

Faith & Politics



A Senior Phase resource for S5/6 looking at Faith and how this can, and should affect our responsibility and opportunity to contribute positively to society.



THIS IS
our faith

RERC

THIS IS OUR FAITH PLANNING EXEMPLARS

S5/6

Core Themes:

Our civil responsibility and how a Catholic conscience influences our opportunity to respond

Suggested Timescale:

Dates:

Teacher:

Class:

TIOF SENIOR PHASE CURRICULUM:

Image of God

S5/S6 I can Describe how the Christian vision of the dignity of the human person, made in the image and likeness of God, is grounded in humanity being relational, rational, creative and having free will.

In particular:

I have explored the ways in which the Catholic Christian vision of the dignity of the human person has implications for how we respond to moral and human rights issues including: moral choices and the creation of a just society

Reign of God

S5/6 I have reflected on Church Teaching and I can describe how this has affected my understanding of my value as person, my awareness of the needs of others and my willingness to contribute to the services of the Common Good

I have considered the importance of an informed conscience. I can describe how an informed conscience affects my response and the response of others to moral issues

In particular:

I have considered how an informed conscience affects my own and others' responses to moral challenges: My positive contribution to society

KEY VERSES OF SCRIPTURE:

1 Timothy 2:1-2

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.

Titus 3:1-2

Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarrelling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people

Acts 5:29

But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men"

Matthew 22:17-21

Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why put me to the test, you hypocrites? Show me the coin for the tax." And they brought him a denarius. And Jesus said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" They said, "Caesar's." Then he said to them, "Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

KEY MESSAGES:

The purpose of this resource is to share what Scripture and Church Teaching has to say about how we respond, with positive action, to our responsibility within civil society. Does faith affect our decision-making? What should we prioritise? Why vote at all? A key message is that we don't look on voting only as a responsibility but look on it also as an opportunity. The Bible says that Mordecai, Esther's uncle, was honoured "because he worked for the good of his people" (Esther 10:3). Shouldn't we also work for the good of our nation and world?

"Sometimes we can have our identity wrapped up in an election—in something that is going to happen, or has happened, in the arena of politics. But if we, as Jesus followers, understand that above all else, who we are is who we are in Christ, then we know that no matter what side we are on regarding the political battles raging out there, our identities in him do not change"

– **Vance H Pitman**

In Fratelli Tutti, Pope Francis says that we need a better kind of politics that can rise to the huge challenge of rebuilding our common home. He calls on all Catholics to actively participate in democracy to build a fairer, peaceful and more sustainable world. Did you know that in the 2016 Scottish Parliament election over 1.8 million Scots did not bother to vote? That is almost half of all eligible voters. As Christians, our engagement in the election process only begins with voting – by asking candidates questions and getting involved in the debate we can contribute to building a better kind of politics.

Quotes from Fratelli Tutti

"When the dignity of the human person is respected, and his or her rights recognized and guaranteed, creativity and interdependence thrive, and the creativity of the human personality is released through actions that further the common good". **#22**

For many people today, politics is a distasteful word, often due to the mistakes, corruption and inefficiency of some politicians. There are also attempts to discredit politics, to replace it with economics or to twist it to one ideology or another. Yet can our world function without politics? Can there be an effective process of growth towards universal fraternity and social peace without a sound political life? **#176**

Every commitment inspired by the Church's social doctrine is "derived from charity, which according to the teaching of Jesus is the synthesis of the entire Law (cf. Mt 22:36-40)". This means acknowledging, "love, overflowing with small gestures of mutual care, is also civic and political, and it makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world". **#181**

At times, in thinking of the future, we do well to ask ourselves, “Why I am doing this?”, “What is my real aim?” For as time goes on, reflecting on the past, the questions will not be: “How many people endorsed me?”, “How many voted for me?”, “How many had a positive image of me?” The real, and potentially painful, questions will be, “How much love did I put into my work?” “What did I do for the progress of our people?” “What mark did I leave on the life of society?” “What real bonds did I create?” “What positive forces did I unleash?” “How much social peace did I sow?” “What good did I achieve in the position that was entrusted to me #197

LEARNING INTENTIONS:

I am learning:

1. That Scripture and Church Teaching has much to teach me about my role in civil society.
2. That my vote and my actions are an opportunity as well as a responsibility to make a positive contribution to society.
3. That my positive contribution to society can make a difference not only locally but also globally.
4. About SCIAF’s role and responsibility (as part of the Bishop’s Conference) to advocate for our sisters and brothers around the world living in poverty.

