Level: 3
Title: CHRISTMAS THE MESSAGE OF JOY AND PEACE
Strand: GOD: Trinity of Persons, Creator, Communion of Love
Suggested Duration: 3 weeks

Unit Focus
In this unit students will be given the opportunity to explore Christmas as a time to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, where the main message is one of joy and peace. They will be encouraged to recognise that as members of a Christian community we are called to share this message with those in the wider world by showing goodwill to each other.

Level Outcome
By the end of Level Three students should be able to:

Understand we are created in God’s image and called to membership of a loving community.

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

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the reasons why Christians gather together and celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ.
2. Identify the various ways that families, church, and society celebrate Christmas.
3. Describe various actions that will foster the Christmas spirit of peace and joy in contemporary society.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRAND</th>
<th>DOCTRINAL CONCEPTS</th>
<th>CATECHISM REFERENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>God</td>
<td>2. The Scriptures contain many stories and images which give us some insights about the mystery of God.</td>
<td>42,214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. God calls us to reach out in love to each other.</td>
<td>1706, 1822</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church</td>
<td>1. The Church is a community of believers called to celebrates and makes present the ministry of Jesus</td>
<td>783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. The Church celebrates Jesus’ life, death and resurrection in the many feasts and seasons of the liturgical year.</td>
<td>1168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Prayer</td>
<td>1. People celebrate and pray together at different times and in different ways.</td>
<td>2660, 2691, 2720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. We honour and celebrate Mary through prayers, feasts and seasons of the Church’s liturgical year.</td>
<td>1172</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key Understandings for Students
- At Christmas Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus, God’s son and share the Christmas message of joy and peace through goodwill to all.
- Christmas is a season of joy that celebrates the story of God’s work among us.
- As Christians we are called to bring Christ’s peace and joy into the world.
- Christmas is a time to think about world issues, for example peace, and to consider how we can share the Christmas message.
Curriculum Links - VELS

The unit *Christmas The Message of Joy and Peace* 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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical, Personal and Social Learning</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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working In Teams</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<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>
</tr>
<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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thinking</td>
<td>Reasoning, processing and inquiry</td>
<td>-“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.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 meta-cognition
- "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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Getting Ready for Jesus; The First Christmas</td>
<td>Christmas the Message of Joy and Hope</td>
<td>What Was the Message of John the Baptist?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Christmas - The Promise is Fulfilled</td>
<td>The Birth of Jesus, the Messiah</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feasts of the Christmas Season</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Student Context**

As students move through Level Three their understanding of themselves, their community and the wider world expands. They are less self-focused and enjoy working collaboratively. Their reasoning ability takes an important step forward and, whilst still being very literal, they are developing the ability to understand different levels of meaning and hence appropriate symbols and symbolic actions. They have a better understanding of time and the sequence of events, therefore Scripture stories take on a new significance.

When using the Infancy Narratives in this unit the difficulty of explaining their literary forms needs to be taken into account. The emphasis should be on the cultural celebration for Christians and our identity as being part of the story of Jesus being present in the world.

**Theological Background for Teachers**

- The one to bring salvation is also called Saviour. Joseph was told that Jesus will save his people from their sins (Mt 1:21) and the angel announced to the shepherds the birth of a Saviour who is Christ the Lord. (Lk 2:12)

- The Infancy Narratives found in the gospels of Mt 1:1-2:23 and Lk 1:5-2:52 although not harmonious in every detail do agree that after being virginally conceived through the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus was born of Mary in Bethlehem.

- The coming of Jesus at the First Christmas fulfilled the Old Testament preparation and was to bring saving revelation to all peoples on earth (Mt 2:1-12; Lk 2:30-32) (O’Collins & Farrugia, 2000, p. 120).

- The celebration of Christmas as the birth of Jesus Christ on 25 December is a Church feast of Western origin that replaced the pagan feast of the Unconquered Sun and eventually became common to all Christian Churches (except Armenian). The Roman liturgy allows for Mass to be said during the night (normally at midnight), at dawn and during the day to celebrate the threefold birth of the Son – in the bosom of the Father, in the womb of Mary, and in the heart of the believer (O’Collins & Farrugia, 2000, p. 42).

- The angels announce peace as a gift of God’s favour. The Roman Emperor Augustus was revered for having established peace in the Empire in 29 BCE after a century of civil strife. But the Pax Romana is an exterior calm enforced by military power. True peace will come through Jesus (Jh 14: 27). (Karris, 2000, p. 942).

- For both the OT and NT peace is more than freedom from war (Isa 2:4; Mic 4:3; Mt 26:52) *Shalom* is the comprehensive welfare given through union with God- in particular the saving
peace associated with the Messianic Age (Isa 9: 1- 7; 11: 1- 9; 32: 15- 20) Jesus’ followers are to proclaim peace, the message of eschatological salvation (O’Collins & Farrugia, 2000, p. 195).

