

CHRISTIAN FORMATION

I. INTRODUCTION

This section of the Handbook of Religious Education focuses upon the formational component of religious education. While catechesis has enjoyed a variety of meanings throughout the history of the church, increasingly it has come to be understood as those activities pertaining to the initiation and formation of individuals and the faith community. (NCD #39)

Catechetical formation presumes a faith response to God's revelation in Christ. In faith, Christians grow in understanding their identity and destiny as sons and daughters of God. They celebrate the sacred mysteries and dedicate themselves to building up the body of Christ and continuing his mission in the world. The goal of Christian formation is continual conversion.

Family life and parish life provide the primary context for Christian formation understood as "a life-long process for the individual and a concerted pastoral activity of the Christian community." (NCD #32) Modeling, sponsorship, faith sharing and discernment are means of formation. And every family and pastoral activity has a formational dimension.

Although the parish community and family provide the primary milieu for formation, the parish school of religion and, where applicable, the Catholic School, contribute to effective Christian formation through their efforts to provide quality systematic learning. Sponsorship, faith sharing and discernment rely on a thorough knowledge of the message of faith and the traditions of the church. Thus formation and learning are interdependent, each contributing to the catechesis of an individual toward a faith that is mature, conscious and active.

II. FAMILY

The family is the domestic church. The meaning of this traditional Christian idea is that the home is the Church in miniature. The Church is the sacrament of God's love...a communion of faith and love...a mother and teacher...at the service of the whole human family as it goes forward towards its ultimate destiny. In the same way, the family is a community of life and love. It educates and leads its members to their full human maturity and it serves the good of all along the road of life. In its own way, it is a living image and historical representation of the mystery of the Church. (John Paul II quoted in *Family Perspective*, p. 21)

Definition

A family is founded on a covenant between persons. This relationship of mutual trust and loyalty is a model of faith. Existing as the first community of faith, the family is a sacramental sign to both its own members and the larger community. While it rises from the sacred union of husband and wife, it is more than just a relationship between them, for each is related to parents and other kin. These relationships and responsibilities are broadened by marriage. The blessings of children, both natural and adopted, extend the family from generation to generation.

Christian Family Catechizes the Community

The Christian family is a sacramental sign of faith, community and conversion, and it is called to go beyond itself and build up the larger society by its hospitality toward all peoples and its political involvement and activity. The family shares in the mission of the whole church of which it is a part by its efforts of evangelization and its service. (See *Family Perspective*, pp. 20-21)

While the Christian family is a bearer of the Good News to the whole world, parents have a primary responsibility toward their own children.

Families pass on to their children attitudes of awe, reverence and an appreciation for the sacredness of all life. Their expression of love enables children to give of themselves and to begin to experience the paschal mystery. It is within the family that children learn the need for forgiveness and how to forgive others. Family meals and celebrations prepare them for the eucharistic feast and the rituals of the church.

Parents Catechize Children Directly

While the most fundamental Christian formation within a family occurs spontaneously, parents are also the first teachers of their children. (NCD #25, #177) As soon as children learn to speak, they may be invited to praise God and pray for their own needs and the needs of others. Families encourage a regular prayer life by progressively inviting children to participate in the prayer and worship life of the whole family.

At an early age, children can come to know God and Jesus through the stories of our faith. Symbols and sacramentals enrich the religious life of childhood as do family celebrations of the feasts and seasons of the liturgical year. Families are also encouraged to recover the ancient tradition of blessing their own children. (See *Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers*) As children grow, the connections between events, decisions, lifestyles and the faith can be shared

with them. Parents introduce children to the wider mission of the church when they participate together in works of service and evangelization.

Family members continue to catechize each other throughout their lives as they share stories, mourn and rejoice with each other, and come together for special events, most notably for sacramental celebrations of their members.

For good or ill, children are formed by the faith and practice of their families. (Canon #226) For these reasons, families have both a right and a responsibility to be intimately involved in the catechetical preparation for and the celebration of sacraments with their children. Parents present their children for initiation into the ecclesial community when they request the sacrament of baptism for them. In this sacrament, parents accept the primary responsibility for bringing their children up to know and worship God and love their neighbors. This initiation into the body of Christ is completed in the sacraments of confirmation and eucharist each of which is preceded by a discernment of readiness and a period of immediate preparatory catechesis. With the guidance and assistance of the larger community, parents bear the primary responsibility for this discernment and catechetical formation.

