

## A Time of God's Generosity

In this unit students explore Lent, Holy Week and Easter as a time of reflecting on and celebrating God's great generosity. They explore what generosity means in the gospels, in the Lenten practices of prayer, fasting and almsgiving, and in the events of Holy Week and Easter. They investigate a Catholic organisation that witnesses to God's loving generosity. They reflect on ways they can live generously among friends and family.

### 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:**

**#301** With creation, God does not abandon his creatures to themselves. He not only gives them being and existence, but also, and at every moment, upholds and sustains them in being, enables them to act and brings them to their final end. Recognising this utter dependence with respect to the Creator is a source of wisdom and freedom, of joy and confidence.

*(See Compendium #53 Why was the world created?)*

**#1968** The gospel brings the Law to its fullness through imitation of the perfection of the heavenly Father, through forgiveness of enemies and prayer for persecutors, in emulation of the divine generosity.

*(See Compendium #420 What is the new law or the law of the gospel?)*

**#565** From the beginning of his public life, at his baptism, Jesus is the 'Servant', wholly consecrated to the redemptive work that he will accomplish by the 'baptism' of his Passion.

*(See Compendium #105 Why did Jesus receive from John the 'baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins?')*

**#478** Jesus knew and loved us each and all during his life, his agony and his Passion, and gave himself up for each one of us: 'The Son of God ... loved me and gave himself for me' (Gal 2: 20). He has loved us all with a human heart.

*(See Compendium #93 What does the heart of Jesus exemplify?)*

### SPIRITUAL REFLECTION FOR TEACHERS

Generosity is a very lovable quality in a person. Remember someone who embodies generosity for you.

Generosity is one of the characteristics of God. In what ways has God been generous to you?

Spend some time meditating on a particular example of the generosity of Jesus Christ in the gospels, perhaps Mk 1: 40–44. What does it show you about the human heart of Jesus Christ?

Jesus Christ's passion and death are the examples of limitless generosity. Recall other stories of great self-giving that will help you and your class appreciate what you and they are called to.

Think of ways to draw together the concepts of self-giving and the generosity to others called for particularly in Lent. How can you make your classroom a generous classroom? This may include material generosity, but should not be limited to it.

## LINKS WITH STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES

Students' beliefs and understandings are influenced by their family and peer groups, school community and popular culture. Students may begin to question inconsistencies in the beliefs and behaviour of adults. *How is generosity understood and practised in the school? How might some of your students understand generosity in the context of a materialistic, lifestyle culture? Is generosity not only about the generous sharing of monetary resources (fund-raising) but also the sharing of one's abilities, talents and time?*

The practice of generosity and sharing involves a critical exploration of why poverty and injustice exist in parts of the community and the world. *What current issues around poverty and injustice may engage students in this unit?*

Students at this stage are developing a heightened sense of social justice. They are becoming more enthusiastic about service activities. *What opportunities exist to integrate a service activity into this unit that encourages generous living?*

## EXPLANATION OF SCRIPTURE

### **Mt 6: 1–18**

The Sermon on the Mount is the setting for these verses from Matthew. The Mount represents Mount Sinai, the mountain where God gave Moses the law. Matthew is probably writing for a community made up of both originally Jewish and originally Gentile Christians. He wants to assure the originally Jewish Christians that Jesus Christ is in continuity with Judaism, and also to assure the originally Gentile Christians that they are not locked into Judaism in a way that makes them second-rate Christians to those of Jewish heritage. Matthew presents Jesus Christ as another Moses, but Jesus Christ transcends Moses. Jesus Christ is the new law-giver, he gives an authoritative interpretation of the Law.

These deeds of loving kindness reflect the Jewish priorities of Matthew's community. Almsgiving, prayer and fasting – these are things we do in Lent, and hopefully all year round. But the distinction Jesus and Matthew make is that they are better done quietly without a lot of fuss. They are part of life. One could see them as natural virtues that are good for society, the community and the individual.

