

Be Compassionate, Choose Justice!

This unit explores the Christian experience and understanding of compassion and justice. Students consider their own and others' experiences of compassion, justice, difference, discrimination and isolation in light of the Beatitudes and gospel stories. They identify experiences of racism and apply their new learnings to these situations. At the conclusion of the unit students select an appropriate action promoting the dignity of the human person, and participate in prayer that recognises the Christian call to justice and compassion.

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:

#2448 (Human) misery elicited the compassion of Christ the Saviour, who willingly took it upon himself and identified himself with the least of his brethren. Hence, those who are oppressed by poverty are the object of a *preferential love* on the part of the Church.

(See *Compendium #520 By what is love for the poor inspired?*)

#1506 Christ associates (his disciples) with his own life of poverty and service. He makes them share in his ministry of compassion and healing.

(See *Compendium #150 What is the mission of the Church?*)

#1807 *Justice* is the moral virtue that consists in the constant and firm will to give their due to God and neighbour.

(See *Compendium #381 What is justice?*)

#2046 By living with the mind of Christ, Christians *hasten the coming of the Reign of God*, 'a kingdom of justice, love and peace'.

(See *Compendium #590 What does the Church ask for when she prays 'Thy kingdom come'?*)

1723 The beatitude we are promised confronts us with decisive moral choices. It invites us to purify our hearts of bad instincts and to seek the love of God above all else. It teaches us that true happiness is not found in riches or well-being, in human fame or power, or in any human achievement – however beneficial it may be – such as science, technology, and art, or indeed in any creature, but in God alone, the source of every good and of all love.

(See *Compendium #360 Why are the Beatitudes important for us?*)

SPIRITUAL REFLECTION FOR TEACHERS

I would rather feel compassion than know the meaning of it (St Thomas Aquinas). When have you been moved to feel deep compassion? How does your thinking and attitude change when you hear someone's story, and walk in their shoes?

The children of Adam are of one body ... when one part of the body is wounded, the whole body hurts. You who feel no pain for others are not worthy of being called human (Saadi, 1184–1291). Who are the people and where are the places in our

world that call for compassion from us? Who are the people and what are the situations for whom it is difficult for you to feel compassion?

The Beatitudes are at the heart of Jesus Christ's preaching, and they take up and fulfil the promises that God made, starting with Abraham ... they characterise authentic Christian life (*Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 360). Which of the Beatitudes strikes you and why? Who is the embodiment of this Beatitude for you?

LINKS WITH STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES

Many students live in a multicultural world where beliefs and values shape culture and identity. *What factors have an impact on how your students understand and experience compassion and justice?*

Students are able to approach text with an increasing ability to critique, analyse and evaluate. *How can we lead students to an appreciation of the Bible as the revelation of God's love?*

EXPLANATION OF SCRIPTURE

Mt 5: 1–12 The Beatitudes

The Beatitudes is a collection of the teachings of Jesus Christ that deals with the attitudes, behaviours and responsibilities of those who are disciples of Jesus Christ. Jesus is telling his listeners that the way to true happiness is to live according to the life of the kingdom. Jesus Christ seems to be saying that those who take on such a way of life are truly blessed. When people experience the mercy of God they will be merciful to others.

The Beatitudes apply Jesus' law of love, and can teach Christians about who and what they are called to become. Throughout his ministry Jesus Christ showed clearly that every person has an innate dignity and worth.

Jesus Christ came as the fulfilment of the law and he leaves his followers with the law as a reminder of the way in which they should live. The love of God and the love of one's enemies is a constant theme in the teachings of Jesus Christ. Jesus lived by the teachings of the Beatitudes, and Christians are called by their actions to do the same.