SUCCESS CRITERIA:

1. I can point to various pieces of Scripture and Church Teaching that encourage me to participate in and influence civil society.
2. I have taken the opportunity to participate in a campaign action and use my voice and influence as a citizen of Scotland to make a positive contribution in the world I live.
3. I have prayed for those in leadership who make important decisions that affect everyone but especially people who are most vulnerable.

PLANNING OUTLINE :

This resource is about providing material and quotes from Scripture and Church Teaching to enable pupils to critically reflect and evaluate what they see influencing them. There is no right or wrong answer in this resource, only the provision of material to aid discussion. SCIAF is part of a global movement of Christians campaigning for a just and green world. We have an opportunity and responsibility to raise up the voices of the poorest and most marginalised people around the world and challenge the unfair systems that keep them in poverty. This often takes the form of mobilising supporters in our parishes and schools to use our collective voice to influence key decision-makers like MPs and MSPs to take action for a fairer world. It can also be sending a ‘well done’ to those in positions of power when justice is delivered.

A big part of the resource will never age and that will be the discussion and thought given to Scripture and Church Teaching. This will not date; only it will change how it is read in whatever times we find ourselves in. For example, when Scripture asks us to pray for those in power (1 Timothy 2:1-2) – this will not change but those in power may change.

The current, time-limited part of this resource comes from the focus on the 2021 Scottish election. It will ask pupils to refer to the SCIAF manifesto and encourage them to take part in action to influence the commitments made by political parties and local candidates before the election. Please note that SCIAF is a-political. We work with whatever party is in power for the benefit of those we serve so be assured that we are not pushing party politics but solidarity, our Christian responsibility and the opportunity we have to make a difference.

ACTIVITIES

Use the video and pdf 'Scripture and Church Teaching' to read and hear about what Scripture and Church Teaching has to say about how we should conduct ourselves in relation to our responsibility and opportunity to positively contribute to civil society.

Ask pupils to consider the following questions as they read and listen to the quotes.

1. What does it mean?
2. What does the quote mean in action? Give some examples of what following the piece of Scripture/Church Teaching looks like in practice?
3. Can/should religion and politics go together?

Ask the pupils to write a position paper on where they stand on 'Should ones political standing be influenced by their faith (Scripture and Church Teaching)?'

You may find the following helpful from the Catholic Parliamentary Office [The Relationship Between Church and Politics](https://rcppolitics.org) – Catholic Parliamentary Office (rcppolitics.org)

Please clarify with the pupils that this not about all Christians or Catholics voting for one particular party but more about their faith affecting what they care about and what they see as important.

Christians have always been involved in politics and decision making at local, national and international levels. While they never have to verbally remind people, they are a Christian, their actions, and what is important to them is shaped by their faith and the decisions they make cannot be helped but be influenced by their faith, it is the person they are.

Direct the pupils to [Christians in Parliament](https://www.christiansinparliament.org) website to watch the video 'Why should Christians be involved in politics?'

Ask the pupils to read the pdf 'Christians in Politics' and create space to discuss their thoughts. If time permits, it would be a good piece of work for pupils to research Christian/Catholic/people of Faith in politics. They don't need to be an MSP/MP, it can be someone who has campaigned for a change in legislation for example.

To close this section watch the video 'How does your Christian/Catholic faith influence your role as a politician?'

If you have time, you may want to revisit the position paper that the pupils produced just to see if any of their thoughts had changed throughout the process of research.

