

YEAR LEVEL	9 and 10
TITLE	Death and New Life
STRAND	TRINITY
SUGGESTED DURATION	10 weeks (25 hours)
ENDURING QUESTIONS	Who is Jesus Christ? What does Jesus ask of me? Invite me into?



Unit Focus

In this unit students will examine the central Christian belief in the resurrection of Jesus as the foundation of Christian hope. Through a study of Church teachings on death and eternal life, students will deepen their understanding of how, for Christians, death has been transformed by Jesus. Students will develop an awareness of the grief process and examine Christian funeral rites and practices within the context of Christian hope and belief in eternal life and the Kingdom of God.

Achievement Standards

By the end of Year 10:

Students examine and analyse different images of, and insights into, the mystery of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Unit Outcomes

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

1. Examine texts that illustrate the struggles of the early Christian community to express the significance of the resurrection of Jesus.
2. Explore symbols, images and concepts from the Christian tradition that convey the Christian hope of fullness of life with God.
3. Analyse the ways in which the Christian view of human destiny is expressed in the rites and practices of Christian burial.
4. Articulate the relevance of the Easter experience, namely the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, to their own lives.

Key Understandings for Students

- Christian faith offers an inherent message of hope and optimism.
- The resurrection of Jesus is the central Christian belief.

- The New Testament texts reveal how, after Jesus' death, the Early Church community came to a new understanding of Jesus' identity, his relationship to God and his relationship to them and the whole human race.
- Jesus' presence transformed the life and relationships of the community of believers, the Church.
- Jesus' resurrection is the basis for the Christian message of the good news of salvation in Jesus as the Christ.
- 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.
- The Christian perspective helps us to explore these issues in terms of Christ's passion, death and resurrection.
- Various cultures have developed widely differing rituals to deal with the experiences of grief and loss.
- Christian funeral rites and practises have been developed within the context of Christian hope and belief in eternal life and the Kingdom of God.

Student Context

Students at this level are able to gather material from a widening range of sources and are able to test the validity of arguments. They can understand how different backgrounds and beliefs give rise to different interpretations of reality. Their capacity for introspection and insight makes them more aware of their own understandings and values, and fosters the formation of more informed opinions.

Students will have a wide range of experiences of grief and loss; teachers are recommended to ascertain these at the very start of the unit. Students at this level are capable of sensitively exploring both their own and others' experiences. While the content and perspective of this topic is Catholic teaching on life and death, the classroom environment should enable the students to develop their own informed perspective about life and its significance.

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 the 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

Lk 24: 13-35 The walk to Emmaus

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?" He asked them, "What things?" They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him." Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over." So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their

companions gathered together. They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Mk 16:1-8

Resurrection of Jesus

When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. They had been saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you." So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

Col 3:1-4 The New Life in Christ

So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.

Col 1:15-29 The Supremacy of Christ

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

And you who were once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his fleshly body through death, so as to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him— provided that you continue securely established and steadfast in the faith, without shifting from the hope promised by the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven. I, Paul, became a servant of this gospel.

Acts 2:31-36 Peter Addresses the Crowd

Foreseeing this, David spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, saying

‘He was not abandoned to Hades,

nor did his flesh experience corruption.’

This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you both see and hear. For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says,

“The Lord said to my Lord,

Sit at my right hand

Until I make your enemies your footstool.”

Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

Major Assessment Task

In groups of three, prepare a Christian liturgy on

- a situation of loss, change and grief.
- or, more specifically to celebrate the life of an imaginary person that has died.

Describe the situation and circumstances of loss and grief or the deceased person and manner of their death (eg an elderly person at the end of a full life, or life cut short). Incorporate symbols, music and images that convey the Christian hope of fullness of life with God and describe the way in which these would be used and why they have been selected. Justify your choice of scripture keeping in mind the Easter experience. Identify:

- points that a homilist might draw from scripture, or appropriate guidelines for a eulogy.

Students will be required to critically reflect on small group effectiveness and their own contributions.

After presentations, groups meet and report on group processes, creativity, thinking and methodology.

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 the Expected Level	Above the Expected Level	At the Expected Level	Below the Expected Level
Knowledge and Understanding	Demonstrates an exemplary understanding of the significance of the resurrection of Jesus	Demonstrates a clear understanding of the resurrection of Jesus	Has a good understanding of the significance of the resurrection of Jesus	Shows some understanding of the significance of the resurrection of Jesus
	Shows accurate and comprehensive knowledge of symbols, images and concepts from the Christian Tradition that express hope.	Shows a very good understanding of knowledge of symbols, images and concepts from the Christian Tradition that express hope.	Shows a good understanding of symbols, images and concepts from the Christian Tradition that express hope.	Can name some of the symbols, images and concepts from the Christian Tradition that express hope.
	Demonstrates a very high level of understanding of how ritual expresses Christian hope.	Demonstrates a high level of understanding of how ritual expresses Christian hope.	Demonstrates a good understanding of how ritual expresses Christian hope.	Has a limited understanding of how ritual expresses Christian hope.
Reasoning	Can make clear connections between scriptural accounts of the resurrection and personal experience.	Makes sound connections between scriptural accounts of the resurrection and personal experience.	Can make some connections between scriptural accounts of the resurrection and personal experience.	With assistance can make limited connections between scriptural accounts of the resurrection and personal experience.

