Celebrating Diversity Handbook

RME Year 1
(NOCN General Religious Education level 1)
LESSON 1: INTRODUCING DIVERSITY

Introduction

In your first year at St. Dominic’s you will follow a course in Religious & Moral Education. This qualification is accredited by the National Open College Network and each student that successfully passes the course will receive an NOCN certificate. This is a nationally recognised qualification which demonstrates that you have successfully completed a course in Religious & Moral Education. To pass the course you need to attend regularly, participate in discussion and group work and complete the written elements of the Course Handbooks. There are three Handbooks covering the topics Justice & Peace, Celebrating Diversity and Learning to Love.

Lesson Objectives

- To get to know each other and complete the RME Individual Learning Plan.
- To discuss what influences our faith backgrounds, and consider what part faith plays in our lives.
- To discuss why faith is important.

Activity 1: Icebreaker

Activity 2: RME ILP

The learning outcomes in the Celebrating Diversity Course are to:

- Increase your knowledge and understanding of religious practice in other faiths, and become more tolerant of others.
- Reflect on the big questions life and death in a variety of faith traditions.
- Bring you a deeper understanding of your own spirituality, theology and ethical viewpoints.

Complete part A of the RME Individual Learning Plan which your teacher will give you.

Activity 3: World Faiths

In pairs write down in the box below as many world religions as you can:

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<th>World Religions</th>
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Activity 4: My Faith

Q: What influences have shaped your religious beliefs? Write your faith in the box in the middle of the diagram below. Identify what you think are the major influences on your beliefs. If a major influence is not here put it in the box marked other. Then number the influences from 1 – 10 with 1 being the strongest influence.
Now split into small groups and explain your influences to the other students in your group. Are there common themes? Are you surprised by what influences others? Have any of the above factors encouraged you to move away from religious faith? Record below the biggest thing which is preventing you from developing your personal faith at the moment:

Activity 5: Plenary
Discuss the key points from the small group discussion.

Activity 6: Reflective Log
Why does the world need religious faith? Write down three reasons why you believe we need faith:

1. 
2. 
3. 

Discuss in the group.
LESSON 2 : PICK A CARD

Lesson Objectives

- To enable students from different faith backgrounds to share views and knowledge with each other.
- To show how faith is diverse yet shares very similar ideas and tenets.

Activity 1 : Diversity Cards

Your teacher will put you into groups of 5 making sure that if possible there is a variety of faith members in each group (at least one Christian, Hindu and Muslim in each group if possible). Each group nominates a leader, who gets a pack of cards. These should be shuffled and placed face down in the middle. The leader takes the first card and passes it around, the person in possession has to answer the question on the card. After each person has spoken at least one other member of the group can ask him/her a question about what he has said. Then the card is passed on to the next person to answer, and so on. Everyone has to try and ask at least one question per round.

Activity 2 : Group Discussion

Your teacher will choose some of the card topics - share your views with the whole group. What are the points of difference and similarity?

Activity 3 : Reflective Log

In the space below, record one thing you have learnt today that you didn’t know before/or record the most important thing you have learnt today.
LESSON 3 : WHAT IS GOD LIKE?

Lesson Objectives

- By using the Diamond 9 format students should be able to explore and discuss their own views on the questions ‘who is God?’ and ‘what is God like?’
- To discuss the question ‘if there only one God?’

Activity 1 : Diamond 9

Your teacher will split you into groups of 3 and give you 15 laminated cards relating to God. You must place them into a Diamond formation with what you thing is the most important statement about God at the top of the Diamond, the next two most important statements and so on until you have a Diamond 9. You must discard six statements that you feel are not true or not so important to you.

◊ ← most important
◊ ◊
◊ ◊ ◊
◊ ◊
◊ ← least important

All three of you must agree to the final Diamond 9 (make compromises if necessary).

Activity 2 : Produce a Class Diamond 9

Activity 4 : Reflective Log

In the space below write down your personal answer to the question ‘who is God and what is he like?’

Activity 5 : Group Discussion

What would you say to someone who said that ‘there is only one God, and all religions are ultimately the same’?
Lesson Objectives

- To discuss the idea of whether one faith is ‘better’ than another and whether conversion is a good idea.
- To explore the statement that ‘what matters is what a person does, rather than what faith group he or she belongs to’.

Activity 1 : The Message

- Get into groups of 4 or 5
- Read Waterboy’s Message which was recently posted on the BBC’s message board.
  