- Believing that the God Jesus proclaimed is good, and can do only what is good, Christians look for signs of his goodness everywhere. We believe that wherever there is goodness, there is also the influence of God who is present.

- Followers of Christ seek to discover his goodness in the beauty, life, order and harmony of creation. We seek it also in others. We know that everything that is good can reveal something new about God (Education Committee of the Australian Catholic Bishops’ Conference, 1990, pp. 227- 228).

- Christian faith is mostly about the present. It concerns God revealing himself personally today to anyone who will listen and respond. It concerns the experience of Christ as Saviour today, the Christ who is present everywhere but especially in his Church, wherever his members live and gather together in his name. He continues to dwell among people today, though under a different human form through us, the community of followers bound together by a shared faith handed down from the apostles (Education Committee of the Australian Catholic Bishops’ Conference, 1990, p. 228).

Scripture

**Teacher Reference (NRSV)**

**Eph 3:14-20 Prayer for the Readers**

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine

**Student Reference (CEV)**

**Lk 2:8-20 The Shepherds and the Angels**

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see- I am bringing good news of a great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours.”

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” So they went with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in a manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told to them.
Suggested Assessment Tasks

Assessment tasks for this unit may include:

Outcome 1   Demonstrate an understanding of the reasons why Christians gather together and celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ.
- Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper and describe the reasons why we celebrate Christmas.

Outcome 2   Identify the various ways that families, church, and society celebrate Christmas.
- Students create a collage using newspaper, magazine and other advertising material that shows how families, Church and society celebrate Christmas. The centrepiece of the poster is an acrostic poem which reflects the student’s understanding of Christmas.

Outcome 3   Describe various actions that will foster the Christmas spirit of peace and joy in contemporary society.
- Students plan a goodwill mission of peace and joy that they could undertake as part of their Christmas celebration.

N.B Outcomes 2 and 3 lend themselves to reporting in the dimension of Knowledge and Understanding.

Suggested Teaching & Learning Experiences

Focusing Activity

Display to the students different images of communication, past present and future. Invite the students to share their thoughts.

- Students explore different modes of communication over the years, paying particular attention on how messages are received and sent. Students could research about a particular mode of communication that interests them.

- Students could pay particular attention to well known symbols in the community and discuss the messages they present. Students could be asked to create their own graphic design of a message they might have for the community.

- What is the message of joy and peace that is being communicated to us in the story of the Lk 2:8-20 The Shepherds and Angels.

- Students write their own definitions of Christmas, celebrating, peace and joy.

- Use contemporary stories/videos to highlight messages of peace and hope during Christmas e.g. Dr Seuss’ The Grinch, Dicken’s Christmas Carol

- Students create a peace banner for the classroom using words and images that they feel reflect peace.

- Create a Y Chart (feels like, sounds like, looks like) about peace. (refer to icon in Planning Tool)

- In groups students collect clippings from newspapers about current world peace issues (teacher may choose to supply some articles which are at the students’ level of understanding).

- Using the PMI strategy students record their responses to the chosen article and report back to the class (Teaching Strategies Resource Book p. 58)

- Students interview four people (Vox Pop) asking the question “What is the message of Joy and Hope in Christmas?” Include photo and comments in school newsletter and or display in school foyer.

- After reading the story of the Lk 2:8-20 The Shepherds and Angels students complete Scripture Comic (Dan White Into the Deep p 114)
• After reading the story of the Lk 2:8-20 The Shepherds and Angels students complete Scripture Think pad (Dan White Into the Deep p84)

• Students write a newspaper article about the birth of Jesus. The article could particularly reflect the messages of joy and peace.

• After reading the story of the Lk 2:8-20 The Shepherds and Angels students retell the Christmas story from the perspective of one of the characters, animals or objects.

• After reading the story of the Lk 2:8-20 The Shepherds and Angels, students play Celebrity Heads (Maurice Ryan Expressions 3 p 91)

• Students participate in a classroom liturgy with its central focus being the peace and joy message of Christmas.

• Lk 2:8-20 To PREPARE TO HEAR the Word - shepherds were at the bottom of the social honour system in the Judean honour system. The message from the angel identified Jesus as Saviour, Messiah and Lord, ref: McKinnon, J. Together Towards Jerusalem

• Lk 2:8-20 To ENCOUNTER the Word after reading the text from the bible tell the story using Godly Play materials

• Lk 2:8-20 To ENCOUNTER the Word after reading text from the bible, students role play the text

• Lk 2:8-20 To RESPOND to the Word – Students record on gift cards to the members of their families how they will be messengers of peace and joy this Christmas. They could take the gift cards home and keep in a special place over Christmas.

• Lk 2:8-20 To RESPOND to the Word - Students think of ways to help spread joy and peace in their local community e.g. Food hamper, giving tree or other community service e.g. weeding gardens for the elderly.

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.