III. Parish

The local parish is the context for the growth and development of the People of God. Like the family, everything the parish does catechizes. Where it places its emphasis, how it contributes and spends money, the functions it chooses to sponsor, and how its members relate to one another all give witness to an inherent value system. (See: *Adult Catechesis in the Christian Community*, #61 and *Chr. L.* #26-#27; #61)

On a more intentional level, the parish catechizes through formal instruction. It is, moreover, the privileged place where Christian formation occurs through:

- social ministry - in its outreach and mutual support;
- liturgical worship - in its celebrations, instructions, and discernment;
- enrichment programs - which contribute to the development of prayer and spirituality.

IV. Religious Education Curriculum Guidelines

The purpose of these guidelines is to identify what students should be able to do after participating in a parish catechetical program. Achieving some of these competencies requires the support and direct participation of the child's parents. The parish catechetical programs supplement and complement the parents' role as first teachers of their children. It does not and should not supplant it. The education of our children does not take place in a vacuum. Proclaiming the "*Good News*" requires the active participation of parents, as well as clergy, religious and lay catechetical leaders.

Catechesis is a lifelong process for the individual and a constant and concerted pastoral activity of the Christian community (*National Catechetical Directory*). It nurtures the faith of individuals and communities by integrating four fundamental tasks: proclaiming Christ's message (**Message**); leading people to worship and prayer (**Worship**); participating in efforts to

develop community service (**Community**); and motivating people to Christian living and service (**Service**).

To help persons responsible for religious education apply theory to the learning process for specific age groups, “thumbnail sketches” are included at the beginning of each learning level (see before Preschool, Primary, Intermediate, Junior High, and Senior High). These sketches describe the implications of systematic learning components at the PRESCHOOL (ages 3-5), PRIMARY (grades K-3), INTERMEDIATE (grades 4-6), JUNIOR HIGH (grades 7-8) and SENIOR HIGH (grades 9-12) learning levels.

A. PRESCHOOL (ages 3 - 5):

time to foster an enthusiasm and openness for God and God's creation

1. In general, learners at this age:
 - are concrete, sensate thinkers who take everything literally
 - have short attention spans (5-8 min.)
 - focus on the present (have little sense of history or time)
 - are naturally curious - like to learn
 - have strong memory skills
 - have limited verbal and motor skills
 - have active imaginations
 - may be illogical and inconsistent
 - are self-centered and have difficulty sharing
 - need to know they are special/important
 - may feel and express emotions strongly
 - need help in dealing with the unfamiliar
 - imitate significant adults
 - seek adult approval

2. Appropriate learning activities include:
 - varied activities which appeal to all five senses (music, color, etc.)
 - physical movement
 - simple "hands on" activities which are easy to complete
 - alternating periods of activity and quiet time
 - story-telling
 - frequent repetition of verses, songs and prayers

3. Key considerations of teachers at this level:
 - need to understand and like preschool children
 - need keen observation skills to compensate for limited verbal skills in children
 - need to be comfortable with non-verbal learning activities
 - need to use a consistent vocabulary limited to words that children can understand
 - questions need to be answered simply and honestly
 - preschoolers need a climate of acceptance, affirmation, welcome, comfort and security
 - need sensitivity to wide variety of family styles

MESSAGE

Upon completion children should be able to:

1. tell a story in their own words about:
 - God as loving Father (2782-2785)
 - God as Son (442-445)
 - God as Holy Spirit (683-686)
2. explain in own words what we mean when we say God made all things (295-299)
3. name ways in which Jesus shows us he is our friend
4. explain in own words why the Bible is a holy book (104)
5. draw a picture of the people of God
6. draw a picture of the house of God
7. participate in prayer with others
8. draw a picture of a person praying and listening for God
9. describe in own words:
 - why we celebrate Christmas (525)
 - why we celebrate Easter (1000)
10. name the mother of Jesus
11. explain in own words how saints are holy people (828)
12. illustrate through art/song/drama/storytelling how each person is unique and lovable
13. demonstrate in action the ability to make peace with another person
14. tell us how they take care of part(s) of God's world (plants, pets, people) (2415-2418)
15. tell someone they are sorry

WORSHIP

Upon completion children should:

1. understand prayer is a conversation with God that involves not only speaking but listening
2. experience a variety of prayer experiences to help them respond to God, by including: (2650-2672)
 - vocal prayer
 - action or dance prayer
 - signed prayer
 - sung prayer
 - silent prayer of the heart
 - litanies
 - celebrations
 - psalm responses
3. experience an atmosphere of prayer in a "Prayer Corner" where they are invited to listen, wonder, relax and reflect on the great love of God (2691)
4. be initiated into liturgy by:
 - familiarizing them with the church building and objects
 - the use of symbols, gestures, music, and rituals
 - teaching them that they may ask for and receive forgiveness
 - leading them to express gratitude
 - giving them an appreciation of silence, which they use to enter within themselves
 - leading them to participate in celebrations
 - urging them to share food with others