  I am a Christian but not happy.
  I have been toying with the thought of changing my religion.
  After researching lots of religions I have cut it down to just 2.
  Muslim or Buddhist? What is better?
  Thank you for giving up your time to reply.
- Each group will receive a piece of paper. You must agree a reply to the message. If there is disagreement in the group you can write 2 messages.
- Read out your messages, and discuss any issues/disagreements which arise.
- Your teacher will give you the other messages which were posted in reply. Each group must put them in order of helpfulness to Waterboy.

Activity 2 : Group Discussion

- Should he stay with the religion he was brought up with, after all we all go through ups and downs in our faith?
- Perhaps he just needs to go to a different church or maybe join a youth group?
- If God is present and alive in all faiths what kind of benefits will he get from changing religion?
- To what extent does his unhappiness come from his religion or perhaps from other things, i.e., does he need to change religion or change the way he thinks about religion? Will changing his faith make him happier?
- What about message 18 – can you ‘pledge faith in Allah whilst still following Buddhism’?
- Imagine that God is replying to Waterboy, what do you think He would say?

Activity 3 : Time to Reflect

There is much hope for Waterboy. Faith and religion are clearly important matters for him (it would be much worse if he was indifferent or apathetic to his religion, just drifting along not thinking, or having a ‘couldn’t care less’ approach). It is good to ask questions, to think, about faith. Waterboy is asking important questions, researching – he is striving to get closer to God. If he continues to be open and continues searching, and prays about his difficulties God will surely show him the right path.

Activity 4 : Reflective Log

Is it true that ‘what a person does is more important that what a person thinks or believes’?

How do you feel about mixed faith relationships?

Final Prayer

Almighty God, may we never be complacent in our faith. May your spirit burn within us, as we continue our spiritual journey through life. Reveal to us the path that will lead us closer to you and to one another. Amen.
**LESSON 5 : ASK A QUESTION**

**Learning Objectives**

- To explore and question the religious practices and beliefs of others in order to shed light on our own beliefs.

**Activity 1 : The Qur'an and the Bible**

Each of the quotations below is taken either from the Bible, or (the English interpretation of) the Qur'an. Put **B** in the box for the quotations you think come from the Bible, and **Q** in the box for the quotations from the Qur'an.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column A</th>
<th>Column B</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Nearest among them in love to the Believers will thou find those who say “We are Christians.”</td>
<td>If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.</td>
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<td>2 There is no god except one God.</td>
<td>The Lord our God is one Lord.</td>
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<td>3 He it is who created the heavens and the earth in six days.</td>
<td>In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.</td>
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<td>4 And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.”</td>
<td>Behold the angel said “O Mary, God giveth thee glad tidings of a word from Him: his name will be Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, held in honour in this world and the Hereafter and of the company of those nearest to God. He shall speak to the people in childhood and in maturity and he shall be of the company of the righteous.”</td>
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<td>5 And John bore witness: “I saw the Spirit descend as a dove from heaven, and it remained on him [Jesus]</td>
<td>We gave Jesus the son of Mary clear signs and strengthened him with the Holy Spirit</td>
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<td>6 He [Jesus] was lifted up, an a cloud took him out of their sight</td>
<td>God raised him [Jesus] up unto himself... and on the Day of Judgement he will be a witness against them [the Jews]</td>
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<td>7 And verily the hour will come: there can be no doubt about it, or about the fact that God will raise up all who are in the graves. As to the knowledge of the time, it is with God alone: I am sent only to warn plainly in public.</td>
<td>And the dead in Christ will rise first, then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds. But of that day and hour, no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.</td>
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<td>8 So woe to the worshippers who are neglectful of their prayers, those who want but to be seen of men, but refuse to supply even neighbourly needs.</td>
<td>If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them “Go in peace, be warmed and filled” without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit?</td>
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<td>9 On that day [the day of Judgement] men will proceed in companies sorted out to be shown the deeds they had done. Then shall anyone who has done an atom’s weight of good see it, and anyone who has done an atom’s weight of evil shall see it. We shall set up scales of justice for the Day of Judgement, so that not a soul will be dealt with unjustly in the least. And if there be no more than the weight of a mustard seed, We will bring it to account. Then those whose balance of good deeds is heavy – they will obtain salvation: but those whose balance is light will be those who have lost their souls: in Hell they will abide.</td>
<td>Since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, they are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood. For by his grace you have been saved through faith: and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God – not because of works, lest any man should boast</td>
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Activity 2 : Question Time

Pair of students go round the room looking at objects and pictures to do with religious beliefs. Each pair writes one question about each object or picture, and leaves the question in the envelope near picture.

Activity 3 : Discussion

Class discussion on questions left in envelopes.

