

Life Is Good!

In this unit students explore the concepts of human dignity and respect for human life. They consider ways in which people care for and respect human life and ways in which human life may be harmed. Students identify and explore either a personal, local or global issue concerning human dignity and respect for life and analyse it in light of Church teaching. At the end of the unit students are invited to make a personal commitment to the issue they have explored.

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:

#362 The human person, created in the image of God, is a being at once corporeal and spiritual.

(See *Compendium #66 In what sense do we understand man and woman as created 'in the image of God'?*)

#2258 'Human life is sacred because from its beginning it involves the creative action of God, and it remains for ever in a special relationship with the Creator, who is its sole end'.

(See *Compendium #466 Why must human life be respected?*)

#2288 Life and physical health are precious gifts entrusted to us by God. We must take reasonable care of them, taking into account the needs of others and the common good. *Concern for the health* of its citizens requires that society helps in the attainment of living conditions that allow them to grow and reach maturity: food and clothing, housing, health care, basic education, employment, and social assistance.

(See *Compendium #408 What is involved in the common good?*)

#2290 The virtue of temperance disposes us to *avoid every kind of excess*: the abuse of food, alcohol, tobacco or medicine. Those incur grave guilt who, by drunkenness or a love of speed, endanger their own and others' safety on the road, at sea or in the air.

(See *Compendium #474 What duty do we have towards our bodies?*)

SPIRITUAL REFLECTION FOR TEACHERS

The understanding of human dignity begins in the story of creation (Gen 1: 26–27) where we are told that human beings are created in the image and likeness of God. God saw that everything created was good. The fundamental principles of Catholic social teaching are: Human life is sacred from the moment of conception until natural death, and the human dignity of every person must be recognised.

How do you affirm life? How do you nurture and respect your body and health? Do you live a balanced life, giving time for the wellbeing of body, soul and mind? Do you show respect for the talents you have been given by sharing them generously? Do you affirm the dignity of each person you meet by your fair treatment of their individuality? Do you show respect for the dignity of those who suffer mental or physical disabilities? Are the

choices you make guided by the Church's understanding of the dignity of the human person, regardless of age or nationality?

Concern for the health of its citizens requires that society helps in the attainment of living conditions that allow them to grow and reach maturity: food and clothing, housing, health care, basic education, employment, and social assistance (CCC #2288). Are you aware of people in the local or global community whose basic health needs are not met? What is the response of the Church? What are some of the barriers that prevent people from having basic needs met? What are some of the challenges that this presents to Christians?

LINKS WITH STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES

School vegetable gardens, breakfast programs and healthy canteens, playing sport, fishing, cycling, dancing, playing with friends, picnics and day trips with families, walking the dog, helping parents wash the car and clean the house: these may be some of the ways in which students are already developing an awareness and respect for the preciousness of life and the need to nurture health and wellbeing through care for the human body. *What do students associate with healthy ways of living? What are some of the challenges or barriers to students having a healthy lifestyle? How does the school support healthy living?*

Often the media can saturate its viewers and listeners with images and discussion about wellbeing, body image and physical health. *What are some of the issues facing students in your class in relation to physical health and wellbeing? Who are good role models of healthy living and respect for the body? How can students be supported to make positive, informed choices about how they care for their bodies?*

While the developed world often confronts health issues such as childhood obesity, anorexia, depression and substance abuse, many people in the world are confronted with hunger, malnutrition and inadequate health care. *How does the school support students with significant health issues? How can the curriculum contribute to this support? Do students have an awareness of the needs of people in the developing world? What Church organisations do they know that support the health and wellbeing of people locally and globally?*

EXPLANATION OF SCRIPTURE

Ex 20: 13 The Fifth Commandment

The commandments given to Moses on Sinai are at the heart of Jewish teaching and the Christian moral code. They are 'lofty, original and morally demanding'. These were to form the basis of Israel's covenant relationship with God. These commandments were given to the people to help them to live together harmoniously. The first commandment calls us to put nothing before God, no person, no thing, no desire, no ambition. This focus on God, if we could achieve it, would make us able to deal well with every other aspect of our lives and relationships. We would never spoil, exploit, ignore, hurt or envy others if we truly realised that God and God alone is capable of satisfying all our desires. This commandment gives order to all the others which specify human behaviour that leads to 'life', and preclude behaviour that leads to 'death'. The fifth commandment in particular, 'You shall not kill', is not only a prohibition against violence and killing, but, positively, demands that we respect the life God gave us, and are concerned for the health and wellbeing of ourselves and of others.

