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| YEAR LEVEL            | 3 & 4   |
| TITLE                 | Circle of Life  |
| STRAND                | CHRISTIAN MORALITY AND<br>SOCIAL JUSTICE  |
| SUGGESTED<br>DURATION | 4 weeks   |
| ENDURING<br>QUESTIONS | What does it mean to be Christian?<br>How do I choose to share God's love with all? |

## Unit Focus

In this unit students will be given the opportunity to reflect on how Jesus is with them in times of sadness, loss and trouble. This is part of our lives. Students will explore experiences of 'death' and 'new life' in their lives. God is with us always and sends people to help us in times of sadness, loss and trouble. We also need to be there for others in their times of need.

## Achievement Standards

By the end of Year 4, students should be able to:

**Identify the Church as a community that celebrates the life and work of Jesus.**

## Unit Outcomes

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

1. Name a time of sadness in their life and identify those who helped them.
2. Explore understandings of death/loss as a separation.
3. Respond in prayer to new understandings of loss and suffering.

## Key Understandings for Students

- As Christians we believe that death is not the end but the beginning of a new way of being, or new life.
- Death/loss is a separation, but we can continue the relationship in different modes: through imagination, memory, ritual etc.
- At every Mass we celebrate Jesus' passing from death to new life.
- We share our gifts with others and others share theirs by offering support and love during times of sadness, trouble and loss.

- Prayer and reflection at a time of loss helps us to accept the loss and grow through it.
- Jesus shows us how to care for others at sad times.
- Jesus endured much sorrow and loss in his life.
- God is present in death, change and loss, offering us the hope of eternal life through Christ's salvific presence.
- The experience of grief in various emotional and physical responses is valid.
- Loss and grieving are an inevitable part of life. We can learn skills to help us deal with these experiences.

## Student Context

As students move through this level their understanding of themselves, their community and the wider world expands. They are less self-focussed and enjoy working collaboratively.

This unit caters well to Year 3 and 4 students as it guides them to develop their understanding of themselves, their community and the wider world. There will be a wide range of experiences of death, loss or separation for students at this level. This unit will enable them to explore their own experiences and that of others.

## Theological Background for Teachers

- It is necessary for teachers to be clear from the outset that the context developed through this topic for the study of the human experience of grief, loss, death and change is that of the Christian perspective. Christians hope not only to mature in the sad experiences of life but also to survive the last and great mystery, death; to enter another life, fulfilled beyond all expectations. There is probably no other aspect of existence in which the fact of Christ's Passion, Death and Resurrection (i.e., the Paschal Mystery) is so relevant as in these two aspects of human experience, namely loss and death. For example, "Anyone who does not take up their cross and follow in my footsteps is not worthy of me. Anyone who finds their life will lose it; anyone who loses their life for my sake will find it." (Matt. 10:38; cf also Matt 16:25). The Church community believes that death is not equal to total extinction of the human spirit, for the human self lives on in some spiritual capacity after physical death.
- Nothing sharpens the awareness of our human condition more than the experience of loss, death, grief and dying. It is that experience that produced the great classics of drama and prose, the philosophies of history and the great religions. Many of these faced the experiences of loss and death with stoic fortitude and despair. Christianity alone, because of the historical fact of Jesus' saving action, faces loss and death with a hope that is vibrant and almost unbelievable. Death is a universal human experience and it is the depth of feelings of attachment that causes the pain, which accompanies such loss. We can develop coping responses that will help us, our family and friends, to handle the grief in such a situation.
- This unit aims to convey how Christians find meaning for their own and others' suffering and death. The refusal of Jesus' followers to accept the reality of his forthcoming arrest and condemnation is a reflection of humankind's inability to cope with the ultimate question. But more powerful is the trilogy of Christ's passion, death and resurrection, where Christians find meaning in Christ's eventual triumph. "I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me even though that person dies, will live, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die." (Jn 11:25-26).

