

YEAR LEVEL	7 and 8
TITLE	A Just World?
STRAND	CHRISTIAN MORALITY & SOCIAL JUSTICE
SUGGESTED DURATION	10 weeks (25 hours)
ENDURING QUESTIONS	<p>How are we called to contribute to the common good?</p> <p>How can I use my gifts for the common good?</p>

Unit Focus

In this unit students will investigate the concept of justice. Scripture and Church teachings will be examined to highlight ways to promote right relationships. Students are encouraged to develop an awareness of justice and injustice in the world today, and a challenge is issued for each student to act justly towards others and the world.

Achievement Standards

By the end of Year Eight:

Students express an understanding and appreciation of Christian life as based on the life, teachings and values of Jesus Christ and as requiring informed decisions and appropriate actions.

Unit Outcomes

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

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the Scriptural imperative for justice.
2. Investigate the effects of self-centred personal choice on relationships with God, others and the earth.
3. Investigate and analyse issues of injustice in the world today in the light of Catholic Social Teaching.
4. Devise and participate in an action to promote justice in the school, local or wider community.

Key Understandings for Students

- The Scriptures describe the justice of God as enduring. The justice of God calls people to account for their actions; God restores the fortunes of the poor and intervenes on behalf of the needy.
- The Scriptural notion of justice means to be open to relationships with the community, the land, and with God.
- A prophet is a person who speaks for God. The biblical prophets call for personal and social change.
- In biblical terms, a person cannot be just, unless he/she takes the cause of the poor.

- The Church's Catholic Social Teaching offers principles for reflection, criteria for judgment and guidelines for action.
- There are key themes in Catholic Social Teaching: Human Dignity, Common Good, Solidarity, Subsidiarity, the Preferential Option for the Poor, Care for Creation, and Participation.
- Self-centred personal choices lead to alienation and estrangement from God and others.
- Catholics recognize that sinfulness obstructs our relationships with God and others.
- All Christians strive to live in a way that is true to the gospels.

Student Context

Year 7 and 8 students are beginning to develop a sense of justice and responsibility to the people and the world around them. They are also growing in their ability to understand that the choices they make have consequences and require that they exercise responsibility. However, they can be overwhelmed by the many new feelings they are experiencing and this can give them a sense of powerlessness.

It is important to help students feel supported and to understand that joint action by people can achieve much. Year 7 and 8 students also need help to be realistic about the expectations they set for themselves, so they can continue to respond to their emerging social conscience and to take up opportunities to put their Christian values into practice.

It is important to acknowledge the students' past experience, or lack thereof, of family, school and parish community, and to help them own their own experience and be able to build on it.

Theological Background for Teachers

The Scripture's Call to Justice

- Justice is a central theme in the Scriptures. A multi-faceted understanding of justice is presented, one that primarily is about fidelity to the demands of relationships with the community, God and the land.
 - Throughout the Old Testament there are descriptions of the just individual, the justice of God and those to whom a special concern should be addressed; the widows, orphans and strangers (the *anawim*). In particular, the books of the Bible that are named after the prophets - notably Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Jeremiah - contain strong messages about justice.
 - The Hebrew word for prophet - *nabi* - means "mouthpiece". A prophet therefore is a person who speaks for God. The prophets call for conversion - that is, personal and social transformation. They speak on behalf of God but also on behalf of those who have no voice. They despise any practice of religion which is not linked to working for justice.
 - The view of justice described by the prophets is highly realistic. Injustice is grounded in behaviour - specifically the mistreatment of weak or needy persons. The effects of justice are portrayed concretely as freedom from slavery and oppression, harmony in community and hope in the face of continuing sinfulness.
 - In the New Testament it is Jesus' radical and unique vision of God's reign which provides a basis for justice. Jesus proclaims that the reign of God is inclusive and not exclusive. Jesus promotes the dignity of all people through both his actions and his words. Specific actions are demanded on the personal, interpersonal and political level to respond to the gospel vision of the kingdom of God.
- Stoutzenberger, J. (1989). *The Christian call to justice and peace*. Winona: St Mary's Press: 33-51.

Catholic Social Teaching

In Catholic Social Teaching we find the following themes;

1. Human Dignity

All people are sacred, made in the image and likeness of God. People do not lose dignity because of disability, poverty, age, lack of success, or race. This emphasizes people over things, being over having.

