**Ecological virtues in the Religious Education Directory (RED)**

|  |
| --- |
| ‘Ecological virtues’ are mentioned in the Religious Education Directory:  U3.1.4. *Describe stewardship by making simple links between Genesis 1:26-31 and people’s actions today (LS 88 on ‘ecological virtues’)*  U5.1.6. *Know that a virtue is a positive habit that helps people live a good life.*  ‘Ecological virtues’ are referred to on the following pages of the RED:   * Page 33 * Page 108 * Page 117 * Page 150   ‘Ecological virtues’ references in Laudato Si’:   * Paragraph 88   Pope Francis’ words reflect the impression made on him by the Church in Brazil. *‘The witness of the Brazilian Bishops offer us a renewed awareness of 1) the natural world as a locus of God’s presence, 2) the importance of better habits in caring for Creation to the life of virtue and 3) how the ecological crisis’ threat to life illuminates in new ways importance of the virtues recognised by Christian thinkers over the ages and the connections between them.’* |

**Ecological virtues: being kind and brave**

There are no virtues that are specifically ‘ecological’ in the teaching of the Church, however virtues are referred to as ‘stable dispositions’ that underpin a good life.

*Laudato Si’* shows how recognising God’s presence in the natural world and confronting the ecological crisis highlights the virtues in a new way.

The **4 cardinal virtues** are named as:

1. Justice - always ensuring that God, our neighbour and the earth receive their due.
2. Temperance (temperateness) – enjoying things in moderation.
3. Prudence (practical wisdom) – exercising good judgement in moral situations.
4. Fortitude (courage) – demonstrating constancy in pursuit of what’s good, overcoming temptations, obstacles and fears.

There are other virtues that relate to these four cardinal virtues. For example, different circumstances might mean that humility, generosity or compassion are required to show justice; gratitude will be necessary for temperateness; honesty and thoughtfulness for practical wisdom; industriousness (hard work) and determination for courage.

The importance of these virtues appears even clearer when we think about the ecological crisis.

For children, words like ‘**kind**’ and ‘**brave**’ can describe our responsibility for taking care of creation.

**Virtues and Genesis 1: 26-316**

Genesis 1:26-31 is the first account of the creation of human beings. It describes God granting human beings “dominion” over every living creature, with our role being “stewards” of God’s Creation. Stewards have a responsibility to care for and cultivate the earth’s goods.

Genesis paints a beautiful picture of God’s Creation. In this original gift, humanity rules over other creatures, but this is a just and peaceful rule, without competition. In contrast to later chapters of Genesis (for example, from Genesis 9 to the Covenant with Noah after the great flood), there is no need to eat other creatures and we are even given different food from them.

Around the world, we see beauty, but not harmony. We have not been virtuous stewards. We have not developed wisely and temperately but have caused the extinction of species and harmed the rich diversity of ecosystems. The story of the fall in Genesis encourages us to reflect on how a lack of gratitude for God’s gifts combined with an impatient greed, can lead to the loss of peace with the rest of the earth.

Growing in virtue, we work towards more harmonious relationships with each other, with God and with Creation.

**Ecological Virtues and Catholic Social Teaching**

These ecological virtues are deeply connected with CAFOD’s principles of CST because they:

* Emphasise a respect for all life and the inherent dignity of all human beings and living things (*Stewardship; Human Dignity*)
* Teach us that human beings have a responsibility to care for the earth and other people, especially the people and living things which are most vulnerable (*Common Good; Option for the Poor*)
* Highlight the interconnectedness of social justice and environmental sustainability (*Solidarity; Subsidiarity; Peace; Participation*)

**Summary:**

The ecological virtues are deeply rooted in the Church’s teachings on human dignity, solidarity and the common good.