POSSIBILITIES FOR PRAYER AND WORSHIP

- Gather in a circle around a large, plain cloth with a cross placed at the centre of it. Sing together the song 'We Are Australian' while placing on the cloth images of Indigenous Australians and other cultural groups that make up our rich Australian identity. Conclude by reading the reflection in *KWL*, 2nd edn, Year 6, Chapter 1, p. 12.
- Celebrate a ritual for the celebration of Reconciliation. (If there is an opportunity, organise and celebrate the sacrament of Penance.) Include an examination of conscience based on discrimination and excluding others.
- Use the song 'Hearts on Fire' (Michael Mangan, *Setting Hearts on Fire*, Litmus Productions) as part of a prayer celebration.
- Practise a *Lectio Divina* (sacred reading) prayer exercise. Slowly read the text of Mt 25: 34–40. Give each student time to choose a word or phrase from the text.

This word or phrase is repeated silently for at least one or two minutes of meditation. It may help to guide the students to repeat the word or phrase on every second 'out' breath. This enables a more focused form of meditation. Reread part of the text to conclude.

- Use the 'Our Heritage' reflection in *KWL*, 2nd edn, Year 6, Chapter 1, p. 12 as a guided meditation exercise, or as a responsory-style prayer.
- Create a PowerPoint reflection on the Beatitudes using the images of the saints in *KWL*, 2nd edn, Year 6, Chapter 2, pp. 18–19. Use the song 'Blest Are They' by Marty Haugen to accompany the reflection.
- Play some quiet, reflective music. Read the Beatitudes slowly, line by line, pausing after each line for the students to add names of those who are 'poor in spirit', 'who mourn', 'who are merciful', etc.
- Create a class prayer service based on the song 'Who Will Speak?' by Marty Haugen (*Agape*). Read brief extracts about Jadwiga Domka and Sister Irene McCormack from *KWL*, 2nd edn, Year 6, Chapter 17, pp. 161–163. Alternate with sung verses of the song. Conclude by proclaiming Lk 4: 17–22.

Related Chapters – *KWL*, 2nd edn, Year 6: Chapter 1, One in Christ Jesus; Chapter 2, Blessed Are You!; Chapter 17, Our Christian Mission.

Faith concepts: compassion, justice, right relationship, diversity, racism, discrimination.

Seeking understanding:

What does it mean to be compassionate?

What does it mean to be in ‘right relationship’ with one another and God?

What are the effects of not being in right relationship?

Understandings:

Jesus Christ is the model of how to live a just and compassionate life.

Through baptism Christians are called to live compassionately and justly.

The Beatitudes and the Ten Commandments express how to live in right relationship with one another and with God.

Each person is unique and has dignity and rights regardless of race, gender or religion.

Prejudice is displayed through discrimination.

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"> • Gospel stories that demonstrate Jesus’ compassion and call to justice. • The Beatitudes as a way of living in a community, and how this way of life applies to modern-day living. • Ways in which people experience injustice and racism and the effect this has on people’s dignity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect on their own experiences of compassion, justice, injustice and racism, and express their feelings, perceptions, thoughts and questions about these experiences. • Evaluate experiences of injustice and racism in light of the Beatitudes and gospel stories demonstrating Christian compassion and justice. • Discover the meanings in a Scripture text through prayer, contemplation and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage in action that addresses racism and that promotes compassion and the dignity of the human person. • Participate in prayer and liturgy that recognises and celebrates Jesus Christ’s call to live justly.

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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>Pope John Paul II in a speech in 2001 on the need for dialogue between cultures for a civilisation of peace said: <i>'At the dawn of a new millennium, there is growing hope that relationships between people will be increasingly inspired by the ideal of a truly universal brotherhood. Unless this ideal is shared, there will be no way to ensure a stable peace.'</i></p> <p>The Pope went on to speak of the need for mutual respect between different cultures, dialogue between peoples and recognition of the human values we all share. While the Pope was speaking to the whole world, the task he was talking about has to be carried out in the families and classrooms and communities where we actually live. Each of us has a part to play in bringing about this harmony.</p> <p>Australian bishops wrote in 2000: <i>Mindful of the dignity of all, Christ's faithful should make every effort to combat discrimination and racist attitudes among people of different national and cultural origins. All have the rights and duties of promoting unity.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is Your Frame of Reference? Present the class with statements expressing opinions about identity, justice and diversity, such as those given below. Ask students whether they agree or disagree with the statements. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – (Name of own school) is the best school in _____. – The Collingwood Magpies is the best football team in the AFL. – Australia is the best country to live in. – Everybody should be treated fairly. – Australia is one nation made up of many nations. – Some people belong in Australia, some people do not. <p>Discuss students' responses to these statements by asking the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Why did you respond this way? – How did you come to hold this 	<p>Assessment for Learning The Orientation tasks will indicate students' understanding, perceptions, values, attitudes and feelings in relation to the key concepts explored throughout this unit.</p>

