

## The World Around Us

In *The World Around Us* students explore the goodness and beauty of God's creation. Prayers and psalms of praise for creation and a commitment to care for it are introduced as ways of responding to this gift.

### 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:**

**#280** Creation is the foundation of 'all God's saving plans', the 'beginning of the history of salvation' that culminates in Christ.

(See *Compendium #51 What is the importance of affirming 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth' [Gen 1: 1]?*)

**#299** Because God creates through wisdom his creation is ordered: 'You have arranged all things by measure and number and weight'. The universe, created in and by the eternal Word, the 'image of the invisible God', is destined for and addressed to man, himself created in the 'image of God' and called to a personal relationship with God.

(See *Compendium #53 How did God create the universe?*)

**#293** Scripture and Tradition never cease to teach and celebrate this fundamental truth: 'The world was made for the glory of God'. St Bonaventure explains that God created all things 'not to increase his glory, but to show it forth and to communicate it', for God has no other reason for creating than his love and goodness.

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

**#307** To human beings God even gives the power of freely sharing in his providence by entrusting them with the responsibility of 'subduing' the earth and having dominion over it. God thus enables men to be intelligent and free causes in order to complete the work of creation, to perfect its harmony for their own good and that of their neighbours.

(See *Compendium #56 How do we collaborate with Divine Providence?*)

### SPIRITUAL REFLECTION FOR TEACHERS

The human experience of God as creator is reflected in the writings of Sacred Scripture, in creeds, in religious artwork, poetry, song, prayer and liturgy. It is reflected in the central beliefs of three of the world's major religions – Judaism, Christianity and Islam. What does it mean for you to say that God is the creator?

In the Jewish–Christian tradition it means that:

*God is the sole creator, creates what is good, creates with care and concern, is personally interested in creation and carefully sees that it continues ... And finally, God is a God who always gives a second chance. We sin and we get another chance. That's a theme that goes all the way through the Bible: God is always ready to give a second chance (Dianne Bergant).*

Does this understanding of the Creator resonate with your own understanding and experience of God?

Human beings have a unique responsibility to care for God's creation. What places in creation are sacred to you? What attracts you to them? How do you show care and concern for them? How do you 'carefully see that they continue'?

In the era of technology our lives are at risk of becoming always more anonymous and merely a function of the production process. In this way, man becomes incapable of enjoying the beauties of the creator and of seeing in them the reflection of the face of God (Pope John Paul II, 1998). Is this a sentiment you resonate with? Where do you see evidence of this in your own local community or in other places around the world?

## LINKS WITH STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES

Students will have varying experiences and sensitivity to the natural world. They enjoy observing, being immersed in and learning about the natural world. *How can the natural curiosity of students be nurtured?*

Students are beginning to develop an image of God as Creator and a growing appreciation of each person as lovingly created by God.

Through everyday experiences students have some understanding of being responsible towards others and the created world. *What does it mean to be responsible towards others?*

## EXPLANATION OF SCRIPTURE

### Ps 8: 1, 3, 7–9

The entire book of Psalms is a collection of 150 psalms *in toto*. They are the prayers of the Israelite people and range across the centuries of the composition of the Hebrew Scriptures. So some are very old (oral tradition – 2000 BC on) and others relatively new – from after the exile (5<sup>th</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> century BC). There are many different types of psalms in the collection – hymns of praise (Ps 104), laments (Ps 22), royal psalms (Ps 2), wisdom psalms (Ps 111), liturgical psalms (Ps 134), and historical psalms (Ps 105). Psalm 8 is a prayer of thanks for the magnificence of creation: for the moon and the stars, for animals both domestic and wild, for the birds of the air and for fish. Everything in creation is good, especially the human person who is given the responsibility to care for God's world.

