect for one another.
(See *Compendium* #459 and #460 *What are the duties of children and parents?*)

#2196 In response to the question about the first of the commandments Jesus says: 'The first is Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these'.
(See *Compendium* #435 *How did Jesus interpret the Law?*)

#219 God's love for Israel is compared to a father's love for his son. His love for his people is stronger than a mother's for her children. God loves his people more than a bridegroom his beloved; his love will be victorious over even the worst infidelities and will extend to his most precious gift: 'God so loved the world that he gave his only Son'.
(See *Compendium* #79 *What is the Good News for humanity?*)

#1084 The sacraments are perceptible signs (words and actions) accessible to our human nature. By the action of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit they make present efficaciously the grace that they signify.
(See *Compendium* #224 *What are the sacraments?*)

#1380 ... (Jesus) in his eucharistic presence remains mysteriously in our midst as the one who loved us and gave himself up for us, and he remains under signs that express and communicate this love.
(See *Compendium* #282 *How is Christ present in the Eucharist?*)

SPIRITUAL REFLECTION FOR TEACHERS

How do we communicate our love for another? People express their love through words, actions, gestures, signs and symbols. We also experience and express the love of God through these same elements. Liturgy and sacraments draw on these elements to communicate and celebrate the love of God for humanity and all of creation. Through the words of Sacred Scripture and through our capacity to allow those words to move

us, God's love is communicated to us. What are some key symbols, words or actions that express God's love for you?

Jesus Christ is God's love. This is expressed throughout Jesus' ministry, and most especially in his Passion, death and resurrection. The Holy Spirit of God that is in each person enables them also to express and experience God's love. People are symbols of God's love. Who are the people in your own life who are symbols of God's love? What is it about them that gives you a sense of God?

LINKS WITH STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES

Most students experience love through their familial and peer relationships. These relationships are built on promise, friendship, trust and courage. *How do students describe their experiences of love? What people, gestures and experiences do they associate with love? What experiences do students identify as experiences of God's love? What does God's love look like, feel like, sound like for a child?*

Students are beginning to understand that signs and symbols of the Church reflect important meaning for the People of God. Churches, classrooms, homes and nature are filled with signs and symbols of God's life. *What religious symbols and signs do students associate with the love of God?*

EXPLANATION OF SCRIPTURE

Ex 12: 1–15: 21 The Exodus

The book of Exodus is the second book of the Bible and the second book of the Torah (Law) or Pentateuch (5 books). The Torah or Pentateuch is made up of five books – Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. It was composed over a long period of time from oral, tribal stories as well as other sources, both written and oral. By the time these texts were finally edited in the sixth century, hundreds of years had passed since the events they relate.

As the title of Exodus suggests, the Book recounts the story of the Israelites' escape or exit from slavery in Egypt to freedom and eventually the return to their homeland in Canaan. The Exodus theme permeates the rest of the Bible. The ideas of freedom, coming home, being chosen by God and covenant are all interwoven in the Exodus. The background to the Exodus story in the first fourteen chapters tells of the birth of Moses (1–2), his marriage, and call by God to liberate the people (2–6). A struggle follows between God and the Pharaoh (7–12) culminating in the first Passover meal (12). Then the Israelites cross the Red Sea into relative freedom in the desert (12–13). It is an epic narrative in which God and Moses are the major characters and certainly the heroes. It shows the greatness of God and how God loves the people.

We have no other historical evidence to support the historicity of these stories. The stories of the plagues can be distressing because the innocent apparently suffer as well. We need to understand that the plagues are presented as a struggle between God and Pharaoh who was regarded as divine. Two great rulers are in combat. God eventually won and continued to care for and love the Israelite people through their sojourn in the desert. Moses, the great leader, teacher and mystic, led his people to freedom under God's guidance. Chapter 15 presents a victory song of Moses, praising God for delivering them all safely out of Egypt.

Mk 14: 12–25

The account of Jesus' final meal with his disciples is divided into three sections: the preparations for the meal (12–16), the first phase of the meal with the prediction of Judas' betrayal (17–21), and the institution of The Lord's Supper (22–25). Mark sees the supper as a Passover meal although there is no reference to the eating of lamb. There are disputes about when the meal was held and what kind of meal was eaten. In the Institution Narrative Mark stresses the words, actions and changing of the bread and wine. The bread and wine become the presence of Jesus Christ, which begins a new covenant to be fully realised in the Kingdom of God. The eucharistic celebration of the Church includes many perspectives: the recollection of the Exodus deliverance, the continuation of Jesus' presence through a meal, the sacramental re-enactment of his Passion and death.

