

Lent to Easter: We Are Transformed!

In this unit students explore ways in which Lent offers opportunities for growth and transformation. Through the exploration of the parable of the Prodigal Son and personal stories of people in the community, students learn that, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, God offers hope to all Christians. Healing, reconciliation and transformation are experienced in the forgiving love of the Father and through the willingness to forgive and to rebuild relationships with others. The students use journals to reflect on any personal growth and change they undergo during the Lenten season. Students participate in both a prayer service and the sacrament of Reconciliation.

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:

#1818 The virtue of hope responds to the aspiration to happiness which God has placed in the heart of everyone.

(See *Compendium* #387 *What is hope?*)

#989 We firmly believe, and hence we hope, that just as Christ is truly risen from the dead and lives for ever, so after death the righteous will live forever with the risen Christ and he will raise them up on the last day.

(See *Compendium* #203 *What is meant by the 'resurrection of the body'?*)

#1820 Christian hope unfolds from the beginning of Jesus' preaching in the proclamation of the *Beatitudes*. Hope is expressed and nourished in prayer, especially in the Our Father, the summary of everything that hope leads us to desire.

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

#1421 The Lord Jesus Christ has willed that his Church continue his work of healing and salvation, even among her own members. This is the purpose of the two sacraments of healing: the sacrament of Penance and the sacrament of Anointing of the Sick.

(See *Compendium* #314 *What is the significance of Jesus' compassion for the sick?*)

#2844 Christian prayer extends to the *forgiveness of enemies*, transfiguring the disciple by configuring him to his Master. Forgiveness is a high-point of Christian prayer; ... Forgiveness also bears witness that, in our world, love is stronger than sin.

(See *Compendium* #595 *How is forgiveness possible?*)

SPIRITUAL REFLECTION FOR TEACHERS

Would you describe yourself as a hopeful person?

Being hopeful isn't simply a matter of temperament. For Christians it is also based on faith in Jesus Christ and conviction that through him we can hope even against all hope, for life, love and justice for all. What are your hopes for yourself and your class?

Despite the wounds of the world, what are some signs of hope and healing you see around you in society, your community, your classroom and students? How can you encourage these and so participate in the transformation begun in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ?

Forgiveness is a powerful agent of healing and transformation, both personally and socially. How difficult is it for you to forgive personal hurt, professional snubs, the shortcomings of others? What happens when you can genuinely forgive another?

LINKS WITH STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES

The current world of the student can be flooded with images and stories of hopelessness and fear. *How do your students understand hope, and where do they find hope in their own context? Do your students see life as good and something to be nurtured and celebrated? How can you assist students to see hope in adversity?*

Students are developing a growing awareness of the connection between hope in their own lives and their perception of the future. *How can you assist students to see connections between the Easter message of hope and their own experiences of hope?*

In Levels 1 & 2 students have been immersed in the stories, symbols and rituals of Easter. At Levels 3 & 4 learning about these elements is more explicit. *How can we support students to develop a deeper understanding of the meaning of this story as well as the symbols and rituals used in the Triduum liturgy? Are there students from other Christian churches or communities in your class? What understanding and practices of Easter do they bring to the unit?*

Bullying, dealing with difference and handling conflict are issues for many students. *What does healing, reconciliation, change and hope mean for students in the context of these issues?*

EXPLANATION OF SCRIPTURE

Lk 15: 11–24

This is one of the most beautiful stories in the New Testament about forgiveness and compassion. The story has many headings like 'the Lost Son', 'the Prodigal Son'. For our purposes in this unit, 'the Forgiving Father' is appropriate. The situation is that of a wealthy family with much property and many servants. It is rather callous of the younger brother requesting to be given his property – strictly speaking he should receive this only on his Father's death. Does this indicate that his father is already dead to him? The son soon spends his inheritance in dissolute living. His hunger forces him to become a hired hand and the work he is given to do is terrible for a Jew – he must feed the pigs. He even envies the pigs because they have food that is not available to him. He 'comes to himself', a time of realism. He prepares a speech to attempt to win over his father by admitting his sin. The father enters the story again and seems to be keeping a watchful eye for his son. When he sees his son he is filled with compassion and runs out to him (something very foreign to someone of his rank, who would normally walk sedately, not run). The father cuts off his son's speech and orders the servants to bring out the best robe, put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. All of these symbolise reinstatement of his position in the household. The father is not concerned with sin and repentance, only that his son was dead and is now alive, was lost and is now found. Here is love, hope and forgiveness with no strings attached.