- helping them experience a sense of mystery and of the sacred
- teaching them reverent church behavior
- introducing them to some special feasts

COMMUNITY

Upon completion children should:

1. be familiar with the parish community through classroom visits of the parish priest, DRE and various members of the parish
2. value God's world and care for it
3. respect all people and all forms of life
4. know about Saints who showed concern for other's and God's world
5. develop social skills by participating in classroom and community events
 - parish meals
 - Christmas plays
 - group prayer
 - intergenerational activities (older students, teens, grandparents etc.)
6. take home materials to share with family members
7. know how to show kindness, forgiveness and concern for others in everyday lives through discussion and role-playing
8. be familiar with how Jesus interacted in community by:
 - caring for the sick and poor
 - attending dinners, dances, and other social events
 - his relationship with his family and friends

SERVICE

Preschool level children should be able to demonstrate that service (stewardship) is essential for Christian life by: (544; 2044-2046)

1. finding ways to help family members
2. learning to answer God's call to enjoy and care for the gifts of nature and the life and spirit of each other
3. interacting with compassion to the needs of friends
4. participating in service-oriented projects such as:
 - picking up litter
 - recycling cans and newspapers
 - visiting a nursing home
 - expressing thanks to teachers, parents and other helpers

SCRIPTURE

Upon completion children should:

1. know the Bible is a holy book that tells us about God's great love
2. treat Bible reverently
3. be familiar with key Bible stories and people

PRAYERS TO BE LEARNED

It is recommended that traditional prayers and biblical passages be committed to memory.

- Sign of the Cross
- Amen
- Sign of Peace
- Grace At Meals

VOCABULARY

Upon completion the children should:

Define the following terms in a manner appropriate to their age:

Bible	Easter	Mary	Christian
Christmas	Father	People of God	Prayer
Church	God	Jesus	
Creation	Holy Spirit	Saints	

B. PRIMARY (grades K-3)

time to discover capability to learn about God and Church

1. In general, learners at this age:
 - understand facts better than abstractions
 - have short attention spans (10-15 min.)
 - live in the present and have a poorly developed sense of time
 - are discovering they can make and learn things
 - have strong memory skills
 - have inadequate language skills to express clearly their beliefs and insights
 - are beginning to develop reading and writing skills
 - are able to describe and retell (but not analyze) stories
 - begin to develop preferred learning styles
 - begin to take limited responsibility for themselves
 - begin to develop a consistent sense of right and wrong
 - are beginning to converse and cooperate in activities
 - display uneven development of motor skills
 - like to please adults and need affirmation from adults

2. Appropriate learning activities include:
 - varied activities with clear rules
 - learning by doing
 - activities which require repetition, recall and a limited degree of application
 - stories, narration, drama
 - some reading opportunities
 - limited use of discussion
 - quiet time for reflection and prayer
 - appropriate retreat experience
 - some group activities
 - simple, brief A-V experiences
 - field trips
 - action songs
 - work with partner for brief periods

3. Key considerations for teachers at this level:
 - need to understand and like youngsters at this age level
 - need good listening skills
 - need a wide repertoire of methods to accommodate emerging learning preferences of youngsters
 - need to emphasize activities which are sensitive to the developing skills of the youngsters
 - need to emphasize that failing at a task is not the same as being a failure as a person - it is part of being a human person
 - need to introduce religious concepts in ways that carefully avoid closing off further exploration/inquiry

- need the ability to communicate simple classroom requirements and apply them fairly
- need to be comfortable with the reality that you are an influential authority figure and are viewed as spokesperson for who God is and what Church means

MESSAGE

Upon completion children should be able to:

1. state that the purpose of life, as designed by God, is to know, love and serve God and to work for and ultimately live in the Kingdom of God
2. identify that Jesus is the Son of God and their savior, friend, brother and teacher (65-67; 422-451; 517-521)
3. explain that they became members of the Church through Baptism (1234-1284; 1694)
4. identify the difference between sin, an accident and a mistake (1730-1754)
5. describe the Sacrament of Reconciliation as a celebration of God's forgiveness (1440-1449)
6. state that the bread and wine received at Mass is the Body and Blood of Jesus (1333-1344; 1374-1375)
7. describe that Jesus is present during Liturgy in four ways:
 - through the people assembled
 - through the Word of God
 - through the person of the minister
 - "most especially" (1373) through the signs of bread and wine (1372-1381)
8. examine the basic tenets of the creed (54-276)
9. say and apply the Two Great Commandments (2055; 2083)
10. describe the Church as the People of God, each member using their gifts and talents in service to the Church and world (748-801)