In the Christian context almsgiving can be practised in a variety of ways in the classroom and beyond. Fasting and almsgiving always have God as their focus.

Prayer and meditation are well-known traditions of holiness, health and wholeness that should be nurtured in children.

### **Mt 26: 17–29 The Last Supper**

The Passover meal is a very important family ritual meal within Judaism. It was so in Jesus Christ's time as well. Jewish families would come to celebrate the feast in

Jerusalem, as did Jesus Christ and his followers on this occasion. Scholars have calculated that the population of Jerusalem then was about 30,000, and it rose to about 130,000 during Passover, which lasted a week. Such numbers meant more Roman soldiers were deployed on active service in Jerusalem during Passover.

The ritual blessing of the bread and wine is a Jewish practice for Sabbath and festival meals. It occurs each Friday evening in Jewish homes.

Passover is a solemn yet happy remembrance of deliverance from slavery to freedom, a remembrance of God's great acts of saving love and deliverance from death. Each Jew every year recalls the meaning of Passover as if it were happening all over again for each individual. What is the personal meaning of these holy days of our Easter festival for us and our students?

## POSSIBILITIES FOR PRAYER AND WORSHIP

- Clear the prayer space of clutter and keep it very stark and simple during Lent. Drape a purple cloth over the table. Place there a cross, candle and Bible. A bowl of ashes ought to be placed there for use on Ash Wednesday.
- During Lent, accompany the reading of the gospel with the singing of a Lenten acclamation such as 'Lenten Acclamation' by Michael Mangan, from his collection, *Renew and Rejoice* (Litmus Productions).
- Establish a pattern of daily prayer during the season of Lent. *Daily Prayer Under the Southern Cross* by Elizabeth McMahon Jeep and Sr Margaret Smith SGS is an excellent resource that can be used for this purpose.
- Invite the students to prepare a PowerPoint reflection on the *Beatitudes*. Give them time to find appropriate images to accompany the text. It may be used as a prayer during a school assembly.
- Give the students a copy of Psalm 130, a traditional Lenten psalm. Invite them to re-write it in their own words. Use this translation throughout Lent.
- On the Fridays of Lent gather in a circle with a large cross in the centre of the group. Pray two or three *Stations of the Cross*. In this way, the fourteen *Stations* will have been covered by the end of the season. Allow a few moments of silence after each *Station*.
- During Holy Week, decorate the prayer space with palms, a bowl and towel, a red cloth, and a large cross. On each day choose one of these symbols as a focus for prayer. Play some quiet, background music and proclaim a short scripture passage related to the symbol. Allow time for silent reflection.

**Related Chapters** – *KWL*, 2nd edn, Year 5: Chapter 3, Lent; Chapter 6, Holy Week.

**Faith concepts:** seasons, generosity, beliefs, values, rituals, practices, justice.

**Seeking understanding:**

What does it mean to be generous?

How can I live generously during Lent?

What influences my beliefs and values about being generous?

**Understandings:**

Throughout his ministry the gospels tell us that Jesus Christ lived a generous life.

During Lent and Holy Week Christians participate in practices that live out and celebrate God’s generosity.

Being generous contributes to the building of fair and just relationships.

People’s beliefs and values influence how they practise generosity.

**Unit specific learning:**

<b>Students will learn about</b>	<b>Students will learn to</b>	<b>Students will undertake to</b>
<i>Knowledge and Understanding</i>	<i>Reasoning &amp; Responding</i>	<i>Personal &amp; Communal Engagement</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Qualities of a generous person.</li><li>• The season of Lent as a time of generosity.</li><li>• The traditional practices of Lent and their meanings.</li><li>• Times when Jesus Christ and other gospel figures demonstrated generous self giving.</li><li>• Catholic groups that live the Christian message of generosity.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reflect on their own experiences of generosity.</li><li>• Make connections between their own experiences of generosity and generosity demonstrated by Jesus Christ in the gospels and the Passion narratives.</li><li>• Identify ways they can live generous lives.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Make a personal or shared class pledge to a way of living generously.</li><li>• Participate in Holy Week liturgies.</li></ul>

## PHASES OF STUDENT INQUIRY

### Additional Reading for Teachers

Generosity is concerned with self giving. It may express itself in the selfless giving of time, talent, wisdom, friendship, as well as material resources.