<p>(ACBC Statement on the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Refugees #4 May, 2000)</p>	<p>opinion? – What has influenced your opinion?</p> <p>Explain that their responses are an expression of their beliefs/feelings or what is sometimes referred to as a frame of reference.</p> <p>Other people might answer these questions quite differently because their frame of reference might be different.</p>	
<p>The bishops see working for harmony as a way to live and proclaim the gospel. The statement ends with these words: <i>The unity and harmony we are called to form by the Lord Jesus Christ, and towards which we strive every day, will be a powerful way for us to announce Christ to all those who have landed in this country with a different faith, particularly to those who in their country of origin have experienced discrimination, ethnic and racial hatred and persecution. Christ himself teaches us: ‘By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another’</i> (ACBC Statement 2000 #5).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared Images of Australians Display a number of images that depict a range of different Australian people. Allow students time to reflect on these images and then ask them for their responses. What do you see? What stories might these people have to tell? What are their experiences? Where do they live? What are their dreams? Allow some time for the class to respond. <p>Individually, students creatively express their responses to these images and questions through words or the arts.</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowing Isolation: Self Reflection Students think of a time when they have been ‘left out’ or identify a story/movie about someone who has been ‘left out’. Students briefly record what happened in this story in word or 	

	<p>image. Students share their stories in pairs.</p>	
<p>Racism stems from fear and ignorance, and incorporates an intentional bias against, and intolerance of, those who are different, based on their skin colour, ethnicity, cultural or religious values, physical features. Young people often experience racism through bullying, teasing, and name-calling, as well as physical harassment.</p> <p>(National Consultations: Racism and Civil Society, <i>Report of the First Australian Youth Consultation On the World Conference Against Racism</i>, 2001)</p> <p>Compassion is a key Christian virtue – it is concerned with feeling the depth of another person’s experience. Throughout the Bible God feels human anguish and suffering and responds out of God’s own love to bring peace, justice, dignity, and fullness of life. When we feel compassion we feel deeply for the situation of another, and respond out of that experience to join with the person to bring about a way of living that God desires. Jesus Christ is often described in the gospels as being moved with compassion for the plight of those who came to him for healing.</p> <p>Justice is the moral virtue that consists in the constant and firm will to give their due to God and neighbour’ (CCC #1807). It is the virtue that converts compassion into action. We are all obliged to live justly. To hunger and thirst</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is Racism? What is Compassion? What is Justice? Class Charts Students complete a Y-chart to explore what racism, compassion and justice look, feel and sound like. <div data-bbox="831 549 1417 927" data-label="Diagram"> </div> <p>Use this information to begin to develop a class description of each of these concepts.</p>	

for justice is a hallmark of being a Christian.		
Additional Reading for Teachers	<p style="text-align: center;">Development</p> <p><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 style="text-align: center;">Assessment: for learning, as learning, of learning</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discrimination and Racism Today Identify with students where we see examples of racism today – sport, media, playground, local community, world. It may be necessary to collect examples of this from the media or internet (e.g. Racism – No Way website). <p>Use these examples to elicit students' opinions on racism. For example, make the following statements and ask students whether they 'strongly agree' or 'strongly disagree'. This could be done by placing these words on cards and creating a continuum in the classroom. Students stand along the continuum according to their response.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – It is okay to intimidate a player on the sporting field with a racist comment if it means winning. – It is okay to call someone a racist name when I am angry or hurt. – It is okay to tell a joke that makes 	<p>Assessment for/as Learning</p> <p>This task will indicate students' perceptions, attitudes and values as they enter into the unit. It will also allow them to monitor changes in these perceptions, attitudes and values in response to new learnings as they progress through the unit.</p>