WORSHIP

Upon completion children should:

1. practice a variety of prayer forms guided by Catholic tradition:

• memorized (2688)	• spontaneous (2700-2701)
• song (1156-1158)	• guided images (2705-2708)
• dance and role play(2663)	• scriptural/story (2653-2654)
• gestures (2663)	• rosary (971; 2678; 2708)
• silence (2709-2724)	
1. participate in celebrations of the liturgical year:
 - Sunday Mass (Liturgy) (2174-2188)
 - Holy Days (2042-2043)
 - Special feasts/saints/Marian feasts (484-507; 963-972; 2673-2679)
2. participate in a retreat
3. participate in a celebration of God's forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation (First Reconciliation)
4. fully participate in a celebration of God's love through the Mass (First Communion)
5. plan and participate in a Eucharistic Celebration (1348-1355)

6. experience the enthronement of the Bible at the beginning of the catechetical year and maintain the presence of the Scripture in a prominent place during every catechetical session (102-103; 131-133)

COMMUNITY

Upon completion the students should:

1. be given family take-home material to encourage the domestic church (2204; 2694)
2. celebrate the parish patron saint's feast day in an age appropriate way (946-958)
3. participate in several organized events that promote social and community interaction:
 - skating party
 - picnic (family)
 - Christmas caroling
 - party/pageant/drama based on the liturgical year
 - intergenerational (older students/teen/grandparents) activities
 - field day
 - bike rides
 - sled rides
1. celebrate new members joining the community through Baptism by attending a Baptism and sending a greeting to newly baptized and/or family
2. have a party to celebrate their Baptismal anniversary

SERVICE

Primary level children should be able to demonstrate that service (stewardship) is essential for the Christian life by: (544; 2044-2046)

1. participating in several service opportunities in the parish (involving families when possible) (1716-1729; 1822-1829)
 - cards for appropriate occasions and parish needs
 - food/clothing collection and distribution
 - recycling/environmental clean-up
 - visit nursing homes, shut-ins
2. participating in service opportunities promoting global awareness (1886-1889; 1905-1917; 1928-1942)
 - Rice Bowl
 - Holy Childhood Assoc.
 - Mission Activity
 - SOME (So that Others May Eat)
 - Bread for the World
 - Crop Walk
 - Hunger Meal
3. exploring that service can be a career:
 - field trips or visitors from:
 - convent/rectory
 - soup kitchen
 - Religious Education Leaders
 - health fields
 - police/fire departments
 - nursing home
4. discussing the meaning that they derived from their service project(s)

SCRIPTURE

Upon completion students should be able to identify:

- Christmas Story
- Easter Story
- Nativity
- John the Baptist
- Last Supper
- Ascension

PRAYERS

Upon completion the student should be able to say:

- Sign of the Cross
- Our Father
- Hail Mary
- Glory Be
- Act of Contrition
- Grace at Meals
- Mass Responses

VOCABULARY

Upon completion the student should be able to:

Define the following terms in a manner appropriate to their age:

- Advent
- Angel
- Anointing of the Sick
- Annunciation
- Bible
- Catholic
- Creator
- Easter
- Eucharist
- Trinity
- Good Friday
- Gospel
- Grace
- Holy Spirit
- Jesus Christ
- Kingdom of God
- Last Supper
- Mary
- Mass
- Resurrection

C. INTERMEDIATE (grades 4-6)

time for belonging and contributing

1. In general, learners at this age:
 - are becoming logical thinkers, capable of some analysis
 - begin to understand simile
 - have rapidly developing reading skills
 - have increased attention spans
 - are developing more adequate concepts of time, space and a sense of history
 - like facts
 - are beginning to construct general concepts from particular observations
 - have more clearly defined learning preferences
 - need help to discover their own talents and develop competence
 - like teamwork
 - desire to belong to and be approved by a group of peers
 - are concerned with fairness and begin to challenge rules
 - are developing a clearer moral sense but are legalists about concepts such as sin and guilt
 - have better physical coordination and are more conscious of their bodies
 - have stronger sex-role identification
 - have a healthy curiosity about their religious roots