Mark's narrative stresses the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ for many. This one sacrifice is made present in the Eucharist.

POSSIBILITIES FOR PRAYER AND WORSHIP

- Write a psalm, song or poem, e.g:
Sing to God. Praise God for ever!
God listens to the prayer of the slaves.
Sing to God. Praise God for ever!
God ...
- Include prayer throughout the unit:
 - Miriam's prayer in *KWL*, 2nd edn, Book 2, Chapter 8, p. 95.
Use tambourines with the prayer.
 - Contemplative prayer, mantra: Just as God was with Moses and the people, and led them to safety, so God is with us too. Guide students to praying a mantra, e.g. 'I am with you always'. See *To God on a Magic Carpet* (Sr Anthony, Spectrum Publications, p. 12).
- Ask students what signs they see of God's love in their lives. These signs may include the sun rising every morning, the air we breathe, the water we drink, the kindness and goodness of people.

Design a simple Litany of Thanks for all these signs of God's love. Invite a few parishioners into your classroom to celebrate the Litany of Thanks with the class.

- Prayer celebrations:
 - Use the symbols of oil, water, light, bread and wine in prayer celebrations.
 - Pray the prayer in *KWL*, 2nd edn, Book 2, Chapter 9, p. 105.
 - Sign of Welcome: *The Lord be with you. And also with you.*
 - Sign of Peace: *Peace be with you. And also with you.*
- Blessings:
 - The Sign of the Cross with holy water.
 - Blessing with arm extended, palm down: *The love of God be with all of you* (or similar words).

- Make the Sign of the Cross with oil on the hand of the one being blessed: *May God bless you (N) _____*.

Related Chapters – *KWL*, 2nd edn, Book 2: Chapter 2, Families; Chapter 3, The Church is a Family; Chapter 8, God of Freedom; Chapter 9, Signs of God's Love.

Faith concepts: sign, symbol, action, belonging, family, love, church, sacrament.

Understandings:

People use words, actions and symbols to show and to celebrate their love.

The family is a sign of God’s love.

Throughout the year the Church celebrates God’s love, especially in the Mass each Sunday.

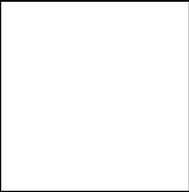
The Exodus story tells us about God’s love for the people of Israel when they were led out of slavery in Egypt to freedom.

Each sacrament has symbols and signs that remind Christians of God’s love.

Unit specific learning:

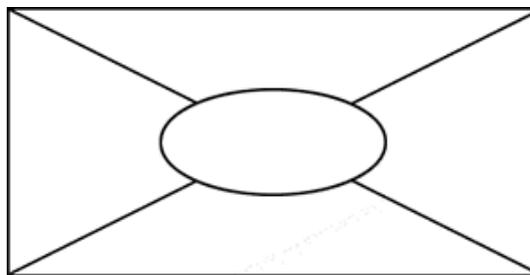
Students will learn about	Students will learn to	Students will undertake to
<i>Knowledge and Understanding</i>	<i>Reasoning & Responding</i>	<i>Personal & Communal Engagement</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ways in which people show care, respect and love for another person, and how these are an expression of God’s love and care. • The characters and events of the Wedding at Cana. • The story of Exodus as a story about God’s gift of love and freedom. • The key characters and events of the Crossing of the Red Sea. • The Church as the People of God. • Signs and symbols of God’s love in the sacraments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Express what is significant for them in the story of the Wedding at Cana and the Exodus. • Reflect on their relationship with God. • Express their feelings, ideas and thoughts about the Crossing of the Red Sea. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be part of prayer celebrations. • Compose a prayer of thanks.

Part 1: Family Is a Sign of God's Love

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
<p>Every human person is created in the image and likeness of God. Therefore, each person's life and inherent dignity must be respected. <i>Every human being</i> possesses this dignity. In the <i>Universal Declaration of Human Rights</i> almost every article begins with expressions such as 'every human being', 'every member of the human species', 'every human individual without any distinction', etc.</p> <p>The human person is not only sacred, but social. The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society, the living cell of society. The nurturing of family life is the difficult yet noble task of humanity.</p>	<p>Wondering People chains</p> <p>Copy the template below. Next, fold a blank page accordion style. Trace the paper doll onto the front of the folded page, making sure it fills the entire page. Then cut along the lines of the doll.</p> <div data-bbox="1025 550 1214 742" style="text-align: center;">  </div> <p>Students wonder about the people in their families who care for them. They draw and write the names on each cut-out. On the back of each cut-out they write a short sentence explaining how that person is caring.</p> <p>Display around the classroom.</p> <p>Telling the Story Read <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edn, Book 2, Chapter 2, pp. 16–17.</p>	<p>Assessment for Learning</p> <p>This activity will demonstrate students' understanding and experience of care and love.</p>

Responding

- Discuss with students the concept of *respect*. Link the concept of respect to the family members that students depicted in their people chains. Students make VIP badges for an important person in their lives.
- Students sit in groups of four. Using a Round Robin strategy students write the word RESPECT in the centre. Each member of the group writes or draws what they think it means to show or receive respect, and what they think respect might mean.



