

October 4, 2011 Catholic Eco-Schools Newsletter Number 20

Happy St Francis Day to all.



Wall icon of St Francis, Assisi. PHOTO: Susie Weldon, ARC

And it is a good day to remember one of the most well known “sermons” given by Francis was of course not to humans, but to a flock of birds. The story is that the saint was out walking one day with his followers, and noticed that the trees were full of birds. Leaving his companions, he ran towards the birds and begged them to listen to the word of God. And as he spoke, the “birds stretched their necks and extended their wings as Francis walked among them touching and blessing them. And later the saint solicited not only birds but also all animals, and reptiles and “even creatures that have no feeling” to praise and love their Creator.”

We have had a lot of teachers say they would be interested in materials about Green Pilgrimage, so I will make sure that is one of the things I collect from our Assisi event at the beginning of November.

Today, however, I would like to pass on an article by Susan Joy St Peter’s Catholic Primary School in West Sussex, which received its Green Flag Award in October 2009. Below the article is some material from St Peter’s newsletters which is particularly relevant to St Francis Day, as it starts with a lesson about animals - not about birds exactly, but about slugs and snails.



ST PETER'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

“St Peter’s Catholic Primary School achieved its internationally recognised Eco-Schools Green Award¹ in October 2009 after eleven years of ground breaking (and back-breaking!) environmental work. Involvement in school environmental activities began mainly in the school grounds through participation in School Grounds Week². Projects included creating a Butterfly Garden, tree planting, planting up a raised flower bed and tubs with bulbs and bedding plants, creating a small meadow adjacent to the Quiet Garden, and generally becoming more aware of what might be done to encourage a caring attitude towards God’s creation.

Side by side with our activities West Sussex County Council began encouraging schools to become more energy efficient, to be involved in preparing School Travel Plans³, and to reduce and recycle paper. In order to reduce electricity and gas bills we have tried to make the school more energy efficient by installing a new boiler control to reduce wildly fluctuating temperatures within the “zoned areas” in school. We also have a “Turn it Off” policy for lights and electrical equipment, have replaced windows to prevent draughts and cut heat loss, and are hoping to put thermostats on all our radiators, as well as install photo-voltaic panels on our ideally south facing pitched roof⁴.

On the recycling front each classroom has a blue bin for used paper, photocopying is done on both sides where possible, and the school has wheelie bins for plastics, cardboard, bottles, paper; St Peter’s also recycles silver foil, mobile phones and ink cartridges. It achieved Travel Mark 2 in 2009 by participating in Walk to School Week, running a weekly walking bus, and by encouraging car sharing and cycling to school.

Pupils are actively engaged through the Eco-Committee which meets each half term. The Eco-Committee, with all classes represented, is responsible for an Eco-Code which is displayed in all classrooms, in the School Prospectus

and on the website; it also produces *Eco-News* termly which is emailed to parents to save paper.

Readers can have a tour around St Peter's by looking at our *Environmental Trail* on our website www.stpeterseastgrinstead A paper version for use by pupils, visitors, other schools, parishioners etc was launched on Wednesday 11 June 2008. The trail consists of 12 points that give information about the school focused around the built, natural and social heritage.

Being a Green Award Eco-school means that we cannot rest on our laurels and we are seeking to establish links with other schools both in the UK and abroad, meet the challenge of cutting our carbon footprint, and raising awareness of environment issues in as many ways as possible.

1. Eco-School Award is promoted by the Keep Britain Tidy group www.eco-schools.org.uk
2. School Grounds Week (13-17 June 2011) is promoted by Learning through Landscapes. www.ltl.org.uk
3. Beverly Clayden, WSCC Road Safety and School Travel Plan Adviser. beverly.clayden@westsussex.gov.uk
4. Carbon Management Team, WSCC. nicola.winsler@westsussex.gov.uk

AND SOME ARTICLES BY THE CHILDEN, PUBLISHED IN ST PETER'S ECO NEWSLETTERS

“Slugs and Snails are the enemies of all garden vegetable growers and even though you can buy slug pellets to stop them munching their way through half of your vegetable patch, you can try to use more organic ways of doing this or at least slowing them down. You could sprinkle sawdust, hair trimmings, crushed up egg shells or ashes from a fire around your plants to protect them as slugs and snails don't like moving over anything scratchy. You could also try to make your garden a friendly place for creatures that eat them. Some birds eat slugs and snails, and so do chickens, and you could have fresh eggs to eat as well. Frogs and toads and some beetles or centipedes also enjoy eating them. Planting mint or sage nearby could stop them coming near your plants as they do not like them or you could plant marigolds because they really like eating them and might eat them first! Or, you could just go out late at night with a torch and just pick them up and throw them away.” Rhianna Coxall , Year 2

St Peters also has a week every year called School Grounds Week

All the classes go outside into the school grounds to tidy, weed and generally make these areas look good. "Each class did this on a different day and we were all given our own jobs. Some children worked in the playground and the field, others in the Quiet Garden, teachers' car park and school entrance. Everything that was picked up was put into a wheel barrow (pushing this was my job.) I needed to use gardening gloves to protect my hands as lots of things I handled were sharp or prickly. My favourite part of School Grounds Week was pushing the wheel barrow around (when it was empty) and my least favourite bit was getting my legs scratched on the thorns and nettles.
Niamh Mahoney - Year 6

"My class made a Year 4 garden with pots and plants including roses, beans and pansies. We also collected dead leaves and foliage to put in the school compost heap. When it has rotted down with our fruit and veggie remains we will use the compost when planting up our allotments. Robbie Byrne, Year 4

St Peters Eco-Committee

"I have been on the Eco Committee since Year 4 and I have learnt about Fairtrade and recycling and renewable energy sources such as solar panels and wind turbines. Here at St Peter's we try to be as green as possible by monitoring how much water we use, using compost bins, recycling paper and foil, and remembering to turn off lights and electrical equipment. The main thing I will remember is when a teacher came from St Wilfrids to talk to us about Fairtrade and explained how Third World farmers benefit from it. Conor Dickson, Year 6

High Weald Heroes

St Peter's is now a High Weald Hero School. The High Weald is an amazing place for everyone to go and explore and have fun! It covers a large part of Sussex and east Kent. The High Weald has funny shaped fields, rolling hills and loads of sunken lanes. Do you know why the lanes are sunken? In the past – as long ago as 4300BC - farmers from the coast, and from the North and South Downs, would come to fatten up their pigs on acorns and beech mast in the summer and because they travelled so much along those lanes it

made them very deep. From 43AD the Romans used the High Weald to extract iron to make weapons to defend their territory and this continued until Tudor/early Stuart times. During School Grounds week a drama teacher came to St Peter's and told us all about the history of the High Weald and years 3,4 5 and 6, acted out different scenes from the past After a whole school assembly. Each child was given an Eye Spy High Weald booklet. Owen Burke Year 5 and Charlie Thorogood Year 2

Please do send information from your school - what the children are doing to learn about the environment, how information is sent around - and I'll pass it on to let other people be inspired.

Best wishes to all,

Victoria Finlay
Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC)
www.arcworld.org