Activity 4 : Hot Discussion Topics

What are your views on the controversial issues below:

1. In French schools pupils are forbidden to wear religious symbols of any sort.
2. An employee of British Airways was initially disciplined for visibly wearing a cross – BA would have been happy if she had concealed it under her shirt.
3. A Muslim teaching assistant in a Church of England primary school was sacked after she insisted on wearing a niqab, which meant that only her eyes were visible.

Questions:

➢ Which side would you support in these cases?
➢ How do your answers fit into the idea of Celebrating Diversity?

Activity 5 : Reflective Log

Write down one thing you understand about another person’s faith which you didn’t know at the start of the lesson.
LESSON 6: DIVERSITY IN RELIGION

Lesson Objectives

- To have a knowledge of the demands of religious commitment in some of the major world faiths.

As you found in Lesson 1, there are a huge number of religions practiced throughout the world. Some you may know more about than others due to friends and acquaintances you have and the culturally diverse community in which you live. This lesson intends to explore some of the lesser known religions and their beliefs/ customs.

Activity 1: Group Work

You will work in groups with information provided by your teacher on a particular religion. Read the information as a group and discuss the main factors. Your group will need to present back to the class and try to teach them at least 5 facts about a religion of which they were not aware.

Write the religion and 5 facts about it in the box below. Decide as a group how you will present back to the class.

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Activity 2: Listen to the presentations from other groups and write down one thing you learn about each different religion

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Reflection

Is there anything you like about another faith which you would like to incorporate into your own life?

Concluding thought:

*I believe in the fundamental truth of all great religions of the world. I believe that they are all God-given and I believe that they were necessary for the people to whom these religions were revealed. And I believe that if only we could all of us read the scriptures of the different faiths from the standpoints of the followers of these faiths, we should find that they were at bottom all one and were all helpful to one another.*

Mahatma Gandhi
LESSON 7 : PRAYER & WORSHIP

Lesson Objectives

- To explore personal forms of prayer and understand prayer and worship in our own and other religions.
- To compile a class multi-faith prayer book.

Activity 1 : Starter

Complete the questionnaire below with your own personal views (do this on your own, in silence).

1. My faith background is
2. How often do you pray?
3. When was the last time you prayed?
4. What prayers do you use?, e.g. set prayers or conversational prayers
5. What kind of things do you pray about?
6. How do you visualise God?
7. Do you have set times or places for prayer? Briefly explain
8. Give three reasons why you pray
   •
   •
   •
9. Do you wish that you prayed more often?
10. What is the biggest obstacle in your life to regular prayer?

Activity 2 : Discussion

Share your answers with the whole group. Further questions to explore:

- Does God always answer prayer?
- Does God answer the prayers of some people more than others?
- What is the best type of prayer?
- Can you be a person of faith and not pray at all?
- Is it better to pray on your own or with others?

Activity 3 : Worship

If there is time allow representatives of each faith to describe the ways they worship within their religion.

Activity 4 : Conclusion

Your teacher will give you a piece of paper. Write your own prayer on here and give it to the teacher. We will use the prayers in the liturgy in Lesson 10.

Additional Activity (if there is time). Students should tell the rest of the class about an important festival or period in their faith, e.g. Diwali, Ramadan, Easter.
LESSON 8: IS THERE LIFE AFTER DEATH?

Learning Objectives

- To consider views of the after life
- To explore the belief that life is eternal rather than finite

Activity 1: Starter

What do you believe happens when you die? Write down what you believe in the box below.

Activity 2: Answers

In groups of three share your answers.

Activity 3: Whole Class Plenary Discussion

Make sure you cover the following discussion points:

- Do heaven and hell exist?
- If so, who goes to hell and why?
- What do you think of the idea of reincarnation?
- Do you agree: ‘if God is all loving then he cannot send people to eternal suffering in hell’.
- ‘The soul (or spirit) goes to heaven’. What is the soul?
- Where have your ideas about death come from? Can you prove them to be true?
- ‘Hell is other people’, Jean Paul Satre. What did Satre mean by this? Was he right?
- St. Theresa of Lisieux said ‘I will spend my heaven doing good on earth’. What kind of place did she think heaven was?

Discussion Topic: How do you think your view of life after death might affect the way you behave now (in what is left of your earthly life)?

