


YEAR LEVEL	9 and 10	
TITLE	Celebrating Religious Diversity	
STRAND	CHURCH AND TRADITION	
SUGGESTED DURATION	10 weeks (25 hours)	
ENDURING QUESTIONS	<p>How does the Church make a difference?</p> <p>How can I respect the beliefs and faith tradition of others?</p>	

Unit Focus

In this unit students will investigate key features of the major world religions. They will use this knowledge to examine the current relationship between the Christian Churches and other world religions and the efforts being made toward cooperation and unity.

Achievement Standards

By the end of Year 10:

Students should be able to recognise and analyse the nature, significance and role of religious places, persons and ethical codes in the faith and practice of some Christian denominations and world religions.

Unit Outcomes

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

1. *Investigate key features of the major world religions.*
2. *Outline the relationship the Catholic Church has with other Christian churches and other world religions.*
3. *Examine the history of the Ecumenical movement and the processes that foster unity among Christians.*
4. *Assess the current state of the interfaith dialogue in Australia and propose ways to enhance the dialogue at the local level.*

Key Understandings for Students

- The similarities and differences between world religions can be analysed by examining particular components or dimensions of religion such as beliefs, religious places, ethical codes, rituals and sacred writings.
- There are many different Christian communities in the world today. Ecumenism is an attempt on the part of members of these Christian communities to come together to share their understanding of the Christian message.
- The reasons for the divisions amongst the Christian Churches are complex. Some have their origin in doctrinal differences and in the Church's view that it possessed the whole heritage of faith, while politics and prejudice also played a part.

- Throughout the ages such disunity has caused much suffering. The Second Vatican Council did much to address the issues and questions involved in Christian unity. All Christian Churches today recognise the anomaly of disunity and work towards Christian unity.
- Interfaith dialogue is the term used to describe the conversation and search for understanding between Christians and people of faiths other than Christian.
- The Church recognises the wisdom in religions other than Christianity and respects those who are followers of other religions.

Student Context

Students at this level are aware of the diversity that characterises Australian culture and of the role that religion plays in influencing the formation of different worldviews etc. Information about conflicts taking place both locally and around the world can lead to students feeling disillusioned and pessimistic about the future. Students may have been personally affected by conflict or prejudice on the basis of cultural or religious affiliation. Students in this phase of their development may draw on the opinions of their parents or reject them completely. They can also espouse narrow, simplistic solutions to social problems.

Many year 9 and 10 students are at a level of exploring the belief systems that they previously may have taken for granted. In many instances they are developing a more mature understanding. They can readily recognise similarities in the way people express religious meaning, the richness of other religious traditions, and the need to work towards understanding, tolerance and harmony.

Theological Background for Teachers

Dimensions of Religion

- Various courses and resources analyse religious traditions in terms of beliefs, myths and stories, texts and sacred literature, rituals, symbols, social structures, systems of ethics and individual experience or similar categories. These categories draw in part on Habel and Moore's (1978) eight major categories within religious traditions. The current VCE Religion & Society Study Design (2017-2022) is based on nine categories namely: Beliefs; Sacred stories; Spaces, places, times and artifacts; Texts; Rituals; Symbols; Social structures; Ethics; and Spiritual experiences.

Ecumenism

- In Australia, Catholics and other groups of Christians share a common vision made evident in joint ecumenical initiatives.
- There are many different faith communities in the world today. Ecumenism is an attempt on the part of members of Christian communities to come together to share their understanding of the Christian message.
- At all times the church carries the responsibility of reading the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the gospel (*Church in the Modern World*, n.4). Throughout its history the Church has carried out this task with varying degrees of effectiveness.
- The Church exhorts us to be alert to the ecumenical “signs of the times”, the Spirit-led initiatives of people working towards full unity. Catholics are, therefore, asked to be thoughtful and active participants in the work of ecumenism. This participation involves both openness to renewing what needs to be renewed and a readiness to be evangelised by “anything wrought by the grace of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of Christians of other traditions” (*Decree on Ecumenism*, n.4).