## POSSIBILITIES FOR PRAYER AND WORSHIP

- Decorate the prayer place with objects from nature: shells, plants, seeds, gumnuts, pebbles, feathers, leaves, flowers, etc. Use these as a focus for class prayer throughout the unit.
- Light a candle and play reflective music quietly. Using plasticine, clay, paint or charcoal invite students to depict a place in creation that is sacred to them. Alternatively, invite them to depict God bringing into being the creation. While these may be considered works of art, students are primarily engaged in a prayer experience.
- Create a psalm of praise with the class for the wonders in the sky, adapted from Psalm 8. You could show the class the book of Psalms in the Bible and explain that they are prayers of praise and thanks prayed a very long time ago by the people of God.

Antiphon: *God of creation,  
how wonderful you are!*

We look up at the sky,  
at the moon and stars, the birds in the air,  
the \_\_\_\_\_, the \_\_\_\_\_,  
the \_\_\_\_\_, the \_\_\_\_\_,  
the \_\_\_\_\_, the \_\_\_\_\_.

Antiphon: *God of creation,  
how wonderful you are!*

This model can also be used to create a psalm of praise for the wonders of the sea, the land, etc.

- Pray using songs about God the Creator and the sacredness of creation, e.g. 'The Wonders I See' (Bernadette Farrell, *Share the Light*, OCP Publications). These can be sung for daily prayer.

**Related Chapters** – *KWL*, 2nd edn, Prep/Kindergarten: Chapter 9, Our Wonderful World.

**Faith concepts:** life, environment, creation, responsibility, love.

**Understandings:**

God created the world as a gift of love.

God wants people to enjoy and respect the whole of creation.

Each person can care for the environment.

**Unit specific learning:**

Students will learn about	Students will learn to	Students will undertake to
<i>Knowledge and Understanding</i>	<i>Reasoning &amp; Responding</i>	<i>Personal &amp; Communal Engagement</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Objects, places and times that make up creation.</li> <li>• Changes within the environment (day/night, seasons).</li> <li>• Ways in which they can look after God’s creation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appreciate creation as wonder and gift.</li> <li>• Express their feelings about creation.</li> <li>• Wonder about why God created the world.</li> <li>• Represent their thoughts about creation through art.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create psalms of praise.</li> <li>• Participate in class prayer sessions.</li> <li>• Engage in meditation and imaginative prayer.</li> </ul>

**Part 1: Our Wonderful World**

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
We live in an age when people have rediscovered the beauty of the natural environment.	<p><b>Wondering</b></p> <p>Take the students outside and invite them to wonder with you about creation. Students name objects from nature that they like, and say how it feels, how it looks and why they like it.</p>	

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
<p>The acknowledgment of God as the creator of all things is recorded in the Book of Genesis. All creation reflects the glory, creativity and love of God who is present in all things and all people.</p>	<p><b>Responding</b> Students collect objects from nature to decorate the prayer place and discuss their significance.</p>	<p><b>Assessment for Learning</b> This task will indicate students' prior knowledge and understanding of elements of the created world.</p>
<p>The universe reflects God and depends totally on God. The beauty of the created universe points us to God and to an infinite glory beyond it.</p>	<p><b>Praying the Word</b> Use these objects as a focus for class prayer throughout the unit (see 'Possibilities for Prayer and Worship').</p> <p><b>Telling the Story</b> Read <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edn, Prep/Kindergarten, Chapter 9, pp. 58–61.</p> <p><b>Responding</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teach students a song about creation, e.g. 'The Wonders I See' (Farrell, B, <i>Share the Light</i>); 'Creation Echo' (Bainbridge, M, <i>Water of Life</i>).</li> <li>• Students create the night sky using the crayon resist technique (students draw with crayons or pastels then wash over work with black paint). They create a display of God's wonderful world. Using this artwork students brainstorm words or sentences describing the wonder of the night sky (e.g. dark, mysterious, wonderful, spooky).</li> </ul>	