POSSIBILITIES FOR PRAYER AND WORSHIP

- Students prepare a liturgy that praises life. Psalm 138 (*KWL*, 2nd edn, Year 5, Chapter 17, p. 171) may be a valuable focus for this liturgy. Invite students to pray for those who have fragile health – the sick, elderly, those who suffer addiction, the homeless.
- If students have explored the wellbeing and health of people in developing nations, this could be the focus for prayer time. Symbols of water and bread (or items of clothing, medicine, housing, etc.) could provide a focus for personal prayer or meditation. Tell a story about people facing problems of health and wellbeing. A valuable resource might be the Ozspirit website <<http://www.ozspirit.com>> that has many stories and images of people in a global context. Proclaim the fifth commandment. Invite students to make prayers of intercession.
- Water – the giver of life! Water is essential for the sustaining of human life, especially the human body. In Australia and in many parts of the world this resource is particularly precious because of its scarcity. Students sit in a circle. Place a bowl of water or images of water in the centre. Tell a story about a person or place that is affected by scarcity of water. Alternatively read a story about the gift of water. An example of this may be *Big Rain Coming* by Katrina Germein, or *Here Comes the Rain* by Clare Good. Proclaim a scripture text such as Mt 25: 37. Invite students to make prayers of intercession or prayers of thanksgiving and petition. Invite students to bless each other with water.
- Students paint, colour or draw a mandala of respect for human life. A Christian mandala is a reflective and artistic response to a meditation or scripture reading. It is based on a circle, which is a symbol of wholeness, and often features at the centre the connecting points of the cross.
- Pray together 'A Psalm to our Provident Creator' from 'Our Prayer', *KWL*, 2nd edn, Year 5, Chapter 1, p. 8.
- Invite students to compose an individual prayer of praise or thanksgiving for the gift of human life. This prayer could be expressed through visual images such as photographs, through a painting or clay sculpture, through the composition of a song, or through a form of poetry such as haiku.
- Invite the students to participate in a guided meditation on the goodness of life. A good example is in *Be Still – Creation Meditations* by Jill Gowdie and Michael Mangan, which includes a CD as well as the written text.
- Celebrate creation in a class ritual. Use 'Spiral Walk: Story of Creation' from *Sparks of the Cosmos – Rituals for Seasonal Use* by Margie Abbott RSM, pp. 26–27. Students experience a ritual, honouring the 'birth' of the universe.

Related Chapters – *KWL*, 2nd edn, Year 5: Chapter 1, God the Creator; Chapter 17, Respect for Life.

Faith concepts: human dignity, human body, creation, respect, responsibility, choices, health, wellbeing.

Seeking understanding:

How can we respect and develop our bodies and minds, and why is this important for Christians?

Understandings:

God’s creation is good.

God creates each person with dignity.

God invites people to be responsible for the life that has been given to them.

People are responsible for their bodies and should respect and care for them.

The fifth commandment teaches people to respect life.

To live out the fifth commandment the Catholic Church has organisations that care for people’s mental and physical wellbeing.

Scripture Text: Ex 20: 1–17 The Commandments.

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">• The principle of the dignity of the human person and how it applies to issues in our personal or global world today.• Scripture concerned with the commandments.• Situations in which human life is respected and nurtured and situations in which it is not.• Ways in which the commandments, particularly the fifth commandment, can be used to analyse modern-day issues. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Analyse an issue in light of the Church’s beliefs about human dignity.• Express their beliefs, attitudes and feelings about an issue concerned with the dignity of the human person in light of new learning about the commandments, specifically the fifth commandment. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Express their views about ways in which human life needs to be respected.• Develop a pledge outlining their own responsibilities in caring for and respecting human life. |