Concluding thought: In her book ‘Climbing the Mountain’, ‘Anne’ a Catholic mystic describes how she is given a foretaste of heaven by Jesus. She writes that Jesus describes heaven to her in the following way:

You can see that many of the things in heaven are similar to the things on earth in as much as these are created by Me to give joy to My children. It is all about love. My love for My children, My desire to please them and reward them, and the way My love flows through souls into each other. When you see love on earth, you know that I am present. Be at peace. This heaven has been created for all of God’s children and all will be welcomed. The only souls who will not come to heaven are those who refuse My invitation. There is no need to worry over loved ones. They are given the choice to make and most choose Me. Each soul on earth has a path that has been traced out for him. His culture, his parents, his placement in time, all of these things have been designed by Me. There are no separations in heaven so cultures and religions blend freely. There is room for each soul and the reward for each soul has been prepared by Me. Many souls on earth long for a place that feels like their home, they will find that place in heaven. They will be with their loved ones and they will be at home, more so than they were ever at home on earth.

What do you think of this description?

Final Prayer:

Do not race after riches, do not risk your life for success, or you will let slip the Heaven within you. — Taoism, Chuang Tzu 29

Lord God, teach me about you, show me your ways, guide me away from the pursuit of earthly riches, prepare me for life with you.
LESSON 9 : AGONY AUNT

Learning Objectives

- To investigate the views of others on moral issues and understand the views of different religions.
- To explore how our faith gives us guidance on moral matters.

Activity 1 : Questions

Your teacher will split you into multi-faith groups of three. Each group will be given a topic from the list below:

- Alcohol
- Abortion
- Drugs
- Divorce
- Racism
- Anger
- Jealousy
- Parental problems
- Hatred
- Pre-marital sex
- Euthanasia
- Lying
- Homosexuality
- Friendship
- Desire for money (avarice)
- Swearing
- Adultery

On your sheet you must write a question for the ‘agony aunts’. Take some time over this so that you prepare an interesting, thought provoking question. The sheet is then passed to another group who act as agony aunts and write advice on the same sheet. This is then passed back to the original group. Sheets can then be passed around and lots of answers can be provided.

Activity 2 : Discuss the Answers

What general principles did you use to provide answers? In what ways does your personal faith give you guidance on moral matters? To what extent does your moral perspective come from God?

Activity 3 : Reflective Log

If you could give just one piece of moral advice (say to your children) what would it be? Record in the box below (maximum two sentences).

Alternative Activity for this lesson (or additional if time).

In small groups act out the role play dilemmas from the cards your teacher will give you.
LESSON 10:

Lesson Objectives:

- To understand that there are many ways of finding God
- To ask God in prayer to bring us to a deeper knowledge of our faith and spirituality.

Activity 1: Starter

If God was speaking to us now, and the world was listening what would he say to us? List three things in the box below.

- 
- 
- 

Activity 2: Discussion

Discuss people’s answers, are there any common themes?

Activity 3: The Mountain (read the extract below entitled The Mountain)

Imagine a tall and beautiful mountain. When you walk around it, the mountain takes on a different shape. In fact from the side it may not look like the same mountain as the one you see from the front. From wherever you stand the mountain always looks slightly different. However, there is only one mountain. Similarly, there is only one God. No two people have exactly the same view of God, or relationship with Him, or say the same prayers, or hold the same beliefs. There are many paths up the mountain, some are long and winding, some are more direct, but ultimately we are all journeying to the same place and if we place our trust in God we will all eventually come together at the summit. When we eventually die and meet God he will not be all that concerned about the path we took up the mountain – he will want to know whether or not we got to the summit, i.e. did we learn to love God and our neighbour as ourselves. For you Christianity, or Islam or Hinduism might be the path you are taking, for you it is the easiest and best way, however this does not mean that you don’t respect religions other than your own. There are however various cults which often promise to take you up the right path, but ultimately bring you back down again.

Gandhi said “Religions are different roads converging to the same point. What does it matter that we take different roads as long as we reach the same goal? In reality there are as many different religions as there are individuals”.

Questions to ponder:

- Where are you on the mountain?
- What obstacles lie in your path?
- How will you make your way to the top?

Activity 3: ILP

Your teacher will re-issue you with the RME ILP sheet. You will be given a list of the ten lessons on the course. Please complete and return to your teacher.

Activity 4: Paraliturgy

After the paraliturgy, all say together the Unity Prayer below:

Almighty God, as we come to the end of this course, we thank you for your presence amongst us. We thank you for the many different gifts you have given to us and we ask for your help as we try to live our lives as your followers. Teach us about yourself, show us how to live, show us how to love. Guide us on our journey toward you and towards one another. Give us love, respect and tolerance towards our neighbour and drive out all hatred, greed and bitterness from our hearts. May your blessing be upon us and our loved ones now and for ever.