Suggested Teaching & Learning Experiences

Outcome 1 *Examine texts that illustrate the struggles of the early Christian community to express the significance of the resurrection of Jesus.*

- Read the story in Luke 24:13-35 (the Walk to Emmaus) and, using either the KITE (Stead 1999) or composite model, students explore and name the message of the post-resurrection experience. The composite model has been further developed by Margaret Carswell (2003; page 112) and provides an excellent tool for breaking open Scripture.
- Study parallel Synoptic Gospel accounts of the Resurrection (Mk 16:1-8, Mt 28:1-10, Lk 24:1-12).
 - List five common factors found in all three Gospel accounts.
 - List at least five differences in the accounts.
 - List at least three main points that were important to the evangelists and that they all agree on, despite the differences in detail.
 - Students are asked to suggest explanations for similarities and differences.
 - Summarise the responses of disciples to the Resurrection.
 - What was the significance of the Resurrection?
 - What is its significance today?
- Through an examination of the following texts, identify the Early Church's growing understanding of the significance of the resurrection of Jesus: Col 1:25-29, Col 3:1-4, Col 1:15-20, Acts 2:31-36. Scripture Graffiti (White, Todd, O'Brien 2003 p 122-126).
- In small groups, students examine a post-resurrection story (each group uses a different gospel account). Using the composite or KITE model present to the class a dramatised telling of the story, including a story map. Explain how the community hearing each account has responded to the resurrection experience.

Outcome 2 *Explore symbols, images and concepts from the Christian tradition that convey the Christian hope of fullness of life with God.*

- Collect, read and analyse some children's stories and picture books on the topic of Jesus' passion, death and resurrection. Read the story to the class, or a younger class (if possible), and articulate the main message of the story. To what extent does the story align with the gospel story and message?
- Review selected scripture passages (as outlined in the teacher/student references) in terms of what they say to you about how followers of Jesus Christ should face: change, loss, death, grief.
- Analyse artistic representations of the Resurrection and the Early Church community across the centuries. What insights do they provide into Christian understandings of eternal life?
- In a small group, develop an advice column or talk-show scenario where Jesus gives advice about how to cope/face change, loss and death based on the Scriptures and the teachings of the Church.
- Analyse current TV dramas/soap operas, media items e.g., excerpts from TV/radio news bulletins, newspaper and periodical articles. Focus on the way that loss, change, death, grief, and hope are portrayed.
- Find images from nature that express metamorphosis. Students write creatively about such symbols as the butterfly. Create visual images that reflect new life, describe the image and propose this as a symbol of death and resurrection

Outcome 3 *Analyse the ways in which the Christian view of human destiny is expressed in the rites and practices of Christian burial.*

- Following a visit to a funeral parlour (NB: permission from parents will be a requirement), during which the Christian requirements for funerals are explained, students will report on the significance of key elements of the rite and practice of Christian burial?
- Make a collection of funeral service booklets (perhaps someone from the parish can assist). Study their similarities and differences. Identify the common core elements of a Christian funeral service.

- Using the testimony of eyewitnesses (the teacher or colleagues or capable students) who have attended religious and/or secular funeral services, compare the core elements of such occasions. Emphasise the importance of rituals and symbols to support people through times of grief.
- Students research the rituals and beliefs of other cultures regarding grief, loss, death and change.

Outcome 4 *Articulate the relevance of the Easter experience, namely the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, to their own lives.*

- Students examine beliefs about death, funerals and mourning in Aboriginal Spirituality.
- Students respond to a guest speaker from the Seasons for Growth program.
- Students respond to a guest speaker from the local parish bereavement team.
- View a video, read a story that provides a gateway/opportunity for students to explore their own experiences of change, loss or death. For example, *Bridge to Terabithia* book/movie includes an engaging look at the traditional stages of grief (Kubler-Ross). Provide an opportunity for personal reflection with journal writing on times of change, loss and death.
- Invite students to reflect on how the experience of the early Christian communities and the resurrection of Jesus can offer hope to people grieving and suffering.
- Prepare your own eulogy emphasising your attitudes and beliefs in relation to life and death, this world and after-life, grief and hope. (NB: judgement about the maturity and resilience of your group of students is required if opting to use this learning experience)

Prayer Ritual

Students prepare a liturgy covering the following aspects for their class group:

What meaning does the Easter experience, namely the life, death and resurrection of Jesus bring to these elements for Christians?

Suggest an additional or alternative element that would be meaningful for you.

Resources

Recommended Resources

Archdiocese of Melbourne (2003) 2nd edition: *To Know, Worship and Love*, James Goold House, Melbourne

Year 9 Chapter 10 *Healing and Hope: The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick*

Understanding Faith Series. Australian Edition. No. 27. (1994). *Loss, death, grief and dying*. (Student text). Dunedin: Tablet Publications.

Kubler-Ross, E. (1970). *On death and dying*. London: Routledge.

Appendices