	<p>fun of another person's race or culture, especially if the person laughs too.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is okay to leave a person out of a game because they are from a different country to you. - It is okay to say you must speak English only in the playground instead of the language your family speaks. <p>During this activity ask some students to explain where they stand and why.</p> <p>In their journals students record their response to this activity. Sentence starters could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I am feeling ... - I am thinking ... - I am wondering ... - I have learned ... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Effects of Discrimination and Racism <p>Students list some of the possible effects of racism on students at school, e.g. unhappiness; aggressive behaviour; trouble making friends. They consider the possible consequences for the whole school, e.g. conflict between students; unfriendly school environment.</p> <p>Alternatively, students could reflect on</p>	
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	<p>the effects of racism on people in the broader community, and the possible consequences of this for community life.</p> <p>Students' thinking could be represented on a flow chart or consequences wheel or as a written or dramatised version of specific scenarios.</p>	
<p>All the gospels portray Jesus Christ as one with a passion for justice and as one filled with compassion.</p> <p>This statement sounds almost trite until we realise that many people, both then (and now) thought that the opposite to justice was mercy, but the opposite to justice, as Jesus Christ saw so clearly, is <i>injustice</i>.</p> <p>Moreover, many people then (and now) thought that righteousness – careful and rigorous observance of the Law – was the key to living a good life, rather than compassion.</p> <p>Jesus Christ perfectly integrated mercy, righteousness and justice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compassion and Justice in the Gospels <p>Students explore a selection of scripture stories which deal with exclusion, justice and compassion, e.g. The Ten Lepers; The Woman at the Well; Jesus Blesses the Children; Zacchaeus; Healing of the Paralytic at the Pool. Students choose an appropriate way to present the story to the class. In their presentation they explore the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Who are the main characters in the story? – Who was being excluded? Why? – Who was excluding them? – What was Jesus' response to this situation? – Why did Jesus Christ respond this way? – What message does he convey through his words and actions? 	<p>Assessment of Learning</p> <p>The presentations will show what students have learnt about the text.</p>

<p>The dignity of the human person is based on the belief that human life is sacred and all people are made in the image of God. We are all sisters and brothers to each other. God is a trinity of persons. Therefore Christians see the image of God reflected not only in individuals but also in communities. Together as a community we bear the image of God whose very nature is communal.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Dignity of the Human Person: Created in the Image of God Explain that at the heart of Jesus Christ's response in each of these stories is the upholding or respect of a person's dignity as a human person. Through their baptism Christians are called to express Jesus Christ's respect of all people. Students read <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edn, Year 6, Chapter 1, p. 12. Students reflect on one of these 'challenges/invitations' and write a response as to how they can live out Jesus' call to respect the dignity of all. 	<p>Assessment of Learning This reflection will indicate students' understanding of the importance of the dignity of the human person, and how it relates to them.</p>
<p>The Beatitudes – 'Blessed are You' The quality of the happiness Jesus Christ promises in the Beatitudes is very different from the shallow happiness which depends on external things. While everyone desires happiness and we often devote much time and energy to pursuing it, Jesus reveals true happiness as a blessing from God often received in times of self forgetfulness and real need.</p> <p>So while materialism pervades the lives of many of us, the Beatitudes call on us to resist the notion that happiness is achieved by preoccupation with possessions or personal gratification. Learning generosity, sharing, concern for justice, compassion and kindness are ways of breaking out of the prison of the self and entering the freedom of true happiness.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Living: The Beatitudes Introduce the Beatitudes to the students by reading <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edn, Year 6, Chapter 2, pp. 15–16. Proclaim the Beatitudes to the students, reading each one slowly and deliberately. Allow students time to reflect after each one. <p>Give one Beatitude to each group of students and ask them to record their responses to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – What is this about? What is the message? – Who was Jesus Christ talking to? – Who is Jesus Christ talking to today? – Who are the 'poor in spirit', 'the meek', 'the peacemakers' today? 	<p>Assessment of Learning The group's presentation and prayer will indicate their understanding of the Beatitude and how it can be lived out today.</p>