2. Common Good

The human person is both sacred and social. We realize our dignity and rights in relationship with others, in community. "We are one body; when one suffers, we all suffer." We are called to respect all of God's gifts of creation, to be good stewards of the earth and each other.

3. Solidarity

We are one human family. Our responsibilities to each other cross national, racial, economic and ideological differences. We are called to work globally for justice.

4. Subsidiarity

Subsidiarity is concerned with the idea that all people have the right to freely participate in decisions that affect their lives, i.e. decisions should be made by those closest to and most affected by the issues and concerns of the community.

5. Preferential Option for the Poor

The moral test of a society is how it treats its most vulnerable members. The poor have the most urgent moral claim on the conscience of the nation. We are called to look at decisions in terms of how they affect the poor.

6. Care for Creation

The goods of the earth are gifts from God. We have a responsibility to care for these goods as stewards and trustees, not as mere consumers and users.

7. Participation

Everyone has the right to work and contribute to their communities. Conversely, it is wrong for a person or a group to be excluded unfairly or to be unable to participate in society.

<https://www.ceosand.catholic.edu.au/catholicidentity/social-justice/catholic-social-teaching>

Sinfulness

- Sinfulness is an alienation or estrangement from God. Sin is ultimately a failure to respond to God's great love. All sin is rooted in personal choices. Sin can be either personal or social in its effects. Personal sin is something freely chosen and done by free and accountable persons, while social sin is an evil that somehow creeps into entire organizations, structures, communities, or societies as a result of human choices, actions, inactions, and attitudes, doing harm to individuals as well as whole communities. Self-centred personal choices can have a damaging effect on our relationships with God, others and the environment. The Christian way of life should be characterized by ongoing conversion away from sinfulness and self-centredness and toward acceptance of God's loving offer of friendship.

Ekstrom, R. (Ed.). (1995). *A new concise Catholic dictionary*. Mystic, Conn.: Twenty-Third: p. 231.

Call to Action

- Determining what the gospel is asking of Christians remains a task for every generation. How we live a life that authentically responds to the invitation of Jesus is the question we need to answer. (*Inform* No. 15 - undated)
- Social justice demands that we ask the question: What can we do? What can one person, one family do, to

bring justice into the local, national and global community? To share more fairly the goods of this world God has provided? To promote peace, not conflict, between peoples? To cherish the environment, and use the gifts of creation thoughtfully? To respond to the call of the Church, which sees justice and peace as the responsibility of all followers of Jesus? (*Inform* No.38 - May 1994)

Scripture

Is 58:6-11

Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am. If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday. The LORD will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail.

Mic 6:8 What God requires.

He has told you, O mortal, what is good;
and what does the LORD require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?

Amos 5:14-15

Seek good and not evil, that you may live; and so the LORD, the God of hosts, will be with you, just as you have said. Hate evil and love good, and establish justice in the gate; it may be that the LORD, the God of hosts, will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.

Mt 25:40

And the king will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."

Major Assessment Task

Major Assessment Task & Rubric

- Using a variety of newspaper articles identify and list situations of injustice at a local, national and international level.
- In pairs, choose an area of injustice from your list and research the issue in order to better understand it. Look at historical factors, cultural issues and political aspects

Create possible solutions or ways to address this area of injustice and act on them.

- Based on your research raise awareness within your school about the issue by choosing one of the following and presenting it accordingly:
 - PowerPoint (presented to the class)
 - Posters (displayed around the school)
 - Banner (in the front of the school)
 - Wall display (classroom, library, foyer or hallway)
 - Newsletter article
 - A short play (presented to the class or at an assembly)

From your understanding of 'Injustice' write a personal reflection (approximately 250 words) of what actions you could take to change an unjust situation and make the world a better place.

It is expected that students and teachers will co-construct an assessment rubric for this task beginning with the below. Teachers are encouraged to assess skills and knowledge from other learning areas that may be included in this task.