PHASES OF STUDENT INQUIRY

| Additional Reading for Teachers | Orientation to Inquiry <i>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?</i> | Assessment: for learning, as learning, of learning | | | | |
|--|---|---|----------------|--|--|--|
| <p>Mother Teresa was born in Skopje, Macedonia, on 27 August 1910. Her family were of Albanian descent. At the age of 12 she felt strongly the call of God and she knew she had to be a missionary to spread the love of Christ. She first joined the Sisters of Loreto who had missions in India. She taught at St Mary's High School in Calcutta, but the suffering and poverty she glimpsed outside the convent walls made such a deep impression on her that in 1948 she received permission from her superiors to leave the convent school and devote herself to working among the poorest of the poor in the slums of Calcutta. In 1950 she received permission from the Holy See to start her own order, the Missionaries of Charity, whose primary task was to love and care for the persons nobody was prepared to look after. She was declared 'blessed' by Pope John Paul II. <http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1979/teresa-bio.html></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immersion: People Who Respect Life Present the story of Mother Teresa and her approach to caring for people. Focus Questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – How did Mother Teresa care for people? – What values and beliefs guided her work? – What choices did she make and why? <p>Create a T-chart to record their learning and questions.</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="color: #A52A2A;">Told Us</th> <th style="color: #A52A2A;">Made Us Wonder</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="height: 40px;"></td> <td style="height: 40px;"></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p style="text-align: center;">This may be added to with stories of others in the Catholic tradition and the broader community who demonstrate</p> | Told Us | Made Us Wonder | | | |
| Told Us | Made Us Wonder | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| | a care and respect for human life. | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence Starters Discuss and then complete the following sentence starters: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – I treat people with dignity when ... – I treat people with respect when ... – A good choice is ... – A bad choice is ... – I show respect for myself when ... | Assessment for Learning Sentences will indicate students' prior knowledge, experience and beliefs. |
| <p>As the Catholic Catechism tells us in #2319 'Every human life, from the moment of conception until death, is sacred because the human person has been willed for its own sake in the image and likeness of the living and holy God'. Once this is accepted, the pro-life struggle makes sense. Human beings are unique. They have rights from the first moment of existence until the time of death. No one can deprive an innocent human being of life, no matter whether a person is born or unborn, healthy or gravely ill, conscious or unconscious. The Christian sees life as 'sacred' because each person is an image of God, created out of love and for love, created with a plan and purpose. (CCC 2319)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immersion – Respect Life Students select from a range of experiences that tune them in to the topic: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Students read 'Respect Life' in KWL, 2nd edn, Year 5, Chapter 17, pp. 169–170. – Students view images and stories from the media that positively or negatively portray human dignity and life, e.g. images of war, images of families, young people or communities working together. – Students view advertising that negatively or positively affects human life, e.g. junk food, over-emphasis on body image, healthy living, smoking. – Look at Catholic organisations that promote life, e.g. read KWL, | |

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| <p>Images of God: There is no image that can depict or describe God, because God is beyond words and images. We can, however, express something of the mystery of God in the many images found in Scripture, e.g. shepherd, father, mother, light, love, rock of safety, shield. Moreover, every human being reflects something of God because we are made in God's image and likeness. We see the glory of God reflected on the face of Jesus Christ, God's Son.</p> | <p>2nd edn, Year 5, Chapter 17, p.173 for a summary of the work of the Mary of the Cross Centre, Melbourne.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prayer Experience Students divide a circle into three (peace symbol). In the first slice they draw an image of God, in the second an image of themselves, and in the third a person who loves them deeply. This circle suggests the similarities and inter-relationship between God's creative love and the love of human persons for one another. Use for prayer experience. <p>Develop a prayer experience around the theme: Human life is good so let's protect it.</p> <p>See 'Possibilities for Prayer and Worship' in this unit.</p> | |
| <p>Additional Reading for Teachers</p> | <p>Development <i>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?</i></p> | <p>Assessment: for learning, as learning, of learning</p> |
| <p>The Ten Commandments were the moral laws given to Moses by God. They were to help the Hebrew people remain faithful to God, and live in harmony together as a community. The first three relate to love of</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect Life – The Fifth Commandment Explore Ex 20: 1–17 and Mt 22: 37–39 with the teacher explaining the historical context. | <p>Assessment of Learning This task will demonstrate how students understand and interpret the messages in the fifth commandment and how they relate the commandment to their own life experience.</p> |

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| <p>God and the next seven to love of neighbour.</p> <p>One needs to look at these commandments in light of today's world. What sorts of things go on in today's world that denigrate love of neighbour? The commandments given to Moses on Sinai are at the heart of Jewish teaching and the Christian moral code. They are 'lofty, original and morally demanding'. These were to form the basis of Israel's covenant relationship with God. These commandments were given to the people to help them to live together harmoniously. The first commandment calls us to put nothing before God, no person, no thing, no desire, no ambition. This focus on God, if we could achieve it, would make us able to deal well with every other aspect of our lives and relationships. We would never spoil, exploit, ignore, hurt or envy others if we truly realised that God and God alone is capable of satisfying all our desires. This commandment gives order to all the others which specify human behaviour that leads to 'life', and preclude behaviour that leads to 'death'. The fifth commandment in particular, 'You shall not kill', is not only a prohibition against violence and killing, but, positively, demands that we respect the life God gave us, and are concerned for the health and wellbeing of ourselves and of others.</p> | <p>Highlight the fifth commandment. On a poster students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Write two or three sentences which express the meaning of the commandment. - Draw pictures that describe this commandment. - Formulate an explanation or illustration of how this commandment would look in modern-day life. - Devise a symbol that captures the meaning of the commandment. | |
| <p>This unit could be taught in conjunction with the Health program.</p> <p>The Church's teaching on social justice</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inquiry Project: How Can We Respect and Care for Life ? This project invites students to | <p>Assessment of Learning Students' presentations indicate their ability to analyse and critique an issue relating to the</p> |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| <p>promotes the dignity of each human person. It highlights the basic call to <i>charity</i> as the greatest social commandment.</p> <p>The Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. This belief is the foundation of all the principles of our social teaching.</p> <p>The catechism also emphasises the common good: 'By the common good is meant the sum total of those conditions of social life which allow people as groups and as individuals to reach their proper fulfilment'. (<i>Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church</i>, #407)</p> | <p>investigate an issue in either their personal or global world. Prior to the project, the teacher might decide whether the focus of the investigation will be global or personal.</p> <p>The class could select one issue to investigate together or individuals could select an issue of personal interest.</p> <p>Either present students with a range of health issues that face young people, e.g. issues concerned with food and diet, smoking, exercise, wellbeing.</p> <p>Or, alternatively the class could explore respect and care for human life in a global context, e.g. choose a developing country and explore issues concerned with access to food, water, safety or health care.</p> <p>Students investigate one of these issues individually or in small cooperative groups using de Bono's Hats.</p> <p>Focus questions could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – What is the issue about? – What are the facts about this issue? – What are the consequences of this way of living? – What are the ways in which people's dignity is or is not | <p>care and respect for human life in light of the Church's teaching on human dignity.</p> |
|--|--|--|