- It is this sure and certain hope of the resurrection that is the cornerstone of Catholic faith and the heart of the Good News. And it is this same hope that makes Catholic funerals paradoxically joyful celebrations, at least for those who believe. This attitude of joy and hope is not a denial of the natural feelings of grief at the loss of a relation or friend, but rather a consequence of a recognition of the validity of St Paul's statement that "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (Heb 11:1)
- Christianity is different, because it accepts that for those who believe in Christ, the basic mystery of death is already anticipated throughout life in the 'little dyings' by which believers give themselves to others and to God in love. And to love is to live! The Church continually prays for the dead and the dying and offers prayerful support to the bereaved, through its funeral rites.
- Different cultures have their own customs regarding funeral rites. In a multicultural society such as Australia, these need to be respected as traditions held sacred over the centuries by the people who observe them.
- The Catholic Church affirms that all people are destined for eternal life with God, i.e., Heaven. The Church also teaches that because human beings of their very nature have freedom to choose, eternal separation from God is a possibility. This is hell. Heaven is living on in love eternally.
- The Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick recognises God's presence in the midst of human suffering. The Sacrament can express hope for one who is sick, that they will be spiritually healed and raised with Christ. The Christian belief in Jesus' death and resurrection are central to the celebration of this sacrament.

## Scripture

### **John 11:25-26 *I am the Resurrection***

I am the resurrection if anyone believes in me even though he dies he will live, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.

### **Eccl 3:1-8 *Everything has its Time***

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:

a time to be born and a time to die;  
 a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;  
 a time to kill, and a time to heal;  
 a time to break down, and a time to build up;  
 a time to weep, and a time to laugh;  
 a time to mourn, and a time to dance;  
 a time to throw away stones,  
 and a time to gather stones together;  
 a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;  
 a time to seek, and a time to lose;  
 a time to keep and a time to throw away;  
 a time to tear, and a time to sew;

a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;  
a time to love, and a time to hate;  
a time for war, and a time for peace.

## Major Assessment Task

Create an artistic representation of **Eccl 3:1-8 *Everything has its Time***.

Students' work may focus on a time of loss or change and what helped them through this or an artistic representation of a few of the lines in the scripture. ( It is important to recognise that for some students this may be moving house, changing school or changing family circumstances. For others this may be the death of a family member)

## Suggested Teaching & Learning Experiences

### Focusing Activity

- Read the story '[Grandad's Prayer of the Earth](#)' by Douglas Wood and create a memory box of the story and discuss the significance of each of the items mentioned in the story.
- Teacher to create a memory box to share with the children and talk about each item as they are taken from the box. e.g. a photo, a scarf, a letter, a piece of jewellery
- Create individual memory boxes with items that remind us of someone we love.
- Students make a timeline of events that are significant in their family story.
- Investigate the life cycle of an insect (eg. Cicad). Complete a compare and contrast activity related to the life-cycle of a human.
- Watch the video of '[The Lion King](#)' and explore the feelings related to the birth of Simba, the death of Mufasa and how Simba recovered from the loss. Write a Movie review.
- Children draw a series of pictures that show times when they were very sad. Discuss what happened. Who helped them when they were sad? How did they show their feelings? What were some of the things that helped ease the pain or that helped them to feel better?
- Construct a word web on related words of Loss (e.g. sad, lonely, angry, upset).
- Explore ways in which people might cope or recover from loss. Draw on characters encountered when reading Junior fiction stories listed in the reference list.

### Read Scripture Passage Eccl 3:1-8 *Everything has its Time*

- Use The Composite model approach to Scripture to engage more fully in this text. Where in the bible is the passage located? What just happened before? What happens after?

- Explore how the Church celebrates the mystery of life and death through ritual, liturgy and all the Sacraments. The Eucharist -“Do this in memory of Me”.
- In Regular classroom prayer time remember those who have died.
- After consulting with the parish or community Bereavement group, volunteer to help with their Care program by writing cards, preparing food etc.

## Prayer Ritual

Gather students around the prayer space and begin with the sign of the cross.

Read **Eccl 3:1-8 *Everything has its Time***. Use images created as the assessment task as a focus for this reflection.

Invite a student to lead the group in a closing prayer (these may be impromptu or a prayer such as Our Father or Hail Mary).