

January 2012: Catholic Schools Eco Newsletter: No.21

Happy Chinese New Year! It's the year of the Dragon, and in Chinese tradition should be a successful and interesting one for all of us.

In this first Eco-Catholic schools newsletter of 2012:

- **Assisi on the GCSE Syllabus**
- **Solar panels and petitions**
- **A charming Islamic cartoon about saving water**
- **Lent ideas.**

1. Assisi on the GCSE syllabus



A couple of weeks ago I had the kind of wonderful surprise at work that makes one think "oh yes, it is all worthwhile".

A researcher from an environmental NGO called for more details of the Assisi Declarations, made 25 years ago by five faith leaders meeting in Assisi, Italy, for WWF's 25th anniversary in 1986 (with the faith element organised by Martin Palmer, now secretary-general of ARC).

"Where can I find the full declarations on the internet," she wondered. And I realised that although they had been published in several books, they actually were not downloadable in full anywhere at all. "Because they're on the GCSE syllabus, and I thought..." she said. And none of us had realised that the Assisi Declarations of faith positions on the environment (by Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish and Muslim thinkers) were indeed on the GCSE Religious Education syllabus in the UK, which is inspiring for so many reasons.

In this newsletter, therefore, I want to tell you that you can download the Declarations on our website. This is the Christian Declaration: <http://www.arcworld.org/faiths.asp?pageID=179> from which you can link to all five original Assisi declarations. In the next few months my colleague Tony Benjamin is creating a full education resource on the Declarations - the history, stories, lesson notes and photos - which will be downloadable from our site. If anyone has any questions or ideas for this please do let me know and I'll forward them.

We returned to Assisi last year for a 25 year anniversary and for the launch of the Green Pilgrimage Network, which was featured on the BBC Radio 4 Christmas edition of the Sunday programme here (<http://tinyurl.com/74qvma8>), and also in Radio 4's Beyond Belief yesterday, which you can listen to here (<http://www.arcworld.org/news.asp?pageID=517>).



2. A charming Islamic cartoon about saving water

One of the key long-term programmes launched at Assisi as part of the Green Pilgrimage Network was a Green Guide to Hajj, and another book for Muslim women called Islam and Water.

This is a Catholic Schools newsletter but many teachers I've talked to from all kinds of schools have been charmed by the short cartoon created for children, about saving water and telling the story of Hajjar, second wife of the Prophet Ibrahim, and her search for water in the desert, told as if by a British Muslim to her small son the night before they leave to go on Hajj.

It might well be a nice inspiration for a lesson plan. You can link to it from here: <http://tinyurl.com/7dmz4ok>

3. Panels and petitions

In Silicon valley, California, a couple of years ago a 7th grade class of Jewish students were so motivated about solar power that they made a report to the board of directors of their synagogue, detailing how it was true to their faith. A year later the synagogue moved to solar power.

A few miles away, the Episcopal Christ Church of Portola also went solar, and in the first year saw 50 percent savings on electricity. You can see the news story here <http://tinyurl.com/7hoglxn>

Many plans by places of worship and schools in the UK to go solar this year have foundered after the government's decision to reduce its subsidy period for feed-in tariffs with no warning. This could change after pressure from many voters (and pre-voters).

Here is the petition by churches: <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/20928>.

There is another one for schools here: <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/21193>

It has been created by Keep Britain Tidy, in the belief that the Government's proposed reduction to feed-in tariffs for solar power will damage the Eco-Schools solar programme. Keep Britain Tidy has recently set up a scheme for schools to have solar panels installed at no cost to themselves or their local authority.

"Each school could save some 25 tonnes of carbon every year, reduce their energy bill by an average 13.5% and save up to £5,000 a year... Local authorities gain from the carbon reduction

to their building stock. We call on the Government to delay the implementation of the changes, as originally planned, until 1 April 2012 and from then to introduce an enhanced feed-in tariff for schools and public buildings.”

Is your school part of this? If so, can you share with us your experience of the Eco-Schools solar programme?

4. Lent

Lent starts on February 21 this year. Some Catholic schools have had wonderful ideas about Eco-Lent. Here's the page we created a couple of years ago, including St Teresa's wonderful Lent eco-calendar: <http://www.arcworld.org/news.asp?pageID=380>,

At ARC we have cut down our high carbon travel over the past few years. This Lent our secretary-general at ARC has decided to give up flying during the seven week period. If any readers of this have ideas of what they might be doing to make Lent at their school more ecologically minded, then please let me know and I'll send out a quick newsletter before February 21 to inspire others.



The US Catholic Coalition on Climate Change recommends **Lent 4.5** from the [Passionist Earth and Spirit Center](#): a seven-week faith program offering “practical opportunities for people of faith to apply the values of Gospel simplicity to their everyday lives”. Learn more and [order resources here](#)

Each week has a different focus:

1. Week before Ash Wednesday – Christian Simplicity: Compassionate Living
2. First Week of Lent – Food: Buying and Eating are

Moral Acts

3. Second Week of Lent – Consumption: Buying Less, Wasting Less
4. Third Week of Lent – Water: Conserving and Protecting
5. Fourth Week of Lent – Energy: Choosing Efficient and Clean
6. Fifth Week of Lent – Transportation: Getting Around
7. Holy Week – Gratitude & Generosity: Becoming Involved

Do pass this on to anyone who might be interested. This is a voluntary newsletter, and it thrives on your input. If you'd like to unsubscribe do please let me know and if you can, give the reason, so we can keep making it as relevant for as many people as possible.

Until next time,

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