Lk 23: 39–43

Another instance in Luke's Gospel where compassion, hope and forgiveness are brought to the fore is when Jesus Christ is on the Cross and is flanked by two criminals. One mocks him and says if Jesus Christ is the Messiah he should save himself and them. This man's idea of salvation is to be rescued from a terrible death. However, the man on Jesus' right turns everything around. He rebukes his fellow criminal and admits the justness of the penalty he has been given. He recognises Jesus' innocence, and genuinely turns to him for salvation. He addresses Jesus Christ by name and asks not to be forgotten when Jesus comes into his kingdom. He is not asking for a high place, just to be forgiven and to be given some hope.

POSSIBILITIES FOR PRAYER AND WORSHIP

- To begin Lent, decorate the prayer table very simply, using a purple cloth, bowl of ashes, Bible and candle. On Ash Wednesday gather around the table and share reflections of the meaning of the ashes. At the conclusion of the reflection time all sing 'Out of Ashes' (Michael Mangan, *Renew and Rejoice*, Litmus Productions).
- Participate in the parish or school Ash Wednesday liturgy.
- Give each student an autumn leaf to hold in prayer. Invite the students to identify something they could 'let go' of during Lent, e.g. selfishness, impatience ... Give them time to reflect. Students respond, as they place their leaves on the prayer table, 'Lord Jesus Christ, teach me to let go of ...' Conclude by singing 'Turn Back to God' (Michael Mangan, *Renew and Rejoice*, Litmus Productions).
- Celebrate a liturgy focusing on the mission of Jesus Christ and the Church's call to build justice. Students make a class commitment to an action to raise both funds and an awareness of injustice issues. Use the Project Compassion kit for ideas of actions and prayers. See format in Resource Sheet 1.
- Pray the *Stations of the Cross*. Relate the *Stations* to situations of injustice in today's world. The Caritas Project Compassion kit will be helpful in your preparation. Focus on two or three *Stations* each day. This can be done in the days leading up to Holy Week.
- Provide an opportunity, during Lent, for the class to celebrate the First or Second Rite of Reconciliation in the parish church. Arrange a time with the parish priest. Prepare prayers and songs in which the children might participate.
- Play some quiet, reflective music. On the prayer table place a bowl of oil as a symbol of healing. Pray a 'Healing Prayer' in *KWL*, 2nd edn, Year 6, Chapter 4, p. 37.
- Pray the prayers in *KWL*, 2nd edn, Year 6, Chapter 17, p. 160 and Chapter 5, pp. 46–47.
- During Holy Week decorate the prayer table in red. Keep a cross or crucifix in a central place. Read Mk 15: 33–39. Allow time for reflection on the reading. Invite responsory prayers from the class.
- Decorate the prayer space in white and gold for the Easter season. Place a large candle and bowl of Easter water in a central place. Occasionally invite the students to bless themselves with the Easter water as a link with their baptism.

- Establish a pattern of daily prayer. Light a large candle and sing a well-known 'Alleluia', e.g. 'Halle, Halle, Halle' (John Bell, *Gather Australia*) or 'Clap Alleluia' (Michael Mangan, *Children of the Light*, Litmus Productions).
- Pray a joyful psalm, e.g. Psalm 139. This can be varied using body percussion, rap rhythms, or traditional musical instruments.
- Practise a form of Centring Prayer with the class. Prepare for it with a time of relaxation to enable the students to become still and silent. Invite the students to introduce one word into their prayer. This one word can accompany their breathing. (The word is of their own choosing. It is a word that directs them towards God, e.g. 'Jesus', 'light', 'peace'.) Allow a period of at least two minutes' silence for this prayer.
- Use one of the responses of those who witnessed the Resurrection (*KWL*, 2nd edn, Year 6, Chapter 6, p. 59) as a basis for meditation.
- Pray the prayer in *KWL*, 2nd edn, Year 6, Chapter 6, p. 58.

Related Chapters – *KWL*, 2nd edn, Year 6: Chapter 3, Freedom to Choose; Chapter 4, Reconciliation; Chapter 5, Journeying From Lent to Holy Week; Chapter 6, Resurrection and Ascension.

Faith concepts: hope, healing, reconciliation, transformation, story, ritual.

Seeking understanding:

What is hope?

How do we prepare to be people of hope during Lent?

What are the stories, symbols and signs of Easter that bring hope?

Understandings:

Lent is a time for reflection on how we live and act.

Acts of healing and reconciliation bring transformation and hope.

In Lent we consider choices that bring about healing and reconciliation.

The Church celebrates healing and reconciliation during Lent through the sacrament of Penance.

In raising Jesus to new life God gives humankind a great sign and gift of hope and transformation.

Christians believe that after death they will rise to new life with Christ.