Groups share responses with the class.

The Wedding Feast at Cana

The story of the wedding feast at Cana is the first of Jesus' miracles recorded in John's Gospel. In Jesus' time wedding feasts lasted for some days. It would have been at great expense to the families of the bride and groom, either of whom may have been related to Jesus because he was there with his mother. That there was not enough wine for the guests is a sign that the host families were poor. Out of compassion for their needs and out of respect for Mary and the guests, Jesus transformed the situation.

Suggested Home Activity

Have each member of the family trace his or her hand on a piece of paper. Each person writes on the hand ways in which they show love and care for each other. Cut out hands and display around the home.

Praying the Word

Students participate in prayer/liturgy based on *KWL*, 2nd edn, Book 2, Chapter 2, p. 23. Invite students to bring a photo of their family to be part of the prayer focus.

Telling the Story

Retell the Wedding at Cana using concrete materials.

Wondering

Invite students to wonder with you:

I wonder why Mary asked Jesus to help the 'wedding' family when they ran out of wine?

I wonder how the guests felt when Jesus changed the water into wine?

Responding

Students explore the story of the Wedding at Cana through a choice of modes:

- Concrete materials
 - Feltboard characters
 - Roleplay
 - Playdough
 - Reading *KWL*, 2nd edn, Book 2, Chapter 2, pp. 18–21.
- Use a WAG strategy to assist students to identify and record Words, Actions and Gestures used during a particular experience or interaction. Students summarise the effect that the Words, Actions and Gestures had on them.

Students use the WAG strategy to complete the following, based on the story of the Wedding at Cana (Jn 2: 1–11).

Words	Actions	Gestures
Summary		

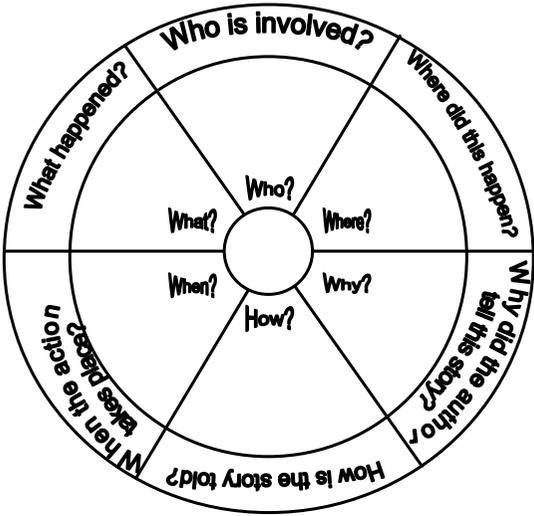
Assessment of Learning

This activity will indicate students' ability to identify the key characters, events and teaching of the Wedding at Cana.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students choose from the following activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Students use the story of the Wedding at Cana to write a rap song. Students perform their rap song. – Provide a postcard template. Students write a postcard to a relative pretending that they were a guest at the wedding. – Create a 3D model of the wedding scene. 	<p>Assessment of Learning These responses will demonstrate the students' ability to express what is significant for them in the Wedding at Cana.</p>
	<p>Praying the Word Students participate in a prayer liturgy that celebrates the gift of family</p>	

Part 2: Exodus Is a Story of God's Love

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
<p>The Exodus is the central saving event of God in the Old Testament. Just as the creation stories tell us that God is the great creator, the story of the Exodus tells us that God is the great liberator and saviour.</p> <p>The story of the Exodus is foundational to an understanding of the symbol of water in baptism and of the Eucharist as the new Passover. As the Israelites moved through the sea into freedom, so we enter into the freedom of Christ Jesus through the waters of baptism.</p>	<p>Telling the Story Discuss with students ways that God's love is experienced.</p> <p>Discuss with students what it means to be free.</p> <p>Read <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edn, Book 2, Chapter 8, pp. 86–93.</p>	<p>Assessment for Learning This discussion will indicate students' understanding and experiences of freedom and of signs of God's love.</p>