2. Appropriate learning activities include:
 - information gathering
 - cooperative learning/teamwork/small group activities
 - research/notation (e.g., locate chapter and verse in Bible)
 - memorization after meaning is explored
 - open-ended questions to encourage expanding religious concepts
 - appropriate retreat experiences
 - problem solving and other challenging activities
 - some work with graphs, charts and maps for older youngsters
 - interpretation of scripture stories
 - use of A-V which encourages some analysis or discovery of other conclusions to the lesson

3. Key considerations for teachers at this level:
 - teacher needs to understand and like youngsters at this level
 - limit expectations - students are just beginning to develop analytic skills
 - need to find activities which allow youngsters to demonstrate competence
 - need capacity to challenge as well as encourage
 - need a varied repertoire of teaching techniques to engage individuals with differing learning preferences
 - need to provide security without smothering initiative
 - need to reinforce the virtue of trust
 - need to provide clear rules and model fairness

- need to summarize discussions clearly without closing off the possibility of further insights into a given topic

MESSAGE

Intermediate children should be able to:

1. define grace as God's life in them (1996-2005)
2. describe that God forgives them when they offer words and signs of their sorrow and the intent to do better (1423-1424; 1846-1848)
3. explain the components of a sin (1752-1754)
4. explain that the teachings of Jesus and the Church are necessary to help them in moral decisions and to develop an informed conscience (84-95; 1749-1775; 2030-2040)
5. explain that the Sacrament of Reconciliation is recommended for those in venial sin and necessary for those in mortal sin (1456-1458)
6. explain that there are many signs of God's presence: people, places, events and things (274-379)
7. define the Church's seven Sacraments and their respective symbols (1088; 1210-1666)
8. describe a Sacrament as the celebration of the presence and action of God in word and symbol celebrated in liturgy (31-35; 54-55; 1113-1130)
9. describe the Sacraments of Initiation as Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist, and their proper sequence (1212-1284; 1322-1419; 1285-1321)
10. define the Sacraments of Healing as Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick (1422-1532)
11. define the Sacraments of Vocation as Matrimony and Holy Orders (1534-1666)
12. describe Scripture as God's revelation to us and others (36-38; 51-53; 101-108)
13. describe Scripture as a collection of various kinds of literary forms through which God communicates. Example: prose, poetry, narrative, myth, etc. (39-43; 105-119)
14. define covenant as a special loving relationship with God and God's people (301; 306-308)
15. identify covenants in the Hebrew Scriptures as they relate to our salvation history (reference: Noah, Abraham and Sarah, Moses, David) (56-64; 218-220; 488)
16. tell how Jesus fulfills the promise of the Hebrew Scriptures as related in the New Testament (128-130; 422)

WORSHIP

Intermediate level children should:

1. see themselves as full members of the liturgical assembly by:
 - a. actively participating in the liturgy of the Church (1071):
 - signs and symbols of the liturgy (1145-1152)
 - words and actions of the liturgy (1153-1155)
 - music of the liturgy (1156-1157)
 - b. experiencing and participating in a variety of liturgical prayer forms (1075):
 - Eucharistic Celebrations
 - Liturgy of the Word (1349)
 - Morning and Evening prayer (1174-1178)

Blessings (1667-1674)

Sacraments (1113)

2. have an opportunity to participate in the celebration of the Rite of Reconciliation (1422), experiencing conversion (1423), penance (1423), confession (1424), forgiveness (1424), and reconciliation (1424)
3. experience the enthronement of Scripture in the classroom/school/home (102-103; 131-133)

COMMUNITY

Intermediate level children should:

1. be given family take-home material to encourage the domestic church (2204-2694)
2. celebrate the parish patron saint's feast day in an age appropriate way (946-958)
3. participate in several organized events that promote social and community interaction:
 - skating party
 - picnic (family)
 - Christmas Caroling
 - party/pageant/drama based on the liturgical year
 - intergenerational (older students/teen/grandparent) activities
 - field day
 - bike rides
 - sled rides
1. celebrating the community by sending a message to those receiving sacraments for the first time (baptisms, weddings, confirmation, funerals)
2. have a party to celebrate their Baptismal anniversary
3. participate in a retreat (2691)

SERVICE

Intermediate level children should be able to demonstrate that service (stewardship) is essential for the Christian life by (544; 2044-2046):

1. participating in several service opportunities in the parish (involving families when possible) (1716-1729; 1822-1829)
 - cards for appropriate occasions and parish needs
 - food/clothing collection and distribution
 - recycling/environment clean-up
 - visit nursing homes, shut-ins
 - reading Scripture to shut-ins
 - assisting with Vacation Bible School
 - plan and present a Scripture enactment for younger students
 - mentoring younger students
2. participating in service opportunities promoting global awareness (1886-1889; 1905-1917; 1928-1942)
 - Rice Bowl
 - Holy Childhood Assoc.
 - Mission Activity
 - SOME (So that Others May Eat)
 - Bread for the World
 - Crop Walk
 - Hunger Meal
3. exploring that service can be a career:

field trips or visitors from:

