

Newsletter No.10

April 2009

Dear All,

What a beautiful springtime it is turning out to be: and we know from those of you we hear from, that many teachers are thinking about how pupils can better enjoy and appreciate the natural environment outside. At ARC – which works with many different faiths on the environment – we have recently been in touch with Hazon, a Jewish organisation which runs some inspiring cycle rides for young people (www.hazon.org/), and with the Daoists in China who for the first time are deciding that they'd like to run youth camps in nature, so that young people in China – so many of them living in cities now - can grow up with some ability to love nature rather than fear it.

Next term we'd love to send something out about youth camps which focus on the natural world or – even better for the focus of this newsletter – Catholic spirituality in the natural world. So please send us any ideas, thoughts, anecdotes or experiences so that we can share them out. It doesn't have to be a full camp, but perhaps walks, cycles and nature treks which have worked in your school – or which you would like to introduce.

This edition looks at:

- 1. Green Flags and Eco Carnivals: how to make an eco Brazilian carnival day at your primary school**
- 2. A new Catholic Coalition on Climate Change**
- 2. Have you considered visiting a Christian Retreat Centre? Find out how St Louis' Catholic Primary School from Frome got on when they visited Ammerdown last summer.**
- 4. St Teresa's Fairtrade Status**

1. St Bonaventure: Green Flags and Eco Carnivals

St Bonaventure's in Bristol (a green flag school) decided to celebrate Mardi Gras this year with its first ever Eco Carnival, featuring fancy dress, dance, cooking, fund-raising for CAFOD's work in Brazil, and a full timetable crash, with every pupil spending the whole day thinking, talking, learning about - and being – eco-friendly. Some of the ideas, as shared by Morwenna Thomas, Eco-schools Coordinator for St Bon's might well inspire other schools:

1. Fancy dress was all to be made of recycled materials. Children and parents were notified several weeks in advance to give them the chance to create an Eco-carnival costume. Belts were made of milk bottle lids, grass skirts out of carrier bags. Many made their costumes over half-term. Children brought money to school in order to wear their outfit and all proceeds were donated to CAFOD.

2. Everyone had the chance to learn a samba-style dance, with a half-hour session for each year group, and a special teacher brought in.
3. Cooking: Children learned traditional Brazilian recipes. Since not all could get in the cookery room on the Tuesday of Mardi Gras, the recipes cooked later in the week had to be savoury “as by then we were in Lent”!
4. Finale: At around 2:45pm everyone paraded around the playground and hall in their costumes, danced to Samba tunes, played musical instruments, waved banners and swung the poi, celebrating a day of looking after the environment, and having fun.
5. Class based activities. There was a full timetable crash for that day, with teachers choosing activities from the following list:
 - a. Making Musical Instruments out of rubbish. Shakers/maracas were made from old bottles filled with lentils/rice/grit etc. Drums can be made from old coffee tins/ice cream tubs etc and decorated.
 - b. Making banners to wave at the carnival in the afternoon or to decorate classrooms. Old carrier bags, cut up, make good streamers, ribbons.
 - c. Making Posters/Computer Screen and light switch notices. Those who do not like too much noise or mess made posters out of scrap paper to put up around the school displaying eco-messages (Turn The Lights Off. Remember to Shut Down the Computers. Use Scrap Paper Where You Can). The best ones were laminated and displayed around the school. Screen prompts were made and printed out, and given to each child to decorate.
 - d. Mask making from old cereal boxes by cutting off the back and adding to them with paper mache, and painting. Or simply cover the shiny surface with scrap paper (printed side stuck to the box) and draw on with felt tips. Make masks of Amazonian animals or see these websites for ideas: <http://masks.novica.com/brazilian-and-carnaval-masks/> www.masksoftheworld.com/SoAmerica
 - e. Face painting – good for those who don’t mind mess, are artistic with a steady hand! Go with the Amazonian themes, jungle animals etc. Artistic parent helpers are particularly enthusiastic, although some kids can be allergic so check first.
 - f. Making Poi: Ask children to bring in one pair of old (clean) socks that have no holes. Fill each sock with lentils, rice etc so they are weighty. Attach a long string on each with finger loops. Add ribbons (made from cut up plastic bags) to the bottom of each. Alternatively you can make them using small food bags or by making pouches from carrier bags and sellotaping together. This will probably be quicker. Check your class for food allergies (is anyone allergic to lentils?). Bring to the carnival in the afternoon.

- g. Speak Portuguese (from CAFOD Website). Teach the children some simple Portuguese words they can use during the carnival, for example: 'Hello' is 'Oi!' 'Welcome to our carnival!' is 'Boas vindas ao nosso carnival!' 'It's good to recycle' is 'E bem reciclar' (being checked) 'Thank you' is 'Obrigado' and 'Goodbye' is 'Ate logo'. These can also be made into a special song, written by the children.
- h. Decorating in the Class - Make an amazing collage with recycled materials from magazines, fabrics etc featuring Amazonian wildlife and plants, and indigenous people and their homes:
www.rainforestconcern.org www.tropical-forests.com
www.rainforesteducation.com
www.zoomschool.com/subjects/rainforests
- i. Make curled-up snakes for the collage or create a stand-alone snake-scene from used paper plates:
www.freekidscrafts.com/jungle.html
- j. Waste Audit Are you and your class reducing, reusing & recycling as well as you could be? Find out with the waste audit (contact St Bon's for more details).
- k. CAFOD has videos and interactive games etc. **Please watch the videos first before you show them to the class to check that they are age appropriate. Please note for example, "The Power of Carnival" refers to street children and the difficulties they face. The link for the videos about the celebration of carnival to bring communities together:**
<http://www.cafod.org.uk/extra/lent-fast-day-2009/>
- l. See www.cafod.org.uk/carnival for more ideas.