TAKING ACTION

Please note that this part of the resource is relating to the Scottish 2021 election. It may still be useful to look at the manifesto mentioned after the election but the request for action will be time-bound and less relevant after the May election. Please contact SCIAF for the latest campaigns at the time of delivering this with your pupils (if after the 2021 May election).

The important thing throughout all this research and learning is that this affects the young people. The aim of this resource is to highlight the responsibility and the opportunity that they have in voting and in taking action to influence their local politician and to make their voice heard and to advocate for those not heard.

Ask the pupils to read the 'SCIAF manifesto' pdf for the Scottish election 2021. We're asking all the political parties to listen to our six-point plan for Scotland to play an active role in building a Just and Green World where no-one is left behind:

1. Transform Scotland to meet our climate targets

The science has told us that we have less than a decade to prevent the worst effects of climate change. Scotland already has some of the toughest climate targets in the world but we urgently need bold action to put us on track to meet them.

2. Build on the success of the Climate Justice Fund

It is a simple fact that the poorest people in the world bear the heaviest burden of climate change even though they did little or nothing to contribute to the problem. Scotland's Climate Justice Fund recognises our historic contribution to climate change, as one of the first countries to industrialise, by transferring wealth to poorer countries like Malawi. We should strengthen this approach by supporting more community-led projects helping those on the frontline of the crisis adapt and survive in a changing climate.

3. Hear the cry of the poor at COP26

In November, the eyes of the world will be on Scotland as Glasgow plays host to the COP26 international climate change summit. We should provide platforms for communities, civil society and national governments in the global south to meet before and during COP26 to raise up their voices and highlight their own priorities for action.

4. More support for people on the frontline of the climate crisis

Scotland's Climate Justice Fund has been frozen at £3 million for the past five years even though the impact of extreme weather events like floods and cyclones is getting worse. The next government should raise new and additional funding to increase the budget to £10 million and unleash even more support by challenging the leaders of other rich nations to follow Scotland's example.

5. Play our part in the fight against extreme poverty around the world

The pandemic has pushed millions more people around the world deeper into poverty and Scotland's International Development Fund has never been needed more. Scotland is proud to give children and families the chance of a better future and our life-saving aid budget should be protected and enhanced over the course of the next parliament.

6. Put building a Just and Green World at the heart of every decision

Our world is more inter-connected than ever before and decisions made by MSPs in Edinburgh can affect the lives of people in the world's toughest places. We need joined-up thinking to consider the short and long-term impact of our decisions, in both Scotland and elsewhere.

If the pupils are in agreement with what SCIAF propose we are asking the pupils and school staff to take part in the following action:

1. Watch our video calling on Scotland's political parties to commit to climate justice. Climate change is not a future threat for the world's poorest - it's already a matter of life and death.
2. We might not be able to march for climate justice right now but we can still show that we care. As a class, or as individuals, record your own video message telling Scotland's next group of MSPs to tell them why we need action on climate justice.
3. Share your video on social media via the school or class Twitter channel. Please use the hashtag #ClimateJusticeScot and tag in the party leaders - @NicolaSturgeon @Douglas4Moray @AnasSarwar @patrickharvie @willie_rennie
4. Don't forget to send SCIAF a copy of your video. We will compile them together and make sure that the political parties hear all the messages from young people.

PRAYER

Challenge the pupils to put 1 Timothy 2:1-2 into action and to compose and share a prayer for those in leadership, those that are making difficult decisions that impact lots of people.

You can find an example below.

Dear God, We thank you that you have given us this beautiful world to live in.
We are mindful that we often don't look after your creation and those in it.
We pray for all politicians and those in positions of power,
that they make the right decisions concerning the most vulnerable.
Help those that follow your ways, to stand up for their faith
and to make judgements that align with your will.
Give our leaders wisdom and compassion to do good work
and bring about equality.
Amen.

Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund

SCIAF is the official overseas aid and development charity of the Catholic Church in Scotland and a proud member of the Caritas family. We work to serve the poorest and most vulnerable people in the world, irrespective of their race, religion or background.
7 West Nile Street, Glasgow G1 2PR. Tel: 0141 354 5555. Scottish Charity No: SC012302. Company No: SC197327.