- convent/rectory
- soup kitchen
- social agencies
- Religious Education Leaders/Youth Leaders
- health fields
- police/fire departments
- nursing home
- Catholic Charities

4. discussing the meaning, inspiration and feelings that they derived from their service project(s)

SCRIPTURE

Intermediate level children should be able to explain and locate:

- Creation (Gn 1-2)
- Adam and Eve (Gn 3)
- Noah and the Flood (Gn 6-9)
- Abraham and Sarah (Gn 12, 15, 17, 18)
- Joseph (Gn 3:40-47)
- Moses (Ex 1-15)
- Ruth and Naomi (Book of Ruth)
- David (1 Sm 17; 2 Sm 5-7)
- Solomon (1 Kgs 5-6)
- Jonah (Book of Jonah)
- John the Baptist (Mt 3:1-12)
- Annunciation (Lk 1:26-38)
- Nativity (Lk 2:1-15)
- Epiphany (Mt 2:1-12)
- Baptism of Jesus (Mt 3:13-17)
- Call of the Disciples (Mt 10:1-15)
- Feeding of the 5000 (Mt 14:13-21)
- Last Supper (Lk 22:1-13)
- Way of the Cross (Lk 23:26-31)
- Resurrection (Jn 20:1-10)
- Emmaus (Lk 24:13-35)
- Prodigal Son (Lk 15:11-32)

PRAYERS

Intermediate children should be able to pray:

- Apostles Creed
- Hail Holy Queen
- Prayer to the Holy Spirit
- Act of Faith/Hope and Charity

Also, be able to identify and demonstrate a variety of prayer forms guided by Catholic tradition:

- Memorized (2688)
- Song (1156-1158)
- Dance and role play (2633)
- Scripture/story (2653-2654)
- Silence (2709-2724)
- Spontaneous (2700-2701)
- Guided images (2705-2708)

VOCABULARY

Intermediate level children should be able to define the following terms in a manner appropriate to their age:

- Absolution
- Acts of Apostles
- Bible
- Blessed Sacrament
- Catechumen
- Chastity
- Conscience
- Consecration
- Covenant
- Easter Vigil
- Examination of Conscience
- Faith
- Good Friday
- Grace
- Great Commandments
- Hebrew Scriptures
- Holy Thursday
- Holy Saturday
- Incarnation
- Inspiration
- Lectionary
- Liturgy
- Liturgy of the Eucharist
- Liturgy of the Word
- Liturgical Year
- Lord's Supper
- Mercy
- Messiah
- Mortal Sin
- Myth
- Old Testament
- Oral Tradition
- Original Sin
- Paschal Mystery
- Passover
- Pentecost
- Rite of Christian Initiation
- Sacred Scripture
- Salvation
- Seder
- Synagogue
- Temple
- Ten Commandments
- Venial Sin
- Yahweh

D. JUNIOR HIGH LEVEL (grades 7-8)

a time of transition toward more adequate understanding of themselves and what they know and believe

1. In general, learners at this age:
 - are undergoing a marked period of physical, mental and emotional growth
 - are becoming capable of forming concepts and thinking in the abstract
 - can think chronologically
 - have a good sense of history
 - need intellectual challenges to discover their new abilities
 - think primarily about the present
 - search for a unique self-image
 - are rapidly developing in sexual awareness
 - tend to have close friendships with a select few
 - have a strong need to belong, therefore their peer group is growing in importance and peer pressure is at its height at this age
 - need to be needed
 - seek to be sincere with peers
 - experience a strong need for a firm home base
 - tend to be self-conscience
 - need to clarify right from wrong
 - question authority
 - have a strong sense of social justice but are so self-absorbed that it is difficult for them to live up to adult expectations such as selfless love for neighbor

2. Appropriate learning activities include:
 - Scripture - using the Bible as text, and study key themes
 - explore and experiment with concepts
 - brainstorming and open discussion
 - group work with clear tasks, accountability and time limits
 - audio-visuals which encourage analysis and reflection
 - appropriate retreat experiences
 - some creative writing with needed direction
 - building a more precise vocabulary of the words used by the worshipping community
 - music, drama
 - maps, charts, diagrams
 - creative art projects
 - field trips
 - some service projects/social justice issues
 - learning games
 - simulation
 - physical activity

