Level: 3  
Title: CIRCLE OF LIFE  
Strand: CHRISTIAN LIFE:  
*The flourishing of human persons, the common good of societies, shared responsibility in relation to creation.*

Suggested Duration: 4 weeks

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

**Level Outcome**  
By the end of Level Three students should be able to:  
*Investigate how Christians make loving choices that are informed by the example of Jesus.*

**Unit Outcomes**  
By the end of this unit students should be able to:  
1. *Name a time of sadness in their life and identify those who helped them.*  
2. *Identify a time when Jesus experienced loss/sadness in his life.*  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRAND</th>
<th>DOCTRINAL CONCEPTS</th>
<th>CATECHISM REFERENCE</th>
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| Jesus Christ      | 1. After Jesus' death and resurrection people gathered in communities to remember him and tell the story of his compassion and love  
                   2. Jesus is fully human and divine and shares his Spirit with us.  
                   3. Jesus is the Son of God and shows us the way God wants us to live. | 767, 729, 747, 743  
                   561                                                        |
| Scripture         | 1. The Scriptures are intended to make us think about and reflect on our lives.     | 141                              |
| Christian Life    | 1. Jesus challenges us to follow his teachings and example.  
                   2. We are challenged to reflect on the ways we respond to God's love for us.  
                   4. When we use our gifts we are serving the community and helping to spread the Reign of God. | 519  
                   125                                                        1942 |
| God               | 4. God calls us to reach out in love to each other                                 | 1706, 1822                      |

**Key Understandings for Students**  
- As Christians we believe that death is not the end but the beginning of a new way of being, or new life.  
- Death/loss is a separation, but we can continue the relationship in different modes: through imagination, memory, ritual etc.  
- At every Mass we celebrate Jesus' passing from death to new life.  
- We share our gifts with others and others share theirs by offering support and love during times of sadness, trouble and loss.  
- Prayer and reflection at a time of loss helps us to accept the loss and grow through it.  
- Jesus shows us how to care for others at sad times.  
- Jesus endured much sorrow and loss in his life.  
- God is present in death, change and loss, offering us the hope of eternal life through Christ's
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.

**Curriculum Links - VELS**

**Victorian Essential Learning Standards**

The unit *Circle of Life* can be used to assess a range of VELS. The table below gives examples of how Level 3 standards could be assessed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strand</th>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Key elements of Standards Students…</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical, Personal and Social</td>
<td>Interpersonal Development</td>
<td>Building Social Relationships</td>
<td>“demonstrate respect for others and exhibit appropriate behaviour for maintaining friendships with other people. They support each other by sharing ideas and materials, offering assistance, giving appropriate feedback and acknowledging individual differences. They work with others to reduce, avoid and resolve conflict.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Working In Teams</td>
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<td>“cooperate with others in teams for agreed purposes, taking roles and following guidelines established within the task. They describe and evaluate their own contribution and the team’s progress towards the achievement of agreed goals.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Civics and Citizenship</td>
<td>Community Engagement</td>
<td></td>
<td>“contribute to the development and support of class rules and participate in school celebrations and commemorations of important events. They describe some of the roles and purposes of groups in the community. They work with other students to identify a local issue and plan possible actions to achieve a desired outcome.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interdisciplinary Learning</td>
<td>Information and Communications Technology</td>
<td>ICT for Visual Thinking</td>
<td>“use ICT tools to list ideas, order them into logical sequences, and identify relationships between them. Students retrieve their saved visualising thinking strategies and edit them for use in new, but similar situations. They explain how these strategies can be used for different problems or situations.”</td>
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<td>ICT For Creating</td>
<td>“create information products to assist in problem solving in all areas of the curriculum. With minimal assistance, students use ICT tools to capture and save images. They use simple editing functions to manipulate the images for use in their products.”</td>
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**Thinking**  
Thinking, reasoning, processing and inquiry  
"Collect information from a range of sources to answer their own and others’ questions. They question the validity of sources when appropriate. They apply thinking strategies to organise information and concepts in a variety of contexts, including problem solving activities. They provide reasons for their conclusions."

**Creativity**  
Creativity  
"Apply creative ideas in practical ways and test the possibilities of ideas they generate. They use open-ended questioning and integrate available information to explore ideas."

**Reflection, evaluation and metacognition**  
Reflection, evaluation and metacognition  
"Identify strategies they use to organise their ideas, and use appropriate language to explain their thinking. They identify and provide reasons for their point of view, and justify changes in their thinking."

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curriculum Framework Context</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
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<tr>
<td>Grief and Loss</td>
<td>Circle of Life</td>
<td>Living as Disciples</td>
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**Student Context**  
As students move through this level their understanding of themselves, their community and the wider world expands. They are less self-focused and enjoy working collaboratively.

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

**Theological Background for Teachers**

- It is necessary for teachers to be clear from the outset that the context developed through this topic for the study of the human experience of grief, loss, death, and change is from 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..."
It is this sure and certain hope of the resurrection that is the cornerstone of Catholic faith and the heart of the Good News. And it is this same hope that makes Catholic funerals paradoxically joyful celebrations, at least for those who believe. This attitude of joy and hope is not a denial of the natural feelings of grief at the loss of a relation or friend, but rather a consequence of a recognition of the validity of St Paul’s statement that “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” (Heb 11:1)

Christianity is distinctive 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 Teacher and Student References (NRSV)

Jn 11:25-26  **I am the Resurrection**
I am the resurrection if anyone believes in me even though he dies he will live, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.

