

<b>YEAR LEVEL</b>	<b>Year 1 &amp; 2</b>
<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Grief and Loss</b>
<b>STRAND</b>	<b>CHRISTIAN MORALITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE</b>
<b>SUGGESTED DURATION</b>	4 - 5 weeks
<b>ENDURING QUESTIONS</b>	<b>What does it mean to be Christian? How do I choose to share God's love with all?</b>



## Unit Focus

In this unit students will be given the opportunity to explore the nature of change and loss in relation to changes in creation, the seasons and in the life cycle of people and animals.

They will explore feelings related to the experience of loss and death, and gain insights into the variety of ways that families, cultural groups and the Church celebrate the life of the departed.

## Achievement Standards

By the end of **Year Two** students should be able to:

**Identify ways that Christians love and care for others as God asks.**

## Unit Outcomes

**By the end of this unit students should be able to:**

1. Explain changes that take place in life cycles and seasons.
2. Identify some rituals used to say goodbye to loved ones.
3. Name and express some feelings associated with loss and some ways we can support others who grieve.

## Key Understandings for Students

- There are many losses that cause people to grieve (eg. sickness, migration, disability, relocation, separation, death of pets, theft, broken toys, being adopted).
- We remember that God loves each of us and gives us life.
- When someone we love dies, we remember and celebrate their life.
- Some understanding of rituals associated with loss is important.
- Sometimes we feel sad when things change.
- Birth, life and death is the cycle of life.

- God is present and active in all cycles of life.
- Christians believe in eternal life and we talk about Heaven.
- We are sad when someone we love dies.
- We can feel sad when people we love move away and leave us.
- Feelings are important in our lives.
- It is helpful to express our feelings of loss. These feelings are part of grief. To grieve is part of loving and saying goodbye.
- There are ways each of us can support those who grieve.
- Death does not hurt; a dead person does not feel; the correct word to use is dead/death; when sad people cry it is healthy and good; death is not catchy; death is final; when we grieve it is good to discuss our feelings and concerns with adults who love us; when we grieve we will not always feel sad; when we grieve it is good to hold a ritual so we can say goodbye and share our grief.

## Student Context

Students at this level may have limited understanding of time, growth, change and cycles of life. Our lives and the world around us are constantly changing. In the change process, loss is common to all. Pets die and leave children grieving. Some children experience the death of loved grandparents and they are growing in awareness that people are sad when their loved ones die. For some the understanding of the finality of death is not understood. For many students, the family experience of separation and divorce is a painful reality. Students at this level are beginning to be able to understand and describe their feelings in a more reflective and insightful way. They are also growing in the awareness of the grief of others and how they can be supportive.

Students at this level are able to share their experiences openly and willingly.

Students may need to be helped to appreciate that all feelings are healthy and OK. How we handle them is important.

Grief is not a bad thing and it won't cause children or adults to go mad or to die as long as there is enough love, understanding and support available. *The Grief of Our Children* - Dianne McKissock (1998)

## Theological Background for Teachers

- It is through the rhythm of the cycles of life that the believer comes to experience and understand God as ever present, loving, sustaining, forgiving and caring.
- Through the cycles of life we see God's creative action made visible.
- In creation we see the constant pattern of birth/beginnings, life, death and rebirth.
- Death is not the end of human existence but the beginning of new life. (Guidelines for religious education of students in the Archdiocese of Melbourne 1995)
- Our hope as Christians is that as Jesus was raised from the dead, so we too will be raised from the dead and enjoy eternal life with God.
- It is in the face of death that the riddle of human existence becomes most acute.
- Although the mystery of death utterly beggars the imagination, the Church has been taught by divine revelation, and herself, firmly teaches that man has been created by God for a blissful purpose beyond the reach of earthly misery.

### Gaudium et Spes 1965 (GS)

- For God has called man and still calls him so that with his entire being he might be joined to him in an endless sharing of a divine life beyond all corruption. Christ won this victory when He rose to life, since by his death he freed man from death. 1 Cor, 15:56-57 GS

- Through Christ and in Christ the riddles of sorrow and death grow meaningful. *GS*
- Life is changed, not taken away. *The Funeral Liturgy*.
- At the Second Coming of Christ, all things will be renewed and the Kingdom or reign of God will appear in its fullness.
- The community of all members of the church both those now living and the saints in Heaven, is one of the distinguishing beliefs of the Catholic Church. This belief is generally referred to as “the communion of saints.” *GS*

## Scripture

### Matthew 13:31-32 – Godly Play The Mustard Seed.

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying: “Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Let anyone with ears<sup>[a]</sup> listen!”