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
<p>Jesus celebrated the Last Supper during the Passover. The Passover is a remembrance of that great event when God saved Israel. Two linked events are remembered: the Hebrews ate the meal of unleavened bread and lamb while the angel of death passed over their houses; and they passed through the Red Sea into freedom.</p> <p>The students explore the story with its rich imagery. Focus on what the story tells us about God – as liberator, saviour, with us and protecting us. In later years there will be time to explore the connection between this story and baptism and the Eucharist.</p>	<p>Responding Students use a Story Wheel to analyse features of the story of the Exodus as it is told in <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edn, Book 2, Chapter 8, pp. 86–93.</p>  <p>Discuss with students that the Exodus is a symbol of God's love.</p>	<p>Assessment of Learning This activity will indicate students' ability to identify key characters and events in the story of the Exodus</p>
	<p>Telling the Story Reread the story of the Exodus using concrete materials.</p>	

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
	<p>Wondering Invite students to wonder with you: I wonder why God chose Moses? I wonder what it feels like to be a slave? I wonder how Moses felt? I wonder how the people felt when they crossed the Red Sea? I wonder how they felt once they were free? I wonder what prayer of thanks you would have said after crossing the Red Sea?</p>	
	<p>Responding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole class improvisation of the events of the Exodus. Teacher acts as the narrator, telling the story. Students improvise actions to accompany the text. • Students illustrate or construct a favourite part or character of the story 	<p>Assessment of Learning Students' responses will demonstrate their ability to express what is significant for them in the Exodus.</p>
	<p>Praying the Word Students participate in a prayer or liturgy thanking God for ways that God loves each person. Students may be invited to pray spontaneous prayers of thanks</p>	

Part 3: The Church Celebrates God's Love

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
<p>Church The word Church comes from the Greek <i>ekklesia</i> which means assembly or gathering. The Church is made up of the people of God called from every part of the earth, and assembled by God for worship. The Church is also called the Body of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Spirit. The building in which the people assemble to pray and celebrate is also called a church.</p>	<p>Wondering Write the following on the board: 'I wonder what happens in a church?'</p> <p>In groups students brainstorm as many events as they can. Make a class list to display in the room.</p> <p>Nominate an event for each group to mime to the class. At the end of the performance students attempt to guess the event.</p>	<p>Assessment for Learning This activity will indicate students' associations and experiences of the church building and the Church as the People of God.</p>
	<p>Telling the Story Read <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edn, Book 2, Chapter 3, pp. 32–37.</p> <p>Discuss.</p> <p>Wondering Use 'I wonder ...' <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edn, Book 2, Chapter 3, p. 38.</p> <p>Responding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn and sing a song about the Church, e.g. 'We are the Church' (<i>As One Voice for Kids</i>); 'The House of the Lord' (<i>As One Voice for Kids</i>). Make up actions for the song to be used at a later prayer session. <p>Discuss the meaning of the lyrics; in particular that the Church is not only the building but the people.</p>	

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
<p>Signs and symbols found inside the church building include the altar, the ambo or lectern, the tabernacle, the crucifix, the Paschal candle, the baptismal font, holy water fonts, the priest's chair, notices about the life and activity of the parish, statues and images of the saints, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students decorate a banner as a mosaic, saying; 'The Church is a sign of God's love'. <p>Students brainstorm people they know who belong to the Church. Students draw pictures of these different people to add to the banner.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take students to the church. Make reference to the signs and symbols in the church that are significant to the Catholic tradition. <p>Students write or draw the ways they feel God's love in the church: for example, candles, when lit, are a symbol of God's presence.</p>	<p>Assessment of Learning This activity will indicate students' understanding of the Church as the People of God.</p>
	<p>Praying the Word Ask students what signs they see of God's love in their lives. These signs may include the sun rising every morning, the air we breathe, the water we drink, the kindness and goodness of people. Write a letter to God describing these times.</p>	

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
<p>The Last Supper – the Eucharist Mark’s Gospel records the events of Holy Thursday or the Last Supper. Jesus gathered, as all Jews did, to celebrate the feast of the Passover. This feast recalled and gave thanks for the great deliverance of the Chosen People from slavery. During the meal Jesus took bread. He blessed the bread, broke it and gave it to his disciples. He then shared the cup. Jesus told his disciples to do this as his memorial each time they gathered to break the bread and drink the cup. He is always <i>present</i> with us each time we celebrate the Eucharist.</p>	<p>Telling the Story Tell the story of the Last Supper in Mk 14: 12–25 using concrete materials.</p>	
	<p>Responding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete a Y-chart classifying things they would have seen, heard and tasted if they were present at The Last Supper. • Discuss key events and symbols. Students use the WAG strategy to analyse the text (classify Words, Actions and Gestures discovered in the Scripture story). 	<p>Assessment of Learning The WAG strategy will enable students to identify the significant words and actions of The Last Supper.</p>
	<p>Praying the Word Students participate in a liturgy which focuses on the People of God.</p>	