	Well above expected level	Above expected level	Expected level	Working towards expected level
Knowledge and Understanding	Can identify, explain and analyse situations of injustice on a local, national and international level	Can identify and explain situations of injustice on a local, national and international level	Can identify situations of injustice on a local, national and international level	Can identify some situations of injustice on a local, national or international level
	Showed an outstanding and comprehensive understanding of the issue on a historical, cultural and political level.	Showed a very good understanding of the issue on a historical, cultural and political level.	Showed a good understanding of the issue on a historical, cultural and political level.	Shows some understanding of the issue on a historical, cultural and political level.
	Insightful choice of information selected from very varied sources.	Accurate and detailed information has been selected from varied sources.	Relevant information selected from varied sources	Information selected from few sources.
Reasoning	Evidence of decision making processes which involve wide range of variables and solutions.	Evidence of decision making processes which involve a range of variables and solutions."	Evidence of decision making which involves some variables and solutions.	Evidence of decision making which involves limited variables and solutions.

Suggested Teaching & Learning Experiences

Outcome 1 Demonstrate an understanding of the Scriptural imperative for justice

- Using a selection of scriptural references (see above from Isaiah, Amos, Micah and Matthew's Gospel) explore the concept of justice. Develop a mind map to show similar themes and related ideas.
- Research one of the major prophets (Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah), taking note of the particular justice issues of the times.
- Select a passage from the scriptures about justice and justify why this passage should be regarded as the key to being a Christian.
- Write a poem as if it is Jesus explaining the link between justice and being a Christian.
- Analyse and interpret a particular scripture passage to show the meaning of the story for people in the world today. This may be presented as a cartoon, power point, poem, collage, story book, etc. You need to include

illustration/s or symbol/s.

Outcome 2 Investigate the effects of self-centred personal choice on relationships with God, others and the earth.

- Use a class set of newspapers to explore situations of injustice and sin at local, national and international levels. Look for patterns that appear and classify the issues.
- Make a collage, using current newspapers, to show how personal greed can affect relationships with God, others and the environment.
- Explore the positive and negative consequences of actions at the personal, local and global level. Show the results of your research in a flow chart.
- Using a case study, explore how personal greed can affect one's relationship with God, others or the environment.
- Select segments from videos and/or novels which show a self-centred choice and its consequences.
- Collect images, objects, opinions, etc from your local environment that truly reflect what it is like. Are any local problems and issues the result of self-centred interest? What can we, as a community, do to help rectify these?
- We can learn much from Aboriginal People who only used what they needed and who demonstrated a deep respect for the land. Research ways that Aboriginal people demonstrate a close relationship with the land, particularly in your local area.

Outcome 3 Investigate and analyse issues of injustice in the world today in the light of Catholic Social Teaching.

- Choose an area of injustice and do some research on the issue in order to better understand it e.g. consider historical factors, cultural issues, political aspects. Propose actions for justice that would deal with changing the structures.
- You are responsible for the design of an ad campaign that aims to teach people about a justice issue. To get your message across you are to select an issue that you feel passionate about. Research and analyse this issue to help design your campaign. How can you speak for the victims of injustice? Take action; get involved in fundraising or advocacy to enable development of communities in need.
- Reconciliation with Indigenous Australians is an important local and national justice issue. Learn as much as possible about the Indigenous people in your area. Invite a local elder or community representative to speak to your class.

Outcome 4 Devise and participate in an action to promote justice in the school, local or wider community.

- As a result of research, small groups develop a scheme to promote action for justice within the school. Members can promote the scheme by speaking at School Assemblies, preparing posters, developing a promotional website etc.
- Develop an advertising campaign that targets teenagers and encourages them to act on a particular justice issue.

Liturgical Celebrations/sacramental celebrations provide opportunities for connection with the prayer life of the Church, for reflection and resonance. Such celebrations should be an integral part of every unit and should be linked to the liturgical year whenever possible.

Resources

Archdiocese of Melbourne. (2003) *To Know, Worship and Love*. 2nd ed. Year 8. Melbourne: James Goold House Publications. Chapters 17 & 18.

Morrissey, J., Mudge, P. & Taylor, A. (1998). *Out of the Desert*. Book 2. Sydney: Longman. Chapter 9

Ryan, M. (1998). *Striving for Justice: A Religion Series for Catholic Secondary Schools*. Teachers' text.

Katoomba, N.S.W.: Social Science Press. Whole book.

Appendices