- Differences concerning doctrine, discipline or the structures of the Church continue to present obstacles to full communion in the Church. The ecumenical movement also takes as its mission the overcoming of these obstacles. In spite of the barriers still existing, the truth remains that all who are baptised and believe are incorporated into Christ and are accepted as sisters and brothers of the family of the Church.
- Although Christians share the essential belief that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, suffered, died and rose again for their salvation, the Church is divided on certain theological understandings e.g. the interpretation of the scriptures, the exercise of authority, the place of Mary.
- The New Testament emphasises that the visible unity of Christians is an essential aspect of their witness as followers of Jesus Christ (John 17:20-23; 1 Cor.1:10; 12:12; Gal. 3:27-28). The Vatican II *Decree on Ecumenism* recognised that the division of Christians is a contradictory witness; it therefore affirmed the need for the restoration of unity among the followers of Christ.
- Ecumenism refers to relations between different Christian churches who are working towards unity and reunion. Pope John Paul II's 1995 encyclical *Ut Unum Sint (That All May Be One)* emphasises that ecumenism 'is an organic part of (the Church's) life and work, and consequently, must pervade all that she is and does' (n.20).
- More recently Pope Francis has said "We are called to pray so that all Christians will once again become one family, consistent with the divine will "that all may be one" (Jn 17:21). Ecumenism is not an optional thing. The intention will be to develop a common and concordant witness in the affirmation of true justice and in the support of the weakest, through concrete, appropriate and effective responses." (General Audience, Jan 16 2019)
- The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (nn.820-822) clearly points out certain requirements crucial to the ecumenical movement:
 - Reform and renewal of our own Church
 - Dialogue at all levels with other churches and communities
 - Co-operation between Christians in service to society
 - Sharing in prayer together
 - Knowledge of other Christian Churches.
- In Australia, Catholics and other groups of Christians discuss ways of bringing about Christian Unity and participate in activities that enable unity to develop e.g. each year a week of Prayer for Christian Unity is held in which all Christians are invited to participate.

Interfaith Dialogue

- In the *Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions* the Second Vatican Council stated that all peoples with their various religious traditions form a single community. The Church respects the spiritual, moral and cultural values of Aboriginal Spirituality, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and other religions.
- It calls on Christians to acknowledge, preserve and promote their spiritual and moral goods through collaboration and dialogue. The spiritual patrimony common to Christians and Jews is acknowledged.
- People look to religion for answers to the profound mysteries of the human condition.
- The believer can benefit from dialogue with other religions by learning to appreciate better the elements of truth and grace which are found among peoples and which are 'a secret presence of God'. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* n 856)

- Vatican II taught that religious freedom has its foundation in the dignity of the human person (*Declaration on Religious Freedom*).
- The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*) stated that people are called to be part of the catholic unity of the People of God. All people are called to salvation by the grace of God: thus Catholics, other Christians and the whole of humanity 'belong to it or are related to it.' (*Lumen Gentium*, n 13 & 14-16). Adapted from *Faithful to God Faithful to People* Level 6. 1996 p150.
- Pope John Paul II said at Blatherskite Park, Alice Springs, 29 November 1986, in his Address to the Aboriginal People of Australia
The Church of Australia will not be fully the Church that Jesus wants her to be until you (the Indigenous peoples of Australia) have made your contribution to her life and until that contribution has been joyfully received by others.
A united Australia which represents this land of ours; values the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage; and provides justice and equity for all.

This indicates the importance of the path towards Reconciliation for the Catholic Church in Australia.

Scripture

Acts 1:6-8 The Ascension of Jesus

So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom of Israel?" He replied, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

1 Cor.1:4-18 Salutation

I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind – just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you – so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose. For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters. What I mean is that each of you says, I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ." Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one can say that you were baptized in my name. (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that I do not know whether I baptized anyone else). For Christ did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power.