2. A new Catholic Coalition on Climate Change

A new campaign to tackle climate change by Catholics in the US has been launched in response to the Pope's call to care for creation and also from a sense of communities wishing to look after their natural environment. Pope Benedict XVI insists, ***"Before it is too late, it is necessary to make courageous decisions [to curb climate change]."***

The aim of the Catholic Climate Covenant (<http://catholicclimatecovenant.org/>) highlights the heavy impact climate change makes upon the world's poor, and encourages Catholic Individuals/Families, Parishes, Schools, and Organisations to be proactive by taking the St Francis Pledge (<http://catholicclimatecovenant.org/the-st-francis-pledge/>) to:

1. Pray on our duty to care for God's creation;
2. Learn about and educate others on the causes and moral dimensions of climate change;
3. Assess how we contribute to climate change;

4. Act to stop it, and
5. Advocate for Catholic principles in climate change decisions.

The latest feature in their campaign, which is entitled: "[Who's Under Your Carbon Footprint?](#)", will be appearing in numerous Catholic publications and websites this month and will encourage Catholics to take the St Francis Pledge. There will also be daily tips on how to reduce your carbon footprint, with stories about how others are fulfilling the St. Francis Pledge. <http://www.arcworld.org/news.asp?pageID=316> and <http://catholicclimatecovenant.org/>.

3. Primary Children visit a Christian Retreat

Last summer, school children from St Louis Catholic Primary School in Frome visited Ammerdown Christian Retreat Centre – and enjoyed the experience immensely. The following article is taken from Ammerdown Retreat's website: <http://www.ammerdown.org/localschool.htm>

"At the end of June, the Centre was filled with the chatter and laughter of 30 school children from local St Louis Catholic Primary School in Frome. The school had booked a two day retreat for pupils in Year 5 – a time to reflect on the past year and look forward to starting the next school year in a new environment, in one of Frome's middle schools.

All the pupils were asked to write a letter to the Centre telling us about the highlights of their stay. By all accounts, they all had a terrific time, helped by sunny weather on their first day. There were quite a few recurring themes in the letters we received – including the home-made ice cream with toffee or chocolate sauce, which was mentioned in nearly every letter!!!

Because the school's stay at Ammerdown coincided with the peace-building consultation on Darfur, the retreat also provided an opportunity for a 'current affairs' briefing relating to the conflict in Darfur. All the pupils were asked to make sure they did not make too much noise when passing the conference room where our Sudanese guests assembled, and they were all very good about it! Here is the letter sent to us by one of the pupils, aged 9:

Dear Ammerdown Staff,

Thank you for our stay at Ammerdown. It was the best two days of my life. The best was... well I liked all of it! I like the rooms – they were so cool and the beds are so comfy. E-suite was 'awesome'! The grounds were luxurious too. The Forest School was really fun, especially toasting the marshmallows on the fire. The sweetie reach was fun too. I hope the Sudan people have sorted it out. Yours sincerely, Ruben

Thanks, Ruben. It was a pleasure to welcome you all!"

4. St Teresa's Fairtrade Status

Finally, we end with congratulations to St Teresa's Primary School, Bristol, which gained Fairtrade Status in February. Alison Spurrell, Eco Schools Coordinator at St Teresa's sent us the good news:

"Pupils at St Teresa's Catholic Primary School, Bristol, are celebrating becoming the first primary school in Bristol to be given the status of 'Fairtrade School'. This prestigious award is the culmination of months of hard work and imagination, mainly by the pupils of Year 6. Many items of evidence were required by the Fairtrade Foundation, including lesson plans, photos of events, minutes of meetings, policies and proof that the Fairtrade message has been spread not only throughout the school, but into the wider community.

Events included sales of Fairtrade goods, the performance of a specially written 'rap' by Year 6, assemblies, the sale of our very own St Teresa's Fairtrade cotton shopping bags (a few still available at £2.50 each – please contact the school) and a presentation to other schools at the annual Fairtrade Schools Conference.

In recognition of the pupils' achievements, a group was invited to help with the launch of Fairtrade Fortnight at the Council House in Bristol. A presentation was made to the group by The Lord Mayor and Claudia Lopez, a Fairtrade Producer who visited Bristol for the 2 weeks. The group performed the 'rap' to much acclaim and were then asked to perform it on the radio! Their photo appeared in the Evening Post the following day. Pupils at the school have more activities arranged for Fairtrade Fortnight, including a cooking competition, a visit from Claudia to tell Year 6 how Fairtrade has improved her life, and the first football match with our new Fairtrade match ball. Several members of staff will be attending a Fairtrade Fashion show at Bristol Cathedral, one of several events around the city".

As always, if you would like to contribute stories about the work your schools and colleges are doing we would be delighted to share them in our newsletters, or indeed if you have any comments on the value of the newsletters, please contact: info@arcworld.org

With very best wishes,

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