The stories, rituals and symbols of the Easter liturgy are signs of God’s hope and transformation.

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"> • Reconciliation as the experience of the forgiving love of God that results in peace and healing for ourselves and others. • The Christian understanding of forgiveness demonstrated in the parable of the Prodigal Son (Lk 15: 11–24) and in Matthew’s account of the Crucifixion (Mt 27: 32–44). • The Christian understanding of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect on, and monitor, growth and change in beliefs, understanding and attitudes through the use of a personal journal. • Evaluate and represent their beliefs, feelings and attitudes to forgiveness in light of new learning about the parable of the Prodigal Son and the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in the sacrament of Penance.

<p>resurrection and hope developed in Jn 20: 1–8.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Symbols and rituals of hope in the Easter liturgy. • Human experiences and stories of hope. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate and express their ideas and beliefs about hope in light of new learning about the resurrection of Jesus Christ in John’s Gospel. • Analyse situations of conflict, bullying and dealing with difference through the Christian approach to forgiveness and healing. 	
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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>Lent is a time of repentance (turning back to God) and preparation for Easter. For many people entering the Church it is also a time of preparation for Baptism.</p> <p>Lots of customs and practices are associated with this time of the year for Christians: the ashes of Ash Wednesday, fasting and eating simpler foods, extra time given to prayer, extra focus on generosity and giving to others (Project Compassion). In the church, flowers and decorations are put aside. We try together to let go of parts of our lives that</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting the Scene for Lent: Curiosity Box Students bring any small item from home that is connected with the Lent to Easter journey. To prompt a breadth of discussion, teachers may need to include additional items, e.g. palm branch, coin (almsgiving), nails, crucifix, sponge, oil, bread. With a partner students take an unseen item from the box and explain its significance before the class. Class members evaluate, challenge or take further the understandings presented. • What is Hope? 	

<p>distract us from what is really essential, and hope that we will be transformed into the people God wants us to be.</p>	<p>Ask students to identify in the news media stories, images or headlines of hope. These texts could be displayed in the classroom as a collage, brought to daily prayer, or inserted into students' journals for personal reflection.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KWL Chart Students record current knowledge of the season of Lent under the three column headings of what they KNOW, what they WANT to know, and, for later reflection, what they have LEARNT. Some of what students want to know may be addressed in what has been planned in the unit. Teachers can build in ways to address other questions students have. • Journal Introduce students to the practice of keeping a journal to reflect on their efforts to grow and change during Lent. Begin with the sharing of the story titled 'Angela's Story' (KWL, 2nd edn, Book 6, Chapter 6, p. 59) as a story where, against all odds, hope prevails. Invite students to write about their own experiences of hope during difficult times. Invite students to share. 	<p>Assessment of Learning The third column is for use at the end of the unit to determine the acquired understandings. Students can evaluate their own learning by comparing what they knew at the start of the unit with what they have learned.</p> <p>Assessment as Learning Through this journal entry an opportunity is provided for students to challenge themselves to become aware of experiences of God's hope in their lives.</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</i></p>	<p>Assessment: for learning, as learning, of learning</p>

	<i>experiences and texts? How will students process their thinking and learning?</i>	
<p>The story of the Prodigal Son or, more accurately, the Forgiving Father, is one of the most beautiful parables in the New Testament about forgiveness and compassion which can lead to conversion and transformation.</p> <p>Just as the Father <i>let go</i> of hurt, the older son needs to <i>let go</i> of jealousy, and the returning son to <i>let go</i> of his self-centredness and pride.</p> <p>During Lent we aim to <i>let go</i> of all that blocks our relationship with God and with each other. Students need to make personal connections with this change of heart that brings about transformation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being People of Hope During Lent: Analysing and Reflecting on a Parable Read together the parable of the Prodigal Son/Forgiving Father (Lk 15: 11–32). Identify the setting, key characters and the sequence of events in the parable. Students imagine themselves in the setting of the story and record what they see, hear, feel and wonder. Invite students to either act out, rewrite or develop a cartoon on the same story, but from the perspective of another character in the story, real or imagined, e.g. the prodigal son’s mother. • Translating the Parable to Life Students discuss the following questions and record their responses in their journals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Which character in the parable is most like you? – If you were the father or older brother in the parable what responses would you make to the younger son? – How does the father fit with your ideas about God? – Which character is a sign of hope? – How could you apply the message of forgiveness and change in this 	<p>Assessment of Learning The analysis and reflection will indicate students’ understanding and comprehension of the parable.</p> <p>Assessment as Learning Through this reflection, students consider their own attitudes, thinking and values about forgiveness in light of those in the parable of the Prodigal Son. During Lent students revisit this journal to monitor growth and changes in thinking and understanding.</p>