For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

1 Cor.12:12-21 One Body With Many Members

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot would say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear would say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.”

Jn 17:20-23 Jesus Prays for His Disciples

“I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

Eph.4:1-6, 11-16 Unity in the Body of Christ

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people’s trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body’s growth in building itself up in love.

Major Assessment Task

DESCRIPTION OF TASK:

The Scenario:

There is growing tension between the religious groups within your community based on fear and misunderstandings. The Catholic parish priest has organised a round table discussion to promote dialogue between the main religious groups involved. Delegates from the following religious groups have been invited: the local Assembly of God Church, Muslims, Buddhists, as well some people from the Catholic community.

The Task:

As a member of your assigned religious group you will be your faiths representative at this important meeting. You are invited to present some of the basic information about your Religion in the hope of providing greater

understanding. Through discussions with members from other religions and their presentations your aim is to gain a deeper knowledge of their religion and develop three strategies or events to foster greater unity within the wider community. After the inter-faith discussion you are to report back to your religious group and share some of the information you have gained and your suggestions.

The Process:

In preparation for your presentations you work with other members of your religion and you each create a portfolio to take to your discussion which includes the following things:

1. An outline of some of the key aspects of your religion using the 8 dimensions of religion, providing an example from your tradition for each.
2. Your official position towards the Catholic Church and other religions.

During the discussions you are to add to your portfolio information from the other religions including:

3. A Venn diagram that highlights the similarities and differences between your faith and the Catholic Church.
4. An explanation of the Catholic Church's relationship with your religion.
5. A list of fundamental differences that might be the cause of divisions within the community.
6. A written action plan that has three suggestions for possible events or strategies to foster unity.

After the discussions:

7. Stop and reflect on the dialogue and complete self assessment and peer evaluation forms.
8. Present your written report back to your faith group, outlining your three suggestions.
9. As a group discuss all your suggestions and come to a consensus on which strategy or event you will adopt as a group and one member explains the idea and why it was chosen.
10. Submit your portfolio to your teacher.
 - The task is designed to promote a greater understanding of the Catholic Church and her views on various religions.
 - There is the opportunity to dress up if you wish.
You could possibly prepare a snack/ dish or a symbolic gift as a sign of goodwill from a country that is connected to your religious group. This can be prepared in your groups.
 - For this task to be successful you will need to prepare well for your discussion.

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	Below Expected Level
Knowledge and understanding	Has produced a detailed analysis of the 8 dimensions of religion.	Has produced a thorough discussion of the 8 dimensions of religion.	Has produced an accurate outline of the 8 dimensions of religion studied.	Has produced a brief outline of the 8 dimensions of religion.
	Demonstrated a competent understanding of the similarities and differences between the religion studied and Catholicism.	Demonstrated a sound understanding of the similarities and differences between the religion studied and Catholicism.	Demonstrated a satisfactory understanding of the similarities and differences between the religion studied and Catholicism.	Demonstrated some understanding of the similarities and differences between the religion studied and Catholicism.

	Demonstrated a competent understanding of the fundamental differences that might be the cause of divisions within the community.	Demonstrated a sound understanding of the fundamental differences that might be the cause of divisions within the community.	Demonstrated a satisfactory understanding of the fundamental differences that might be the cause of divisions within the community.	Demonstrated some understanding of the fundamental differences that might be the cause of divisions within the community.
Reasoning	A thoughtfully reasoned action plan that has three suggestions for possible events or strategies to foster unity.	A soundly reasoned action plan that has three suggestions for possible events or strategies to foster unity.	A reasoned action plan that has three suggestions for possible events or strategies to foster unity.	An action plan that has three suggestions for possible events or strategies to foster unity.
	Has prepared a perceptive reflection on the inter-religious dialogue and completed comprehensive self assessment and peer evaluation forms.	Has prepared a thoughtful reflection on the inter-religious dialogue and completed detailed self assessment and peer evaluation forms.	Has prepared a reflection on the inter-religious dialogue and completed self assessment and peer evaluation forms.	Has prepared a limited reflection on the inter-religious dialogue and has included some self assessment and peer evaluation forms.