### Orientation to Inquiry

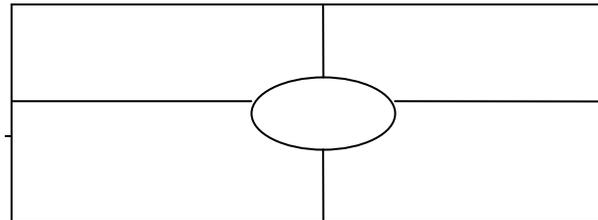
*What do students already know, think or feel in relation to the topic? What are students' questions about the topic? What experiences and reflections can we offer students to become engaged with the topic?*

- **A Generous Brainstorm**  
What does it mean to be generous?  
In small groups students discuss their experiences and associations with generosity, and then come together as a whole class to develop a description of a generous person.
- **Graphic Organiser: Generosity in Lent**  
Students complete the following graphic organiser to assess their prior knowledge of practices of generosity in Lent.  
**Title in circle:** Lent is a time of generosity.  
**Organising questions in rectangular boxes:**
  - How was Jesus Christ generous?
  - In what ways have people been generous to me?
  - How can I be generous during Lent?
  - Who do I know that is generous, and why?

### Assessment: for learning, as learning, of learning

#### Assessment for Learning

The brainstorm will elicit students' current understandings and experiences of generosity. These may be further affirmed or challenged throughout the unit.



### Assessment for Learning

Graphic organiser will show students' prior knowledge, and this assessment will inform the rest of the learning and teaching sequence. Ask students to complete the same organiser at the completion of the unit so that they can evaluate their learning.

**Lent** is the old English word for Spring. This is the period of forty days from Ash Wednesday to Holy Saturday. It is a time when we prepare for the greatest season in the Church's Liturgical year – Easter. It is a time when the Church prays and engages in acts of service to others.

**Ash Wednesday:** This is the first day in the Lenten season. When we go to Mass on Ash Wednesday our foreheads are marked with blessed ashes in the form of a cross to show that, as followers of Christ, we are entering into a time of repentance and prayer. The distribution of ashes comes from a ceremony of ages past. Christians who had committed grave faults performed public penance. On Ash Wednesday the bishop blessed the hair shirts which they were to

- **Immersion: Generosity and Lenten Practices**

Reflect on Ash Wednesday as the beginning of Lent. Lent is a time when we give generously in preparation for Easter. Highlight *almsgiving*, *prayer* and *fasting* as traditional practices (Mt 6: 1–18). Read *KWL*, 2nd edn, Year 5, Chapter 5, pp. 45-46, 49-50.

Show students a series of photos or images or listen to stories which involve expressions of generosity and prayer. Students reflect on these images and stories using de Bono's Thinking Hats.

- What's happening in each photo/story?
- What will be the possible positive

wear during the forty days of penance, and sprinkled over them ashes made from the burning of palms from the previous year.

- effects of the actions?
- Could there be any possible negative effects of the actions?
- Which photo/part of the story brings out a strong feeling in you?
- Have you seen any of these actions in your life?
- What questions would you like to ask the people in the photos/stories?

Images and stories of people whose lives have been affected by generosity and prayer may be found on sites such as Caritas and CAFOD (see below).

- **Immersion: Generosity in the Community**

During the weeks of Lent collect media stories and/or articles that tell tales of human generosity. Discuss and share with the class.

