

YEAR LEVEL	7 & 8
TITLE	The Kingdom of God
STRAND	TRINITY
SUGGESTED DURATION	8-10 weeks (20 - 25 hours)
ENDURING QUESTIONS	Where and how do we discover God? What does God ask of me? Invite me into?



## Unit Focus

In this unit students explore some of the foundational ideas of the Kingdom of God present in our world. Students will identify realistic and practical ways in which they can live the Kingdom of God in the world today.

## Achievement Standards

By the end of Year Eight:

*Students identify how Jesus' life and teachings live out the Kingdom of God.  
They describe ways in which they can live out the Kingdom of God.*

## Unit Outcomes

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

1. Describe and explain how the concept of the Kingdom of God shaped the mission of Jesus as shown in his ministry.
2. Investigate people who bring about the Kingdom of God in the world today.
3. Reflect critically on how the Kingdom of God can be expressed in a practical way through action in the world.

## Key Understandings for Students

- The central theme and focus of Jesus' mission and ministry was bringing about the Kingdom of God.
- Jesus' ministry refers to the time he spent preaching, teaching and healing which scholars believe was approximately three years.
- A foundational principle of the Kingdom of God is that we are called to live in right relationship with God, others, creation and ourselves.
- Living in right relationship means that we know, love and worship our God in a sincere and deep manner.
- Living in right relationship also means that we respect and promote the rights of all people to quality of life and to freedom from fear, hunger, persecution and injustice. We work to create a world in which people can be all that they can be.
- When we act and live in right relationship, we are following the example of Jesus who showed us what it

means to be fully human, what it means to be a child of God.

- The Kingdom of God must come about in the whole of creation. It is not just about people. This means that we must respect and promote the right of all that exists to be what the Creator intended it to be in the act of creating.
- The Kingdom of God is a paradox. Because of Jesus' life, death and resurrection it has already come, but we also know that it will not be complete until the end of time. We fully experience the Kingdom of God when we live in eternity with God. All people who follow Jesus are called to continue to allow the Kingdom of God to shape their lives and the world.
- The Kingdom of God is about living as Jesus taught us and breaking down all barriers that stand between one person and another, all which divides "us" and "them", to bring all human beings into life-giving relationship with God and with one another.

## Student Context

Many students will be entering Catholic education for the first time and the content of religious education will be new and challenging at times. At the same time students with a Catholic primary background may have some familiarity with concepts which can be drawn upon.

Students beginning secondary school are also entering adolescence, a time of great change and uncertainty. Students are developing a more abstract rather than concrete form of thinking, assisting them to form judgements based on facts, creating their own viewpoint. Students also have the capacity to reason and reflect upon themselves and others. Utilising this capacity, students may therefore come to an increased understanding of the complexity of who God is, who they are and what the Kingdom of God means.

## Theological Background for Teachers

Below is a selection of direct quotes taken from *Inform* and some *Vatican II documents*.

- Figuring out what the gospel is asking of us remains a task for every generation. How we live a life which authentically responds to the invitation of Jesus, is a question forever fresh. There are many facets of our response to the gospel (*Inform* No. 15).
- But remember, Jesus came to bring **life**, and **life to the full** - for everyone. That was, and remains, his mission, and it is ours, too. Whatever is not life-giving needs to be challenged, measured against the love, truth, courage, and goodness of the Gospel. In other words, the good news is meant to enter into all aspects of society.
- The message of Jesus is that where God reigns it is not good enough just to love our family and friends, or even those of our own nation, race or religion. The Reign of God is about breaking down all barriers that stand between one person and another, all which divides between "us" and "them", to bring all human beings into good and life-giving relationship with God and with one another.
- The underlying principle of the Reign of God is to live according to what Jesus taught based on a personal, intimate and continuously growing relationship with God. Justice is a consequence of this.
- Synod of Bishops, **Justice in the World** (1971) calls justice a constitutive element of the Gospel and the Church's mission: stresses the preferential option for the poor and the reform of society so that all persons can participate actively in the economic, political and cultural life of their society. (*Inform* No.23 - April 1991)

## A Christian response

- We are called to continue to strive for a society of compassion, justice and good neighbourliness, so that Australia may take its place as responsible participant in the international community. (*Inform* No. 55 - August 1997)
- Jesus calls us to follow him. He urges us to share our goods with others (Mk 10), to help the person who has fallen victim at the side of the road (Lk 10), to feed the hungry and visit the prisoner (Mt 25). He asks us to forgive those who have injured us, and to do it over and over (Mt 18). He encourages us to love not just our friends but our enemies as well – those who hate us, speak ill of us, persecute us – and to do good to them (Lk 6:27). He asks us to serve one another... (Jn 13), and to seek the lowest place rather than the highest (Lk 14). In Jesus' view, it is not enough to love just family and friends, or even just those of our own nation or religion. His vision of community takes in all humanity. He seeks to break down all barriers that stand between "us" and "them," to reconcile all human beings with God and one another." (Fisher and Hart, 1995, p.8)