	parable to your own life during Lent?	
<p>The gospel accounts of the Passion of Jesus Christ are at the heart of the Christian story because they reveal God through his Son Jesus Christ entering the darkness of human sin and suffering, recognising it, meeting it and conquering it.</p> <p>If we look at the words of Jesus Christ from the cross in Luke we see that they are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • words of forgiveness for those responsible for his death • words inviting the repentant thief to Paradise • words of faith commending his spirit to God. <p>Forgiveness, hospitality and faithfulness are the key characteristics of Jesus Christ in the Gospel of Luke.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forgiveness and Hope in the Passion Use a visual story-telling strategy such as 3D materials to retell Lk 23: 39–43. On a map of Jerusalem locate where Jesus' crucifixion took place. <p>Identify what happened before and after this episode in Luke's Gospel. Ask students to put themselves in the shoes of one of the main characters: Jesus, or either of the criminals. Ask them to imagine what the character was thinking, feeling, wondering, throughout the interactions of the story.</p> <p>Pose the questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – I wonder what the character thinks forgiveness is about? – Is this the same as your ideas about forgiveness? 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easter Hope: Stories of Hope Re-read 'Angela's Story' in <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edn, Year 6, Chapter 6, pp. 59–60. <p>Explore stories and experiences of fear, doubt or hopelessness and how these are transformed to hope via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – viewing documentaries or films, or reading stories or media articles and current affair stories that tell a 	

The **Resurrection** of Jesus Christ is the great sign of **hope** for the whole human race. It is God's promise that sin and death will not have the final word. We might struggle and fall, we might lose sight of, or even forget, who we are (God's sons and daughters), and where we are bound for (eternal life), but the raising up of Jesus Christ from the dead is God's irrevocable promise that we too, even though we will all die, are destined for life. *'If we have died with him, we shall live with him. If we endure with him, we shall reign with him.'* 2 Tim 2: 11.

At the resurrection of Jesus Christ the true 'new age' began; the reign of death and sin was ended, we entered a time of hope and conviction that, no matter what befalls, life and love will have the upper hand.

Of course, the history of the last 2000 years

story of hope

- inviting parishioners as guest speakers to share with students examples of hope during times of darkness and despair, both in their own lives and in the life of the parish community. Ask them to make the connection with the story of Easter hope.
- inviting students in groups of up to five to listen to one another's stories of hope coming out of despair. Groups select the most powerful story and recount this to the whole class.

Students write/illustrate in their journals their personal reflections on how these stories of despair to hope reflect the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. They could also insert stories or images from media into their journals.

- **Resurrection Narratives of Hope**

Tune students in to the resurrection accounts through a quick brainstorm of characters, events, symbols and themes they associate with the Easter story.

Read Jn 20: 1–18:

- Read the first part of the text (Jn 20: 1–10). Students record the movements and responses of the characters.

shows us that this hope and conviction has had plenty of pain, persecution, suffering and anguish to test itself against. Christian faith is not a panacea but a promise that, as Jesus Christ passed over from death to life, so shall we.

Life after death

Eternal life begins for Christians at baptism. At baptism the Christian is born to eternal life

- Read the second part of the text (Jn 20: 11–18). Students record the movements and responses of the characters.

Read the appearance stories listed in *KWL*, 2nd edn, Year 6, Chapter 6, p. 59. What do the stories have in common? List interesting observations. :

Students choose a mode through which they explore and compare characters' responses to the Resurrection:

Diagram: Students could record work using a matrix, concept map or flow chart.

- Compare the movements and responses of the different characters.
- How would you have responded in this situation?
- What insights do we gain from this text (Jn 20: 1–18)?

Characters	Initial feelings/ reactions	Final Response/ Statements of belief

OR

Assessment of Learning

This task will indicate how students interpret and respond to the resurrection story through the analysis of the story's characters.

and shares the life of Christ. As St Paul says, 'alive or dead we belong to the Lord'. So even as human beings we can experience some of the joy of union with God.

However, we all wonder about life after death, what it will mean for us, what this new life will be like. While the Church teaches that for faithful people 'life is changed, not ended' yet we cannot know the details of this changed life. What we do know is that every thing, every relationship that is good on earth is a reflection of the goodness of God with whom we shall be united forever. It is our union with God which will be heaven.

Similarities	Differences	Interesting Observations

Drama: Students capture each movement and response in mime through a freeze-frame.

Music: Students create a soundscape that captures the emotions of characters in the scene.