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| | <p>respected in this way of living?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Who has responsibilities for this issue and what are they? – How does the fifth commandment relate to this issue? <p>Students present their findings to the class.</p> <p>Construct a rubric that will guide students in developing their presentation.</p> | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put Yourself in Someone’s Shoes Students consider what it would be like to be a peer dealing with the issue they explored in the prior session. Consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – What might a typical day look like for you? – What are the positives in your day? What are the negatives? – What, if any, choices do you face each day? – What support do you need from friends, family, teachers, others? <p>Students record responses in a journal, roleplay or share ideas with a friend.</p> | <p>Assessment of Learning This task will indicate students’ understanding of the issue under investigation.</p> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Praying For Life Use one of the suggestions in ‘Possibilities for Prayer and Worship’ to pray for human dignity and life. Alternatively students could plan a | |

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| | <p>prayer time that brings to prayer the people whose lives are affected by the issue that has been investigated.</p> | |
| <p>Additional Reading for Teachers</p> | <p>SYNTHESIS <i>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?</i></p> | <p>Assessment: for learning, as learning, of learning</p> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluating Thinking and Beliefs Ask students to complete the sentences in their journal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – What I now know about this topic is ... – I now feel ... – I now believe ... – I now wonder about ... – I now would like to ... | <p>Assessment as Learning This task may indicate to students changes and developments in their thinking and beliefs about a specific issue related to the dignity of human life.</p> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing Letters Write a letter to a newspaper editor or politician stating your opinion or point of view about a person or group of people who have not had their rights or dignity respected according to how the Church would understand the issue. | <p>Assessment of Learning The letter will demonstrate the students' ability to form an opinion in light of reflection on Church teaching .</p> |

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| <p>The Church teaches that we need to respect the laws inscribed in creation and the relationship that we have with the natural world. This is a 'principle of wisdom and a foundation for morality' (<i>Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church</i>, #64).</p> <p>To do this means that we have to change the ways we view the world and change our thinking and behaving as we take on the responsibility of caring for the earth and all its creatures and natural systems.</p> <p>Since the late 1970s Pope John Paul II sought to stand in solidarity with the poor and marginalised in the world as well as calling Christians to exercise good, appropriate stewardship of the fragile ecosystems that support life on earth. 'Christians, in particular, realise that their responsibility within creation and their duty towards nature and the Creator are an essential part of their faith' (Pope John Paul II, New Year Message, 1990).</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Covenant of Care Students individually develop a promise or pledge to respect and care for themselves and others. Students may share with other members of the class in small groups. | <p>Assessment of Learning This pledge will demonstrate how students seek to make a difference in their personal or global world.</p> |
|--|--|---|

RESOURCES

To Know, Worship and Love, 2nd Edition

Year 5: Chapter 1, God the Creator; Chapter 17, Respect for Life.

Teacher Resources

White, D et al. 2003, *Into the Deep: Rich Teaching Strategies for the Religious Education Classroom*, KD Publications, NSW.

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

Websites

Web quest for healthy living

<http://www.teachnet.ie/stpats/2003/healthy_living/intro.html>

Food and healthy living

<<http://coolfoodplanet.org/>>

A student site that investigates healthy eating and the effects of smoking

<<http://www.mindbodysoul.gov.uk/smoking/smomenu.htm>>

Global issues concerned with food, health and safety

<<http://www.un.org/cyberschoolbus/poverty2000/index.asp>>

Mother Teresa

<http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1979/teresa-bio.html>

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION STANDARDS

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

Students analyse and critique their personal and global worlds in light of the teachings of the Catholic Church seeking to make a difference.