3. Key considerations for teachers at this level:

- teacher needs to understand and like young persons at this level
- need to challenge the students to discover their analytical skills
- need to vary activities to accommodate differing learning preferences
- need to be comfortable with the need of young people to question religious understanding
- need to develop the capacity to ask clear questions
- need to include historical information in presentations
- need to be honest, fair and consistent in dealing with students
- need to provide clear, precise directions for learning activities
- need to make rules and regulations that provide security, make sense and can be reasonably explained
- need the capacity to accept negativity and opposition as characteristics of a phase which will be out grown
- need to be positive adult models for the young adolescent by showing one's own commitment in the face of ambiguity and doubt
- need to provide strong affirmation for individuals within the context of fair "ground rules" for group behavior/performance

PERSONAL GROWTH AND RELATIONSHIPS

Message: The students should:

1. study Scripture passages which describe Jesus' personal qualities in relationship with others (908; 520-521; 517; 1503-1510)
2. examine how the gifts of faith and grace effect their relationship with God, self and others (142-175; 1996-2005)
3. name their personal gifts and limitations as the basis for their ministry in the Church and world (541-550; 684; 2003)
4. compare and contrast healthy and unhealthy relationships (1606-1608; 1700-1709; 1716-1724; 1739-1742)
5. practice the skills of non-violent conflict resolution (2302-2306)

JESUS AND THE GOSPELS

Message: The students should be able to:

1. identify the Gospels as faith testimonies, not as biographical accounts
2. list some titles of Jesus (e.g., Messiah, Savior, Lord, Son of God, Son of Man, etc.) to show that Jesus is both fully human and fully divine. (65-67; 422-451)
3. discuss the person of Jesus: his values, attitudes and motives as preached through the Reign of God. (535-542)
4. discover the key themes of the Good News: God's love, God's forgiveness, prayer, service and salvation (543-560)
5. compare the fellowship of the first disciples to that of the present-day parish community (425-434; 789; 1816)

CHURCH: TO BE A CATHOLIC CHRISTIAN

Message: the students should be able to:

1. contrast Paul's vision of Church with the predominate vision of Church during the High Middle Ages, and at the time of the Reformation (75-79; 747-752; 758-776)
2. explore Vatican II's image of Church (75-79; 747-752; 758-776)
3. examine the role of the Holy Spirit as the one who guides the Church and its development (49; 737-741; 767-768)
4. describe the Eucharist as the central action of the Church (1369-1372; 1391-1461)
5. research different Christian traditions and discuss the similarities and differences of these denominations with the Catholic Church (838; 843; 845)

MORALITY AND MORAL DECISION MAKING

Message: the students should:

1. examine the Two Great Commandments, the Ten Commandments, and the Beatitudes (1716-1724; 1823-1824; 2052-2074)
2. define original sin and explore its consequences in their lives (390-397; 402-409; 416-419)

3. relate conscience, sin and reconciliation to issues of adolescent life (977-983; 1749-1750; 1776-1794)
4. examine the social nature of sin (1869)
5. learn a moral decision-making process which takes into consideration Jesus' values, Catholic Church teachings and the impact that our actions have on self and others. (84-95)

SEXUALITY

Message: The students should:

1. discover sexuality to be a central aspect of one's self-understanding (355; 368-370; 2331-2336)
2. identify that sexuality is a crucial factor in one's relationship with others and that it involves communicating one's whole being (masculine/feminine) (1005; 2332)
3. evaluate an appropriate lifestyle for a Christian as a single person, married person, priest, permanent deacon or vowed religious (897-933)
4. recognize that marriage is the appropriate context for sexual fulfillment and the family is the most basic community (1601-1658; 2360-2379)
5. research the Catholic Christian understanding of sexuality and sexual moral values (2337-2350)

JUSTICE AND PEACE

Message: The students should be able to:

1. recall all people are created in God's image (356-383)
2. study and discuss Catholic pro-life doctrine as stating the fundamental rights of every person (2258-2317)
3. study and discuss Catholic social doctrine related to responsibility for the world (stewardship) and the fundamental dignity of every person (1905-1917; 1925-1942; 2198-2424)
4. explore Jesus as a person of compassion as recounted in the New Testament (1846)
5. list ways in which prejudice and stereotyping rob people of dignity and other fundamental rights (2476-2479)

WORSHIP

Upon completion the students should:

1. participate weekly in parish weekend liturgies and celebrate the holy days of the liturgical year (2174-2188)
2. celebrate the Triduum with the parish community (1168)
3. assist in planning and celebrating a youth/parish liturgy (1348-1355)
4. plan and participate in a variety of prayer forms guided by Catholic tradition, e.g.,
 - meditation (2505-2708)
 - guided imagery (2705-2708)
 - silence and contemplation (2709-2724)