Visual Art: Students use plasticine, playdough or clay to sculpt the responses of characters to the Resurrection. Alternatively, they could paint or use pastels.

- **Easter Hope: Life After Death**
Ask students: What does 'new life' mean to you? Think – Pair – Share.

Read *KWL*, 2nd edition, Year 6, Chapter 18, pp. 167–168 and 174–175. Discuss: What does this tell us about what Catholics believe about life after death? (Heaven, Hell and Purgatory)

Using reflective music lead students in a guided meditation. Ask them to visualise heaven as a mustard seed ... as a house with many rooms ... as a banquet ... as a place of rest and peace ... as a community of people they have known and people throughout history ... as a

	<p>place of God's love and happiness ... as a place where they are close to God ...</p> <p>Then ask them to visualise for themselves what life after death is like. What does it look like ... feel like ... sound like ...? What image comes to mind?</p> <p>Students design a symbol for 'New Life'.</p> <p>Invite students to pray for deceased family members; friends; and school, parish or community members. Invite students to pray the Preface of Christian Death 1 in <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edn, Year 6, Chapter 18, p. 173.</p>	
<p>The Easter symbols all convey the sense of hope implicit in Easter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Paschal candle represents Christ, who is light in the darkness and who shares his light with those he calls. • The water of the font promises new birth in Christ and a whole new way of life in him. • The Chrism seals our identity with Christ and assures us that we share his dignity and mission as priest, prophet and king. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signs and Symbols of hope in the Easter liturgy Display the symbols of water, oil and the Paschal candle. <p>Pose the question: How do these symbols from the Easter liturgy fit with the ideas about hope we have been learning?</p> <p>In pairs compile a list of reasons these symbols are symbols of hope for Christians at Easter.</p>	
<p>Additional Reading for Teachers</p>	<p>SYNTHESIS</p> <p><i>How will students demonstrate their understandings, beliefs, values, skills and feelings in relation to the topic?</i></p>	<p>Assessment: for learning, as learning, of learning</p>

	<p><i>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>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simulation How are we challenged as people of hope to bring about healing and reconciliation in ourselves, our families and in our school community? Provide scenario cards about which the children will role play situations related to bullying, dealing with difference, handling conflict, etc. The focus for students is to demonstrate healing and reconciliation through the role play. Follow-up discussion should challenge the students to articulate how a Christian person is called to be one of healing and reconciliation so that they are agents of change and hope in the lives of others. • Gallery of Hope Discuss with students what have been the most important things they have learned in this unit about hope and forgiveness. Ask students: What do you think is important for others in the school, parish and community to know about forgiveness and hope? Individually, or in small groups, students create an art piece that will 	<p>Assessment of Learning The simulations will provide the teacher with evidence of how students understand reconciliation in their own context.</p> <p>Assessment of Learning The gallery of hope will provide the teacher with evidence of how students understand Christian hope and forgiveness, its relationship to the celebration of Easter, and how this relates to experiences and issues of modern-day living.</p>

	<p>communicate to others the Christian experience and understanding of forgiveness and hope in Lent and Easter.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prayer service Students gather in the round for a whole class Holy Week prayer service. A large candle and bowl of water are central. Join in singing 'Turn Back To God' in Michael Mangan's <i>Renew and Rejoice</i>. A child reads from Jn 21: 1–14. Invite students to share their journey of forgiveness and hope during Lent. Pass the water bowl and hand towel around the circle as a symbol of the healing that has taken place over this Lenten time. Each child dips their hands in water, then their hands are dried by a neighbour. Together pray the prayer from <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edn, Year 6, Chapter 5, p. 47 based on Mt 25: 35–40. Finish with each child lighting a taper (which they place in sand) from the central candle to symbolise the transformation that comes about from the efforts to live as Jesus Christ has taught. In Celebration of Penance Lent or Holy Week invite the local priest to lead students in a celebration of the 	
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	sacrament of Penance, or they participate in a parish celebration of the sacrament.	
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RESOURCES

To Know, Worship and Love, 2nd Edition

Year 6: Chapter 3, Freedom to Choose; Chapter 4, Reconciliation; Chapter 5, Journeying From Lent to Holy Week; Chapter 6, Resurrection and Ascension; Chapter 18, Christ Will Come Again.

Music and CDs

Bell, John, 'Halle, Halle, Halle' in *Gather Australia*, NLMC Publications.

Mangan, Michael, 'Clap Alleluia' in *Children of the Light*, Litmus Productions.

Websites

Caritas Australia has many stories of hope and transformation.

<<http://www.caritas.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. Students explain Christian signs and symbols drawing on personal insights that are informed by Scripture, Tradition, liturgy, culture and life.