### Additional Reading for Teachers

### Development

*What experiences and religious texts will provide new learning for students? What skills will students need in order to work with these resources? What strategies and tools will enable students to think and reflect on these experiences and texts? How will students process their thinking and learning?*

- **Generosity in the Gospels: Almsgiving, prayer and fasting**  
Students read Mt 6: 3–4, 6, 17–18.  
Pose the questions:

### Assessment:

**for learning, as learning, of learning**

### Assessment as Learning

Students' responses will demonstrate their understanding of the relationship between the scripture text and the Lenten traditions of

Generosity is partly about the sharing of wealth and possessions for the good of all.

In the story of **Mary, Martha and Jesus**, Luke shows that generosity is also concerned with the giving of one's self, one's time, one's companionship and one's loving attention. Mary sits at the feet of Jesus Christ and lovingly **gives of her time and her friendship**. As a true disciple in Luke's Gospel she **chooses to listen to and ponder Jesus' words**. Martha has gone somewhat overboard in her giving of material goods and hospitality. In her character we see that the emphasis on giving resources and goods can sometimes deflect from other expressions of generosity among people. **Generosity is about listening and attending to another's needs, not only their material needs.**

Lent is a time in which the Church explicitly stands in solidarity with others in acts of prayer, fasting and almsgiving. While many community organisations share similar values and practices, this unit focuses on how these Lenten practices are central to **Catholic identity**. Engaging with Church groups during Lent is a way of immersing students actively in the institution of the Church and of

- Who is Jesus talking to?
- Where is the story set?
- What is Jesus' teaching?
- How do these teachings relate to the Lenten practices?

prayer, almsgiving and fasting.

- **The Generosity of Martha, Mary and Jesus**

Tell the story of Martha and Mary in Lk 10: 38–42 noting what each character says and does. Ask:

- Where does the story take place?
- Who are the characters?
- How would you describe each character?
- How is each character in the story a person of generosity?
- What are some of the ways your family or friends are generous with each other?
- What are some of the ways you are generous with God, giving God your time and attention?

- **Generosity in the Church**

Divide the class into small groups. Each group of students is given information about a specific Church organisation or person to research.

- What does the group/person do?
- Why is the organisation/role needed?

nurturing a sense of Catholic identity and belonging. Two well known organisations in Australia are The St Vincent de Paul Society and Caritas.

The official website of the the **St Vincent de Paul Society** in Australia tells us that 40,000 members and volunteers work hard to assist people in need, and combat social injustice across Australia. Internationally, the Society operates in 130 countries and has over 950,000 members. Members of the Society are people who live out their faith in action by visiting people in their homes to **provide support, friendship and material assistance**. This practice is known as home visitation, and is carried out by local St Vincent de Paul Society conferences. Conferences are typically parish or school-based groups of people who respond to calls for assistance from people in the local community and work closely with the Society's Vinnies Centres.

**Caritas Australia** is the Catholic agency for international aid and development. Caritas **helps people to help themselves**, regardless of race, political beliefs, gender or religion. Caritas supports programs for human development and self-reliance. These include improving health, overcoming illiteracy, reducing environmental damage, conserving cultural identity and providing training for better agricultural practices. Each year Caritas Australia is responsible for the Project

- Who can join?
- What parts of their work interest you or inspire you?

Organisations could include: Centacare, Caritas Australia, the St Vincent de Paul Society, Aboriginal Catholic Ministry, Melbourne Overseas Mission or the work carried out by religious orders, lay people, parishioners.

Alternatively students could work with the Caritas Australia Lenten Project Compassion materials.

Students present their findings in a mode of their choice, e.g. role play; PowerPoint slides; brochure; diagram; film; 3D collage of materials, words and images associated with the group.

### **Assessment of Learning**

The presentations will indicate how students recognise and value the purpose and work of the organisation as an act of God's generosity.

Compassion campaign across Catholic parishes and schools in Australia.

**Holy Week:** This is the week leading up to Easter, beginning with Palm Sunday and ending with the beginning of the **Easter Triduum**, which starts on the evening of Holy Thursday, continues through Good Friday and Holy Saturday, and culminates in the vigil and celebration of the first Mass of Easter.