## Kindness

- "Saint Paul describes kindness as a fruit of the Holy Spirit (*Gal* 5:22). He ... describes an attitude that is gentle, pleasant and supportive, not rude or coarse. Individuals who possess this quality help make other people's lives more bearable, especially by sharing the weight of their problems, needs and fears. This way of treating others can take different forms: an act of kindness, a concern not to offend by word or deed, a readiness to alleviate their burdens. It involves "speaking words of comfort, strength, consolation and encouragement" and not "words that demean, sadden, anger or show scorn". Kindness frees us from the cruelty that at times infects human relationships, from the anxiety that prevents us from thinking of others, from the frantic flurry of activity that forgets that others also have a right to be happy. Often nowadays we find neither the time nor the energy to stop and be kind to others, to say "excuse me", "pardon me", "thank you". Yet every now and then, miraculously, a kind person appears and is willing to set everything else aside in order to show interest, to give the gift of a smile, to speak a word of encouragement, to listen amid general indifference. If we make a daily effort to do exactly this, we can create a healthy social atmosphere in which misunderstandings can be overcome and conflict forestalled. Kindness ought to be cultivated ... Precisely because it entails esteem and respect for others, once kindness becomes a culture within society it transforms lifestyles, relationships and the ways ideas are discussed and compared." Pope Francis *Fratelli Tutti* (2020) n. 223-224

## Holiness

- "I like to contemplate the holiness present in the patience of God's people: in those parents who raise their children with immense love, in those men and women who work hard to support their families, in the sick, in elderly religious who never lose their smile. In their daily perseverance I see the holiness of the Church militant. Very often it is a holiness found in our next-door neighbours, those who, living in our midst, reflect God's presence." Pope Francis *Gaudete et Exsultate* (2018) n.7
- "To be holy does not require being a bishop, a priest or a religious. We are frequently tempted to think that holiness is only for those who can withdraw from ordinary affairs to spend much time in prayer. That is not the case. We are all called to be holy by living our lives with love and by bearing witness in everything we do, wherever we find ourselves. Are you called to the consecrated life? Be holy by living out your commitment with joy. Are you married? Be holy by loving and caring for your husband or wife, as Christ does for the Church. Do you work for a living? Be holy by labouring with integrity and skill in the service of your brothers and sisters. Are you a parent or grandparent? Be holy by patiently teaching the little ones how to follow Jesus. Are you in a position of authority? Be holy by working for the common good and renouncing personal gain." Pope Francis *Gaudete et Exsultate* (2018) n.14

## Kingdom of God

- The terms 'reign' or 'kingdom' are important in Catholic language. The Church is often referred to as the new kingdom or new reign of God, a new Israel and new people of the Creator. Theologians continue to emphasise that the entire Christian community needs to express and re-express the good news of God's reign, as proclaimed by Jesus of Nazareth, in every time and every culture...Vatican II claimed that the church has received a mission to proclaim God's reign from the apostles. It is the duty of the entire people of God to make the Church a living reality, "a budding forth" of the dynamic event of grace called the kingdom...Vatican II noted that the church today must work to remain a visible

sign of community and Christian holiness in order to become more perfect from age to age, until the end of the world, the time in which the true reign of God will be fully realised. (*Ekstrom, 1995, p.216*)

- The spiritual dimension of human life shows that we are intimately related to each other so that anything which diminishes the integrity of one person, diminishes the well-being of humanity at large. Because God is the provident and faithful one, we too must provide for, and be faithful to, those with whom we share the earth. The Bible calls us to respond to the need of the widow, the orphan, the refugee, the outcast, the other.
- “The heavens proclaim the glory of God”, as do the seas and rivers and the seasons of the earth. Our environment matters because it carries God’s footprints. If we foul our own nest and destroy the beauty of creation, we impoverish our sense of God, and eventually weaken our respect for the human beings who are made in God’s image.
- We believe that God loved and valued the world so highly that in Jesus Christ, God became part of it. ...So Christian faith maintains that, when we build our world with respect and we see God’s presence in it, we contribute to its transformation, which has already begun in Christ.
- It involves a respectful attitude to the world, developing it wisely for the benefit of all human beings, particularly for the most deprived of our society, and seeing it as the place of Christ’s presence. (*Inform No. 30 - September 1992*)