<p>The Beatitudes are part of the Sermon on the Mount/Plain. There are two accounts of the sermon in the gospels. One is in Mt 5: 1–12, the other is in Lk 6: 20–26.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – What can I do to be ‘merciful’, ‘pure in heart’, ‘a person who hungers and thirsts for righteousness’? <p>Each group chooses an appropriate way to present their information to the class, and also develops a prayer which reflects their Beatitude.</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting You in the Picture: Communities of Compassion and Justice <p>Students choose to either draw a picture, write an explanation or create a concept map of what a compassionate and just school or local community looks like. Ask students: Where do you fit into this picture?</p> <p>Students write, draw or map how they see themselves in relation to the rest of the topic.</p>	
<p>Additional Reading for Teachers</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">SYNTHESIS</p> <p><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 style="text-align: center;">Assessment: for learning, as learning, of learning</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self Reflection and Evaluation <p>Return to the statements in the section ‘Racism today’. Ask students to re-evaluate their responses to these statements:</p>	<p>Assessment as Learning</p> <p>Through their response to these, students will be able to monitor their response to the new learning.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have any of your ideas, feelings or attitudes changed? - Have any stayed the same? - If they have changed, why? <p>Students reflect on their learning at the conclusion of the topic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I now know ... - I now think ... - I now feel ... - I now hope ... - I am now challenged to ... 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class Action Negotiate with the class an appropriate action to take in response to their new learnings. This could be done individually or as a group and may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Developing a personal or group charter for how to prevent racism and/or build a compassionate community. - Developing an awareness-raising campaign in relation to racism and compassion for the school. This may include posters or items on the school newsletter. - Writing letters of encouragement to agencies that work to eradicate racism, e.g. United Nations, AFL, Netball Australia, ARL, NSL. 	<p>Assessment of Learning Students' actions will reflect their understanding and perception of and attitude towards the concepts contained in this unit.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prayerful Response to Scripture Involve students in a <i>Lectio Divina</i> (sacred reading) prayer exercise. Slowly read the text of Mt 5: 1–12. Give each student time to choose a word or phrase from the text. This word or phrase is repeated silently for at least one or two minutes of meditation. It may help to guide the students to repeat the word or phrase on every second ‘out’ breath. This enables a more focused form of meditation. Reread part of the text to conclude. 	
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RESOURCES

To Know, Worship and Love, 2nd Edition

Year 6: Chapter 1, One in Christ Jesus; Chapter 2, Blessed Are You!; Chapter 17, Our Christian Mission.

CDs

Haugen, M 1993, ‘Who Will Speak’ on *Agape*, GIA Publications.

Mangan, M 2001, *Setting Teacher Resources*

Hill, A 1994, *The Burnt Stick*, Viking/Penguin Australia, Ringwood

Reid–Nguyen 1999, *Think Global – Global Perspectives in the Lower Primary Classroom*, Curriculum Corporation, Australia.

Wilson, J & Wing-Jan, L, 2005, *Focus On Inquiry*, Curriculum Corporation, Australia.

DVDs

Noyce, P 2002, *The Rabbit Proof Fence*, Miramax Home Entertainment Websites

Websites

Student and teacher resources about racism

<www.racismnoway.com.au>

United Nations and racism

<<http://www.un.org/cyberschoolbus>>

Young people and racism including definitions of racism

http://www.hreoc.gov.au/racial_discrimination/national_consultations/youth_report.html#definitions

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.

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