**Service:** In Jesus' time the lowliest servant washed the feet of visitors before they entered the house. When Jesus Christ washed the disciples' feet at the Lord's supper he demonstrated how he wanted the disciples to follow his example and serve others. Jn 13: 14–15 symbolises humble service in love towards another. Jesus Christ told the disciples explicitly, 'If I, your Lord and master, have washed your feet, you should wash each other's feet'.

- **Jesus Christ's Generous Self-Giving In The Passion, Death And Resurrection: Holy Week**

Explore the events of Holy Week through the Passion narratives, (*KWL*, 2nd edn, Year 5, Chapter 6) highlighting Jesus Christ as servant, and demonstrating the ultimate sign of love and generosity in the giving of his life.

In each event ask students to ponder:

- Who are the generous ones in this event?
- What do they give of themselves to another person?
- Who struggles to be generous?
- What might cause them to respond this way?

Invite students to choose one of the characters of Holy Week who has struck them as being generous. Invite students to portray this character in a scene from Holy Week through painting, sculpture, poetry, role play, photography, or retelling the event from the perspective of the character orally or in written form. These could be integrated into Holy Week liturgies or prayer times.

### **Assessment of Learning**

This task will indicate how students have come to understand generosity in a Christian context and how they interpret the actions and responses of biblical characters.

## Additional Reading for Teachers

## SYNTHESIS

*How will students demonstrate their understandings, beliefs, values, skills and feelings in relation to the topic? How will students take action based on their learning? What strategies and tools will enable students to discern their action, to plan and implement action and to evaluate their action?*

## Assessment: for learning, as learning, of learning

- **Personal or Shared Pledge**

Ask students to list the qualities of a generous person in light of all they have learned. Ask them to consider what they could do either personally or as a class to act on what they have learned.

From the list choose an action; display this in the classroom. Over subsequent weeks monitor this commitment.

- **Journal**

Ask:

- What have you learned about being generous?
- What has interested you in this unit?
- What has challenged you?
- What has surprised you?

Students respond to these questions in a journal using writing, pictures, diagrams, symbols, photography, visual images.

- **Holy Week Liturgies**

Participate in Holy Week liturgies.

### Assessment of Learning

The pledge will demonstrate how students have understood generosity and how they are able to translate the learning into their own lives.

### Assessment as Learning

This journal entry will indicate the development of students' understanding of, and valuing having a generous disposition.



## RESOURCES

### ***To Know, Worship and Love, 2nd Edition***

Year 5: Chapter 3, Lent; Chapter 6, Holy Week.

### **Teacher Resources**

Jeep, Elizabeth McMahon and Smith, Margaret 2007, *Children's Daily Prayer Under the Southern Cross*, Sisters of the Good Samaritan, Five Dock.

Murdoch, K 1998, *Classroom Connections: Strategies For Integrated Learning*, Eleanor Curtain Publishing, Australia.

### **CDs**

Mangan, Michael, 'Renew and Rejoice', on *This Time is the Time*, Litmus Productions.

### **Websites**

The CAFOD (Catholic Agency for Overseas Development) website features PowerPoint slide shows and images of contemporary situations of poverty or disaster that require assistance to rebuild life and hope.

<[http://www.cafod.org.uk/watch\\_listen/powerpoints/rebuilding\\_lives](http://www.cafod.org.uk/watch_listen/powerpoints/rebuilding_lives)>

Caritas Australia

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

Acclaim Images is a photography site that has many images of individuals and groups in prayer.

<[http://www.acclaimimages.com/search\\_terms/praying.html](http://www.acclaimimages.com/search_terms/praying.html)>

St Vincent de Paul Society

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

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION STANDARDS**

This unit may be used to assess some of the Level 4 standards.

Students analyse and reflect on scripture texts and stories in Church Tradition to inform actions, attitudes and values.