#### **Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity *Apostolicam Actuositatem 1965***

- Christ’s redemptive work, while essentially concerned with the salvation of people, includes also the renewal of the whole temporal order. Hence the mission of the Church is not only to bring the message and grace of Christ to men but also to penetrate and perfect the temporal order with the spirit of the Gospel. (n5)
- Young persons.....heightened influence in society demands of them a proportionate apostolic activity, but their natural qualities also fit them for this activity. As they become more conscious of their own personalities, they are impelled by a zest for life and a ready eagerness to assume their own responsibility, and they yearn to play their part in social and cultural life. (n12)

#### **Dogmatic Constitution of Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum 1965***

- Christ established the kingdom of God on earth, manifested His Father and Himself by deeds and words, and completed His work by His death, resurrection and glorious Ascension and by the sending of the Holy Spirit. (n17)

#### **Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes 1965***

- ... love for God and neighbour is the first and greatest commandment. Sacred Scripture, however, teaches us that the love of God cannot be separated from love of neighbour: “If there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.... Love therefore is the fulfilment of the Law” (Rom. 13:9-10; cf. 1 John 4:20). (n24)
- He Himself revealed to us that “God is love” (1 John 4:8) and at the same time taught us that the new command of love was the basic law of human perfection and hence of the world’s transformation. (n38)
- Hence, while earthly progress must be carefully distinguished from the growth of Christ’s kingdom, to the extent that the former can contribute to the better ordering of human society, it is of vital concern to the Kingdom of God (Reign of God). (n39)

## Scripture

### Luke 4:16-21 Jesus' Mission

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed, go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

### Matthew 10:7

As you go, proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near'.

## Major Assessment Task & Rubric

i) Choose one of the following texts from scripture that illustrates Jesus' teaching about the Kingdom of God. Research the context and setting for your chosen text. Explain how the text helps you to understand how you can contribute to the Kingdom of God. (150 words)

Luke 4: 16-21

Matthew 6: 9-13

Matthew 22: 34-40

ii) Choose one simple message from Pope Francis (e.g., from his Twitter feed @Pontifex) that can be applied to your daily actions. Identify the context and setting for the message (e.g., when was it written? to what issue may Pope Francis be responding?). Explain how Pope Francis' message inspires you in making your contribution to the Kingdom of God. (150 words)

iii) Based on your written responses, create a presentation that clearly shows what actions you can take to continue the mission of Jesus in building the Kingdom of God – the focus will need to be on ACTIONS that can be performed.

Presentations need to be creative and have a strong message and impact. Format may include:

- i) PowerPoint
- ii) A3 Poster
- iii) Song and lyrics
- iv) Other (to be negotiated with teacher)

***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.***

	<b>Well above expected level</b>	<b>Above expected level</b>	<b>At expected level</b>	<b>Below expected level</b>
<b>Scripture</b>	A detailed and insightful explanation of the context of the selected text including how it highlights ways to contribute to the Kingdom of God	A reasonably detailed explanation of the context of the selected text including how it highlights ways to contribute to the Kingdom of God	Accurately explains the context of the selected text and how it highlights ways to contribute to the Kingdom of God	Lacks an explanation of the context of the text or offers
<b>Message from Pope Francis</b>	A detailed and insightful description of the context of the message and how it is inspirational	A reasonably detailed description of the context of the message and how it is inspirational	Accurately describes the context of the message and how it is inspirational	Inaccurately describes the context of the message or how it is inspirational
<b>Action</b>	Describes in detail a number of practical actions that will build the Kingdom of God	Describes in some detail a number of practical actions that will build the Kingdom of God	Describes a number of practical actions that will build the Kingdom of God	Lists one or two actions that may build the Kingdom of God
<b>Presentation</b>	Presentation shows an excellent degree of creativity, impact and attractiveness	Presentation shows a high degree of creativity, impact and attractiveness	Presentation is creative, impactful and attractive	Presentation is lacking with regard to creativity, impact or appearance

## Suggested Teaching & Learning Experiences

### Focusing Activity:

Gather the class in a close semicircle. Read the picture story book “Be Kind” by Pat Zietlow Miller to the students. The story may be viewed on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t6NUJ2Jz50>

Discuss the following questions:

How is Tanisha feeling after her accident? How do we know? Why does the girl narrating the story not laugh at Tanisha with the other students? How would you have reacted if you were one of the other students? What examples of (i) giving, (ii) helping, (iii) paying attention and (iv) speaking are mentioned in the story? What other examples of being kind are also mentioned? What does it mean to say small kindnesses can “grow into something big”?