### Matthew 5:4

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted”.

## Major Assessment Task

Assessment tasks for this unit may include:

- Order the life cycle of a frog or butterfly, or the seasons, and name some of the changes that take place.
- Using a Y chart, students will identify what it may look, sound and feel like when someone is grieving. Students will include how they could support these people during times of grief.



## Suggested Teaching & Learning Experiences

### Focusing Activity

Show students a collection of images from different seasons (Summer, Autumn, Winter, Spring) these images may show people enjoying different aspects of the seasons and reflect the changes in the landscapes. Have a class discussion about what is in the images and ask students to group these according to the seasons. Students label each season and write all the changes they can see or have experienced in each season.

- Use the Very Hungry Caterpillar to explore the lifecycle of a butterfly. Look at the changes that occur. Explore other life cycles such as a tadpole to a frog. Students create a life cycle poster showing the changes.
- Read [\*The Growing Story\*](#) by Helen Oxenbury. Use process questions to explore and discuss this text.
- With the help of the student's families, have each student make a poster with photos to show his/her development to date. Under each image, students write what responsibilities or changes occurred at this time for them.
- Ask the students to interview their parents to talk about their parents and other ancestors. Ask them to bring photos of themselves with grandparents etc, to display in a family photo gallery.
- Plant some fast growing seeds and chart their development. What changes occur to the seeds, what helps them grow?
- Godly Play The Mustard Seed. Allow time and resources for response.
- After reading '*Wilfred Gordon MacDonald Partridge*' make a 'Memory Book' about things they did or can remember that happened to them when they were younger.
- Recall the story of the Mustard Seed and how things change over time and how we take a long time to grow. Monitor the growth in the seeds that have been planted. Talk about how things start small but grow according to God's plan. Relate this to ourselves but also to God's plan for all of us as His 'kingdom'.
- Make a 'Feelings Book' in which the students can name and illustrate as many feelings as they can think of. Have a class activity that divides the feelings into two divisions eg: those we like to have and those we don't like to have. While acknowledging that it is normal to have negative feelings, explore ways we can lessen the intensity of those feelings we do not like.
- Read '*The Very Best of Friends*' discussing the feelings that the characters were feeling.
- Discuss how it is important to share memories about a person after they have died. Create a Memory box to contain objects, photos, drawings of the memories they have of the special person who has died.
- Introduce children to the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick. Show students the oil that is used. Invite the Parish Priest or member of the Parish Bereavement Group to talk about their ministry to the sick and the bereaved.
- Consider making or contributing to a memorial garden in your school/parish.

- 'I Wonder, I Wish, I Hope' - Students to write and/or draw what they wonder, wish and hope as they reflect on a person who has died.
- Provide sentence starters to allow an opportunity for teachers and students to share their thinking/experiences. These prompts allow everyone to share their ideas, experiences and for classmates to understand that many of us have grieved the loss of someone.
  - The thing that makes me feel the saddest is ...
  - If I could talk to the person who died, I would ask ...
  - When I am alone ...
- More True! / More False!: To prompt discussion and dispel any myths, the following statements can be placed on a continuum between More True! (It could happen!) and 'More False!' (It could not happen!):
  1. Everything that is alive will die one day.
  2. People should not be sad when they have lost something.
  3. People die because they were naughty.
  4. It is okay to cry.
  5. A funeral is a good way to say goodbye to someone who has died.
  6. People die in many different ways.
  7. You die when you are old.
  8. Funerals should be happy times not sad times.

## Prayer Ritual

Gather students in a circle with their fast growing plants/seeds. Light 2 candles in the middle of the circle and explain to the students that one candle represents Jesus and the other represents people who have died (if appropriate).

Introduce students to the response 'blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted' (Mt 5:4).

**Leader:** (Make the Sign of the cross)

Dear God, please comfort people who are feeling loneliness or sadness (*students respond*).

Dear God, we pray for anyone who has lost someone that they love (*students respond*).

Dear God, we pray for all people who are in heaven with you (*students respond*).

Dear God, please hear all the prayers in our hearts (*students respond*).

Listen to Andrew Chinn's - Grow in Truth, Grow in Love

**Leader:** (Make the Sign of the cross)

## Appendices

Appendix 1 - Godly Play - The Mustard Seed