Suggested Teaching & Learning Experiences

Outcome 1 Investigate key features of the major world religions

- Chapter 7 of *To Know, Worship and Love Year 10* looks at ancient and indigenous religions and offers a description of the core elements of a religion (p129) that could be used as a reference point throughout this unit.
- Explain the meaning of the classifications of the dimensions of religions, e.g. beliefs, sacred stories, (see Theological Background) by drawing on examples from one world religion.
- Use the categories to enable the class to complete the details for Christianity.
- Prepare a verbal and visual presentation on a world religion using the eight major categories of religious traditions.
- Design a spreadsheet or database to collate information about three major world religions from the class presentations.
- Visit the sacred space of another faith. Invite a member/leader of that faith to speak with the class. Respond to this experience. Use focus questions (eg, central beliefs, rituals, ethics, sacred space, symbols, texts) and opportunities to journal.

Outcome 2 Outline the relationship the Catholic Church has with other Christian churches and other world religions

Teacher Note: Be sure to distinguish between *ecumenism* (dialogue between the Catholic Church and other Christian faiths - see Outcome 3) and *interfaith dialogue* (between the Catholic Church and non-Christian religions - Outcome 4)

- Using *Different but Alike* (Into the Deep, pp 53-56), students gather data on the Catholic Church and other Christian denominations and work through the process.
- Use the same strategy as above with the Catholic Church and other world religions.
To complement this activity, teacher input is recommended in exploring the positive developments in the changing relationships of the Catholic Church and other denominations and world religions (see Theological Background)
- Invite a clergy member or a layperson from the Catholic Church and different Christian denominations to share experiences of how and when they were confronted by differences and divisions within the Christian Tradition.
- *To Know, Worship and Love*, year 9 pp120-123 & pp138-142 explore the divisions that arose over time in Australia between Catholics and other Christian denominations. The film *Change, Challenge, Faith* (available from the Library Learning Centre) also gives a clear account (beginning at the 5:55 minute mark). Ask students to speak to family members (e.g. grandparents) regarding any experiences of religious intolerance they may have experienced in years past and report back to the class.
- Identify some of the consequences of poor relationships between different denominations. How can these relationships improve?
- Use *TKWL year 10* pp121-124 to find out about the origin of Christian churches and create a diagram to show when and why they separated from the Catholic Church or how they see themselves in relation to other Christian churches. Complete the Activity on p124.
- Research (i) recent statements by Pope Francis re ecumenism, and (ii) examples of when Pope Francis has visited / appeared with leaders of other Christian faiths. As represented by Pope Francis, what is the Catholic Church's current attitude towards other Christian religions?
- Write an historical account of the founding and establishment of one Christian denomination with special attention given to its history, significant people, points of doctrine and practice involved, and presence in the local area. This report should show evidence of fieldwork carried out by students.
- Write a dialogue between a Catholic and a member of another Christian denomination that reveals the similarities and differences between the two denominations.
- Use the internet and library resources to find examples of icons. These very distinctive images are central to the Eastern Church. Students could research the different approaches to holy images in the Eastern and Western Churches as a starting point for understanding commonalities and differences. Chapter 6 of *To Know, Worship and Love year 10* (p114) has some good material to start this study.
- Read about the official position of the Catholic Church towards non-Christian churches, particularly in *Nostra Aetate* (1965) - see for example <https://catholicoutlook.org/interfaith-dialogue-nostra-aetate/> . Again research instances of Pope Francis meeting with leaders of these faiths. What messages (explicit and implicit) do these events give?
- Research any groups in your local area who engage in ecumenical or interfaith conversations, e.g. is there a Council of Churches (ecumenical). Which religions are involved? Who represents them? What issues do they discuss. What events do they conduct?
- Research the work of the National Council of Churches by visiting their website <https://www.ncca.org.au/>
- Explore the dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry, Melbourne.
- Draw concept maps to illustrate
 - a. the relationship between the Catholic Church and other Christian churches
 - b. the relationship between the Catholic Church and other religions.
 - c. The relationship between the Catholic church and Aboriginal Spirituality. (Aboriginal Catholic Ministry-ACM)
- Write an imaginary letter of welcome to a member of a particular church or follower of a particular world religion who wishes to enrol in your school. The letter needs to convey the Catholic Church's relationship with other world religions and other Christian denominations.