- Luke 4: 16-21 is often described as Jesus’ mission statement. Display the text on large paper. Ask students to identify who were the poor / blind / oppressed / captives in Jesus’ time. How did Jesus respond to these people? Display the text again. Who are the poor / blind / oppressed / captive people today? How do other people respond to them with love? Is there anything the students can do for people in one of these situations? (**Appendices 1a & 1b**)
- Students begin a journal in which they can write about “Waking God” moments, that is Who was Jesus for me today? How?

- Chapter 13 in Matthew's Gospel contains many parables describing the Kingdom of God. In groups of 3 students chose one of the parables and discuss how this text describes the kingdom. Students create a collage of words, images, metaphors from the text. Display each group's work and invite each group to talk about their collage. Which collage resonates most with your image of the Kingdom of God? Why?  
**(N.B. The teacher may need to read through the chapter first with the students)**
- Revisit Appendix 1b, with a focus on what the Kingdom looks like when we continue Jesus Mission. Students create tableaux of actions that show how we contribute to the Kingdom and photograph these still frames. Display under the heading "WHAT GOD'S KINGDOM LOOKS LIKE IN OUR WORLD." Create a job profile **(Appendix 2)** with a list of characteristics that would be required in working to continue to build the kingdom of God in the world today.
- If you could create an award titled "Kingdom Person", think of someone you know that you would like to nominate for this award and write a short bio explaining how they contribute to the kingdom of God. Highlight the features of their lives that led you to nominate them for this category. Display your work through a Gallery Walk.
- In his recent writings, Pope Francis speaks about holiness and kindness as attributes to which we can aspire in order to be Kingdom people **(See Theological Background)**. Using the following quotes from Pope Francis teachers open up a discussion about what does it mean to be holy and what does it mean to be kind.

*"Often nowadays we find neither the time nor the energy to stop and be kind to others, to say "excuse me", "pardon me", "thank you". Yet every now and then, miraculously, a kind person appears and is willing to set everything else aside in order to show interest, to give the gift of a smile, to speak a word of encouragement, to listen amid general indifference."*

*"We are all called to be holy by living our lives with love and by bearing witness in everything we do, wherever we find ourselves."*

Students look at Pope Francis' Twitter feed @Pontifex for examples of simple messages that express the values and virtues that people display as Kingdom people.

- Discuss this quote by John F Kennedy: "As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them." What does this quote say to you? How can you show gratitude for what others do for you (in words or actions)? In pairs students (i) find their own quote about gratitude (or thankfulness), and (ii) write a definition of gratitude. As a class create a Gratitude Wall containing the collection of definitions and quotes.
- As a class develop 52 practical actions that you can do to express the values of the kingdom of God. Put each action onto a playing card sized piece of card and create a deck of cards called a "Year in the Kingdom of God." Each week a student pulls a card from the deck and displays the card and students agree to animate that action in their daily lives. (Place used cards in a separate box) Teacher creates a wall chart to record the weekly action and students tick when they have seen someone perform that action.
- Research monthly kindness calendar at: <https://www.actionforhappiness.org/> or [www.randomactsofkindness.org](http://www.randomactsofkindness.org)  
Set the class the challenge of performing each suggested action each day.
- Students look at their school's motto. What does this motto mean? How do we live our school motto? What values do we show when we live our school motto? How does our school motto animate the Kingdom of God? How do others in the school live out the motto? Create a word web of the students' responses with the motto

in the centre.

- Invite a guest speaker for example the Parish Priest, a Parish Pastoral Council Member, a Parishioner, to explain any of the various ministries which are undertaken in the community.
- Students participate in a formal class debate: “Some actions are more valuable than others in contributing to the Kingdom of God.”

## Prayer and Ritual

Students use the photos of their actions of the Kingdom of God.

Set up a circle of chairs.

In the centre of the circle place the images from the tableaux “What God's Kingdom Looks Like In our World.”

Students reflect silently on the images displayed.

Go around the circle, each student responds in one word what they notice from the images displayed.

The teacher or one of the students reads the below scripture.

“As you go, proclaim the good news, ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near’”. (Matthew 10.7)

Students reflect silently on the below prompts

What is the good news for me?

How am I going to live the good news?

If Jesus is sending me out as the disciples, what does that mean for me.?

How do I proclaim the good news in my words and deeds?

Song

## Appendices

Appendix 1a: The Kingdom of God

Appendix 1b: The Kingdom of God

Appendix 2: Job Profile