Eccl 3:1-8  **Everything has its Time**
For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:

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

Lk 22:39-47  **Jesus prays on the Mount of Olives**
Jesus went out to the Mount of Olives, as he often did, and his disciples went with him. When they got there, he told them, "Pray that you won't be tested." Jesus walked on a little way before he knelt down and prayed, "Father, if you will, please don't make me suffer by having me drink from this cup. But do what you want, and not what I want." Then an angel from heaven came to help him. Jesus was in great pain and prayed so sincerely that his sweat fell to the ground like drops of blood. Jesus got up from praying and went over to his disciples. They were asleep and worn out from being so sad. He said to them, "Why are you asleep? Wake up and pray that you won't be tested."
Soon Jesus and his disciples were on their way to the town of Nain, and a big crowd was going along with them. As they came near the gate of the town, they saw people carrying out the body of a widow's only son. Many people from the town were walking along with her. When the Lord saw the woman, he felt sorry for her and said, "Don't cry!"

Jesus went over and touched the stretcher on which the people were carrying the dead boy. They stopped, and Jesus said, "Young man, get up!" The boy sat up and began to speak. Jesus then gave him back to his mother.

Everyone was frightened and praised God. They said, "A great prophet is here with us! God has come to his people."

News about Jesus spread all over Judea and everywhere else in that part of the country.

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**Suggested Assessment Tasks**

**Assessment tasks for this unit may include:**

**Outcome 1: Name a time of sadness in their life and identify those who helped them.**
- Using one of the suggested picture story books students identify the separation that takes place between the characters and how this affected the characters. Children complete a facts and feelings chart (M. Ryan Teaching the Bible p 135)
- Children draw a series of pictures that show times when they were sad, discuss what happened. Who helped them? How did they show their feelings? What were some of the things that helped ease the pain or helped them to feel better?

**Outcome 2: Identify a time when Jesus experienced loss/sadness in his life.**

**Outcome 3: Explore understandings of death/loss as a separation.**
- Using one of the suggested picture story books students identify the separation that takes place between the characters and how this affected the characters. Children complete a facts and feelings chart (M. Ryan Teaching the Bible p 135)

**Outcome 4: Respond in prayer to new understandings of loss and suffering**
- Children write a litany prayer – eg: For the times we are sad, For the times we lose ..... Creator God ........... pray for us. Loving God ............ , pray for us. (check B. Bretherton *Praying with Children* and R. Wintour *Sacred Celebrations* for examples of litanies)

N.B Outcomes 1 and 2 lend themselves to reporting in the dimension of Knowledge and Understanding.

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**Suggested Teaching & Learning Experiences**

**Focusing Activity**

Read the story “Wilfred Gordon MacDonald Partridge” and create a memory box of the story and discuss the significance of each of the items mentioned in the story.

- Teacher create a memory box to share with the children and talk about each item as they are taken from the box. e.g. a photo, a scarf, a letter, a piece of jewellery
- Create individual memory boxes with items that remind us of someone we love
- Use picture story books to introduce and explore loss, hurt, trouble separation (see reference list)
• Students make a time line of events that are significant in their family story.

• Teacher prepares a series of images and photos of nature, different stages of life that have a few thought provoking questions. eg ‘before’ and ‘after’ photos of bushfire. “Thought Sheets” (refer to icon in Planning Tool)

• Investigate the life cycle of an insect eg. Cicada. Complete a compare and contrast activity related to the life-cycle of a human.

• Watch the video of “The Lion King” and explore the feelings related to the birth of Simba, the death of Mufasa and how Simba recovered from the loss. Write a Movie review.

• Watch the video “The Fall of Freddy The Leaf: a story of life for all ages”. Discuss

• Invite the people of the Parish in who work in the Bereavement support area. Listen to how they work to help those in a time of sadness. After consulting with the parish or community Bereavement group volunteer to help with their Care program by writing cards, preparing food etc.

• Construct a word web on related words of Loss e.g. sad, lonely, angry, upset

• Explore ways in which people might cope or recover from loss. Draw on characters encountered when reading Junior fiction stories listed in the reference list.

Read Scripture Passage John 11:25-26 I am the Resurrection

• Use The Composite model approach to Scripture to engage more fully in this text. Where in the bible is the passage located? What just happened before? What happens after? Who was Jesus speaking to and why? What was he trying to say to the disciples? Role play a discussion held by the disciples after Jesus said this trying to understand what Jesus meant. Create a visual display of the text.

• Explore how the church celebrates the mystery of life and death through ritual and liturgy. eg The Eucharist- “Do this in memory of Me.”, Baptism, Anointing of the sick. Discuss the rituals that are specific to the Funeral mass.

• Invite the priest to bring some baptismal water to the class and discuss its significance in the Christian understandings of life and death.

• Plan a class liturgy where students bring an item from their “Memory box” to pray for someone they love”. Incorporate some baptismal water as symbol.

• In regular classroom prayer time remember those who have died. ANZAC Day Focus depending on time of year.

• Eccl 3:1-8 To PREPARE TO HEAR the Word - written in poetic form, takes a negative view of life which reflects the life of the Hebrew people. It is part of the Wisdom books of the Old Testament and is a ‘sort of journal on the purpose of human life’ Catholic Youth Bible NRSV

• Eccl 3:1-8 To ENCOUNTER the Word after reading the text, students complete an innovation of the text e.g. a time for…..and a time for…..

• Eccl 3:1-8 To ENCOUNTER the Word after reading the text, students listen to the song, Turn, Turn, Turn by the Byrds and identify the scripture elements

• Eccl 3:1-8 To RESPOND to the Word – participate in a Curtains Up, Curtains Down.

• Eccl 3:1-8 To RESPOND to the Word – students write their own journal about the purpose of human life, provide the following stem sentence – To live a good life I should……

Resources

For resources to support this unit, refer to the online planning tool. For additional resources, refer to the Resource Centre Catalogue: http://www.ceoballarat.catholic.edu.au and follow links to Resource Centre.