Outcome 3 Examine the history of the Ecumenical movement and the processes that foster unity among Christians.

- Research Assignment: “An open door, an open table – Ecumenism in Action”. Research the ecumenical movement among Christian churches internationally in the light of this statement (this can be adapted for a variety of presentation formats).
- Construct a timeline to illustrate the history of the Ecumenical movement. Indicate by use of colour or symbol processes that are currently operating e.g. ecumenical councils.
- Is there an ecumenical or interfaith group in your community? Interview a Christian representative who has served on ecumenical committees about the history of the group and its accomplishments.
- List the types of events and processes that are employed to foster ecumenism e.g. Week of Christian Unity, World Council of Churches, World Day of Prayer. Choose one and use information posted on the web to construct a profile of the aims, purposes, vision and mission of the organization.
- Create and present a liturgy/prayer service expressing aspirations for reconciliation and unity.
- Develop a poster/collage illustrating the intentions and processes of ecumenism between the Christian Churches.
- *To Know, Worship and Love year 10* has a section (pp112-119) on the historical relationship between the Western (Roman) and Eastern Churches. Complete the activity on p115. Where is the nearest Eastern (Orthodox) church?
- Interview a family member, friend or teacher who lived through the period of the Second Vatican Council. What changes have they noticed about attitudes to other Christians?

Outcome 4 Assess the current state of the interfaith dialogue in Australia and propose ways to enhance the dialogue at the local level.

- Collect and collate newspaper articles and media images that mention issues of a person’s faith (or where a person’s religion is implicit, but not always stated). What messages and attitudes about that religion are conveyed in the articles?
- List the processes and practices of interfaith dialogue that occur at national, regional, and local levels.
- Contact local representatives of the major world religions and ask them to express their opinions on the impact of interfaith dialogue.
- Imagine you are employed as a consultant for a local interfaith group. Review the ways that formal interfaith dialogue occurs and suggest ways that it could be enhanced in your area.
- Write a letter to the editor commenting on the stereotyping of Muslims in Australia and assumptions that are commonly made. Put forward the case for greater dialogue and understanding of other religions.

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 wherever possible.

Resources

Archdiocese of Melbourne 2003 *To Know, Worship and Love* 2nd Edition, Year 9 chapter 6, James Goold House Publications

Archdiocese of Melbourne 2003 *To Know, Worship and Love* 2nd Edition, Year 10 chapter 6, p121-126, James Goold House Publications

Morrissey, J., Mudge, P. & Wilson, G. (1998). *Out of the Desert. Book 3*. South Melbourne: Pearson Education Australia Pty. Ltd.

Morrissey, J. & Mudge, P. (2000). *Out of the Desert. Book 4*. South Melbourne: Pearson Education Australia Pty. Ltd.

Understanding Faith Series. No 22. (1994). *Ecumenism & the Catholic identity* (Teachers' text). Dunedin:

Tablet Publications.

Understanding Faith Series. No. 26. Australian version. (1994). *The Church's story: The modern age*

(Teachers' text). Dunedin: Tablet Publications.

VCAA (2008) VCE study Design Religion and Society (also available on-line see below)

Wilkins, R.J. (1984). *Religions of the world*. Iowa: Win C Brown.

National Council of Churches in Australia

<http://www.ncca.org.au/>

VCAA VCE Study Design Religion and Society (2017-2022)

<https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Documents/vce/religion/2017ReligionSocietySD.pdf>

Appendices