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
<p>The Book of Psalms is a collection of hymns and prayers of praise compiled over centuries. The psalms express the human experiences of people and their relationship with God. The psalms express the whole range of human emotion – from rage to wonder and awe. The psalmist acknowledges God as being with us in all of life’s events, and the cry of the human heart for communication with the Divine.</p>	<p><b>Praying the Word</b>  Use students’ descriptive words or sentences about their night sky to create a class psalm of praise. Begin the psalm of praise with ‘God of creation, how wonderful you are ...’ (see ‘Possibilities for Prayer and Worship’).</p> <p>The psalm of praise is to be built upon throughout the unit.</p> <p><b>Wondering</b>  Invite students to wonder with you:  I wonder what the sky looks like in the daytime?  I wonder what the sky looks like during Winter/Summer/Spring/Autumn?  I wonder what animals are awake during the day?  I wonder what your favourite part of the day is?</p> <p><b>Responding</b>  Students paint or construct a 3D model from art materials and playdough of a daytime scene selecting their favourite season as a focus. Using students’ artwork or construction, brainstorm words/sentences describing the wonder of the daytime scene.</p>	

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
	<p><b>Praying the Word</b> Use students' descriptive words or sentences about their daytime scene to continue the psalm of praise (see 'Possibilities for Prayer and Worship').</p> <p>Set the scene for the reading of Scripture: light candles around the collection of objects from nature. Pray Ps 8: 1–9 with the students.</p> <p>Lead the students through a meditation about God's creation, e.g. 'The Butterflies' (Garth, M, <i>Starbright</i>).</p> <p><b>Suggested Home Activity</b></p> <p>Students take their painting or 3D construction to place in the family prayer place.</p> <p><b>Praying the Word</b> Lead the students through an imaginative prayer where they use an object from nature as a focus (Bretherton, B, <i>Praying with Children</i>, p. 23).</p>	

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
	<p><b>Responding</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students make a concertina book about the wonders of God’s creation. Students illustrate and label something from nature in each section.</li> <li>• Students collect leaves or flowers from around the school. Encourage students to be respectful of the environment as they select their objects.</li> <li>• Students write a simple prayer of praise using sentence starters, e.g. God of creation, how wonderful you are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– You created ...</li> <li>– You made ...</li> <li>– You gave us ...</li> <li>– You provide ...</li> <li>– You show your love for us by ...</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Students paste the leaves or flowers on their published prayer to create a prayer card</li> </ul> <p><b>Suggested Home Activity</b> Laminate students’ prayer cards to send home.</p>	<p><b>Assessment of Learning</b> This booklet will indicate students’ ability to identify parts of God’s creation.</p>

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
	<p><b>Wondering</b>            Invite students to wonder with you:            I wonder who looks after God’s creation?            I wonder what you can do to care for creation?            I wonder how we can encourage others to look after God’s creation?</p>	
	<p><b>Responding</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students design a poster or make a video for display or viewing around the school encouraging others to care for the school environment.</li> <li>• Students take a form of action that shows care for their environment, e.g. planting some seeds in a school garden; making a walking trail through the school for other students to use to appreciate school surroundings; class compost</li> </ul>	<p><b>Assessment of Learning</b>            This poster will indicate students’ ability to identify ways in which God’s creation can be looked after.</p>
	<p><b>Praying the Word</b>            Students participate in a class prayer session using <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edn, Prep/Kindergarten, Chapter 9, p. 63.</p>	

## RESOURCES

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

Prep/Kindergarten: Chapter 9, Our Wonderful World.

### **CDs**

Farrell, B 2002, 'The Wonders I See' in *Share the Light*, OCP Publications.

### **Teacher Resources**

Bretherton, B 1995, *Praying with Children*, Social Science Press, NSW.

Garth, M 1991, *Starbright Meditations for Children*, Harper Collins, NY.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION STANDARDS

This unit may be used to assess some of the Level 1 standards.

Students relate to sacred story including the image of the Good Shepherd by making connections to their personal experiences. Students contemplate and reflect about God, themselves and the world by responding to their wondering, feelings and ideas through prayer and a range of media.