Part 4: Sacraments: Signs and Symbols of God's Love

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
<p>Particular symbols are used in the sacramental life of the Church: water, oil, light, bread and wine. Through these symbols students learn of God's presence and saving activity. This lays the foundations for later teaching about the sacraments.</p>	<p>Wondering Select a range of signs and symbols that the children would be familiar with, e.g. STOP sign, school logo, Made in Australia sign, Nike tick, etc. Discuss the signs and their significance.</p>	<p>Assessment for Learning This activity will indicate students' prior knowledge of signs and symbols.</p>
<p>Symbols are outward ways of expressing inner meaning. A kiss, an embrace, a ring, sending flowers, a cake with brightly lit candles, all put us in touch with certain aspects of life, e.g. friendship, love, commitment, sympathy, remembrance. Symbols are part of our religious heritage and our lives, and can express meaning that is beyond words.</p>	<p>Discuss the fact that certain signs and symbols represent a greater message. Ask students to recall and draw a range of symbols and signs.</p> <p>Share some with the class and discuss the symbolism.</p>	

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
<p>The symbols and signs used by the Church communicate the life of God. They have many layers of meaning. Symbols find their meaning in the context in which they are used. On the literal level, water is sustaining, cleansing, renewing and refreshing, so too is God's life in baptism. Bread and wine nourish us, so too God nourishes us in the Eucharist. Oil is soothing and strengthening, so too is God's grace in the anointing in Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Orders and Anointing of the Sick. But the seven sacraments are not merely symbols. They are chosen signs that give grace.</p>	<p>Telling the Story Read <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edn, Book 2, Chapter 9, pp. 96–103</p>	

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
<p>The story 'Signs of God's Love' is best told using the symbols themselves. The <i>KWL</i> chapter outlines the ways oil, water, bread and wine, etc. are used in everyday life, and then examines these symbols in the sacraments. Symbols are the Church's way of expressing a spiritual reality. Children need to experience these symbols rather than simply be told about them.</p>	<p>Responding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students re-read <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edn, Book 2, Chapter 9, pp. 96–102. <p>In groups students identify the signs and symbols of the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist.</p> <p>Each group presents their findings on a selected sacrament. Students create a poster naming the signs and symbols of the sacrament and list what each sign represents in ordinary life and in sacramental life. Illustrate.</p> <p>For example: We use water to wash, clean, drink. Water is used in baptism as a sign of new life.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students make 2D and 3D signs and symbols of the sacraments of Initiation. Display these in the classroom's sacred space. 	<p>Assessment of Learning</p> <p>This activity will indicate students' ability to identify signs and symbols of particular sacraments.</p>
<p>A Blessing is an ancient form of prayer. It is an expression of God's generosity and love.</p>	<p>Praying the Word</p> <p>Students participate in a prayer liturgy based on the signs of sacramental life. Use the prayer in <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edn, Book 2, Chapter 9, p. 105.</p> <p>Conclude with a blessing.</p>	

RESOURCES

To Know, Worship and Love, 2nd Edition

Book 2: Chapter 2, Families; Chapter 3, The Church is a Family; Chapter 8, God of Freedom; Chapter 9, Signs of God's Love.

Teacher Resources

Macdonald, Sr Anthony 2004, *To God on a Magic Carpet*, Spectrum Publications, Richmond, Vic.

White, D, O'Brien, K & Todd, S 2003, *Into the Deep*, KD Publications, Marayong, NSW.

Wintour, R 2002, *Just Imagine 2: More Creative Ways of Presenting Scripture*, Mountjoy Enterprises, Brisbane.

Wintour, R 1998, *Sacred Celebrations: Liturgies for Children*, Mountjoy Enterprises, Brisbane.

Music & CDs

Ford, E & N 2002, 'The House of the Lord', in *As One Voice for Kids*, Willow Connection.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION STANDARDS

This unit may be used to assess some of the Level 2 standards.

Students interpret biblical stories and stories in Church Tradition by making a response and expressing their own ideas, feelings and perceptions. Students distinguish the key objects, signs, symbols and actions of the sacraments of Initiation and seasons of the Church by explaining what they mean.