

Newsletter No.5

October 2008

Hello,

As we enter a glorious autumn, we are now onto our fifth Eco Newsletter for Catholic Schools – and our second academic year.

In this edition, Mary Colwell, ARC's Catholic Programme Advisor, has written about the Sound of Many Waters Initiative which culminated in a celebration at Clifton Cathedral in early October. The story is accompanied by photographs of work produced by students from St Brendan's Sixth Form College and St Gregory's. Many thanks to Chris Hayward at St Brendan's for sharing them with us.

We also have a wonderful new museum to visit: the "Nature in Art Museum" is dedicated to work inspired by the natural environment. David Beer from St Ursula's recently visited with some students.

- 1. WALK TO SCHOOL MONTH**
- 2. SOUND OF MANY WATERS**
- 3. TRACKING BIRDS**
- 4. GARDENING AT ST TERESA'S**
- 5. ST URSULA'S – AND THE MUSEUM OF NATURE IN ART**

#### **1. WALK TO SCHOOL MONTH**

October is International Walk to School month. Last year 42 countries worldwide joined in the celebration. The aim of the walk varies in each community, but most involve messages of promoting better exercise habits while learning more about nature and conserving the planet. If you would like to know more, link here: <http://www.iwalktoschool.org/>. The site has an example from Lytchett Matravers Primary School in Dorset which has introduced a passport incentive scheme where a passport is stamped each time they walk to and from school. The surrounding area has been colour coded into zones and even children who come to school by car can now be dropped off in one of the three zones near the school to earn stamps for their passport.

The school has also marked out a "walking route" around the playground, so pupils travelling to school by bus can also participate in the scheme by walking measured distances within the playground. Children can choose from a number of different rewards, depending on how regularly they have walked to and from school and the number of points they have collected on their passports.

**The incentive scheme is funded by the local Parish Council. All Parish Councils have funding under Section 137 of The Local Government Act, which states that £5 per elector can be spent towards community projects, such as walking incentive schemes.**

Deputy Headteacher David Dorrell said: "Traffic at and around our school site has always been a problem. We have now found a way for our pupils and their parents to use their feet more and cars less all year round. Our aim is to continue to reduce traffic around the school and develop the health and fitness of children and parents!"

Please let us know if your own school has been participating, and if you have had any other good ideas, either on the practical organisation, or on incorporating Catholic teaching – particularly perhaps the teaching of St Francis that monks should be observers of nature - into the notion of walking to school and really looking at the world.

## **2. SOUND OF MANY WATERS**

Over the weekend of the 4th and 5th of October Clifton Cathedral celebrated the end of a year-long series of environmental events called Sound of Many Waters (<http://www.soundofmanywaters.org/index.html>) During the year Clifton had explored various aspects of our relationship with the natural world in a faith context. Events ranged from nature walks and talks to an evening of reflection and reconciliation, a look at the wisdom of the Saints and the involvement of local schools. Nature was high on the agenda and parishioners could go and watch the winter roost of starlings on the Somerset Levels, hear the spring dawn chorus in the Bishop's garden while children were led around the Clifton Downs for a bird walk with experts. There was also an afternoon of inter-faith dialogue between a Muslim leader, a Rabbi and Bishop Declan Lang - each leader presented their ideas on our relationship with nature in the beautiful garden of Emmaus Retreat House in Clifton.

Sound of Many Waters put the natural world and commitment to faith in the same place; no longer is the environment something that just "greenies" care about. We are all part of the natural order and depend on it for our health and well being. It was a wonderful year and we hope many other parishes and dioceses will follow suit, covering as little or as much of the events as they wish.



A stand with St Gregory's artwork produced for Clifton Cathedral's "End of Sound of Many Waters".

Parishioner and BBC producer Mary Colwell was the energising force behind the celebrations – and she is now working with ARC, and watching the Clifton eco-schools newsletters with interest to see how it can be leveraged up into a national initiative.

We are working together to create a document about Sound of Many Waters – to explore how it could be built on by other Catholic parishes and dioceses round the country, which we will alert you to, in case you want to do something at your school. But meanwhile I should like to share with you a letter Mary received from a parishioner:

*“Firstly, thank you so very much for your wonderful year for the environment. It has changed the way I look at the world, truly, and I am glad of it. The highlight for me was the Dawn Chorus day and the lunch. I think you have touched more people than you know. I think the legacy of this year is the seeds you and your colleagues have planted. They will grow. Please be encouraged by what you have achieved”.*



An example of student artwork produced for the end of “Sound of Many Waters” Celebration.

### **3. TRACKING BIRDS**

In Mary’s BBC work, she recently talked to Roy Dennis, a bird expert, who has been tracking the migration of osprey to and from Scotland for many years. Only 4 out of 10 chicks survive the migration to and from West Africa and he said on the programme that in order to keep a proper eye on how the birds will fare in the future we need to form strong links between human populations - he specifically mentioned schools - from Scotland to West Africa. We are following this up with him to try to find some specific places we could target where faith schools interested in wildlife and the environment can take up his challenge. This could also be part of the BBC’s “World on the Move” initiative, which has received huge numbers of messages from people who want to track “their” swallows, house martens, swifts etc - and linking faith schools along specific routes would be great. There is increasing concern for birds and animals as they migrate across a changing world and the dangers posed by climate change, which is affecting their staging posts and feeding areas, is becoming more and more obvious. Has your school joined “World on the Move”? Can you let us know how it is working?

### **4. ST URSULA’S – AND THE MUSEUM OF NATURE IN ART**

Pupils from St Ursula's Catholic School in Bristol enjoyed such a fabulous visit to the Nature in Art Museum in Twigworth, Gloucestershire that the school has decided to make this a regular part of the art curriculum. Pupils

were able to celebrate life on Earth, drawing from and exploring the array of art inspired by the natural world. Nature in Art is the world's first museum dedicated exclusively to fine, decorative and applied art inspired by nature. Its growing collection is housed in a fine Georgian mansion. Right now they have a show of drawings and paintings by illustrator Raymond Shephard, and a show about the River Severn, following it from its source to the sea. See [www.nature-in-art.org.uk](http://www.nature-in-art.org.uk) and please let us know if there are any other local places that other schools might find interesting.

## **5. GARDENING AT ST TERESA'S**

Finally, congratulations go to St Teresa's Primary School which won the Bristol Evening Post School Build SOS Competition in July. After submitting a bid to construct raised beds for gardening, the school then had to collect as many tokens as possible from the Evening Post. Link here for more details: <http://www.cliftodiocese.com/st-teresas-schools-win-newspaper-competition>

***We have just produced a leaflet about Catholic Eco-Schools, which you might find useful. The version attached is designed for printers with automatic borders, which most schools use. If you'd like one with a non-border format then please ask.***

***The next newsletter, in November, will take a look at some of the ideas that Catholic schools have for celebrating Advent in a way that helps creation. Please send us your ideas.***

With best wishes,

ARC  
[www.arcworld.org](http://www.arcworld.org)