- spontaneous (2700-2701)
 - song (2702)
 - dance and drama (2703)
 - Scripture story (2653-2654)
 - Rosary (971; 2678; 2708)
5. experience a variety of Catholic devotions, e.g.,
 - Stations of the Cross (2663)
 - Forty Hours (2663)
 - Benediction (2663)
 - Liturgy of the Hours (1174-1178)
 - Marian devotions (2673-2679)
 6. plan and participate in prayer services related to the individual faith themes, their lived experience, local and world events, and their personal call to discipleship (2745)
 7. experience various styles of prayer within the retreat day (see community #3) (2691)
 8. celebrate a communal penance service with opportunity for Sacramental Reconciliation as a source of personal growth, healing and peace (1457-1458; 2042)
 9. pray with the youth community about important issues: e.g., (2745)
 - guidance in the decision making process
 - respect and dignity for all life
 - troubled/broken relationships and families in distress
 - missions, both domestic and international
 - peace: family, school, national and global
 - gratitude for the gift of sexuality

COMMUNITY

Upon completion students should:

1. take an active role in group-building activities within the youth community, e.g., icebreakers, simulation games, faith-sharing experiences and social gatherings
2. take an active role in community-building activities within the parish, e.g., parish festivals, dinners, picnics (791; 794)
3. participate in Christian fellowship through retreats (at least day-long), youth rallies, ecumenical youth activities, etc. (905; 2691)
4. invite other youth to participate in parish/Diocesan youth activities
5. have access to a yearly activity/workshop relating to family interaction, e.g., communication, conflict resolution, listening skills, adult development (2204-2231)
6. demonstrate that sharing non-threatening areas of their lives is an essential part of Christian community

SERVICE

Junior High level students should be able to demonstrate that service (stewardship) is essential for the Christian life by: (544; 2204-2246)

1. participating in acts of loving service to their family (2208)
2. ministering to the needs of peers in a manner appropriate to their talents and gifts (908-913)
3. contributing to parish programs, such as Food Pantry, Social Concerns, Liturgical Ministry, Parish Organizations, Festivals, etc. (1716-1729)

4. engaging in service to the missions and/or the needs of the local community, e.g., poor, elderly, ill, disabled, children (consider ecumenical efforts) (1822-1829: 1905-1917; 1928-1942)
5. reflecting on and discussing the service performed

VOCABULARY

The students should be able to define the following terms in a manner appropriate to their age:

- Autonomy
- Body of Christ
- Catholic
- Charity
- Church
- Conflict resolution
- Creed
- Dignity
- Disciple
- Eucharist
- Faith
- Four Marks of the Church
- Gospel
- Grace
- Independence
- Interdependence
- Lord
- Messiah
- Ministry
- Model of Faith
- New Covenant
- Non-violence
- Parish
- Reformation
- Reign of God
- Relationship
- Sacrament
- Sacraments of Healing
- Sacraments of Initiation
- Sacraments of Vocation
- Saint Paul
- Salvation
- Savior
- Self abuse
- Son of God
- Son of Man
- Vatican II
- Abortion
- Authority
- Beatitude
- Capital punishment
- Catholic social doctrine
- Celibacy
- Chastity
- Church law
- Citizen
- Compassion
- Conscience
- Culture
- Euthanasia
- Feminine
- Fundamental dignity
- Great Commandment
- Human rights
- Infatuation
- Love
- Marriage
- Masculine
- Moral decision-making process
- Mortal sin
- Ordination
- Original sin
- Prejudice
- Pro-life
- Reconciliation
- Religious life
- Sexual abuse
- Sexuality
- Social Justice
- Social Sin
- Solidarity
- Stereotype
- Stewardship
- The poor

- Venial sin

E. SENIOR HIGH LEVEL (grades 9-12)

time to develop an understanding of God and the meaning of life and faith for oneself

1. In general, learners at this age:
 - are comfortable dealing with abstract ideas
 - are learning the skills of critical reflection
 - have the ability to synthesize as well as analyze
 - are beginning to expand their perspective beyond family and peer group to the world
 - are becoming more objective
 - are becoming more stable emotionally
 - can empathize and see issues from the perspective of others
 - have definite preferences for learning styles
 - experience feelings of insecurity as they engage in new modes of thinking and develop new perspectives
 - are establishing clear personal identities
 - develop lasting friendships with members of both sexes
 - are engaged in making decisions about career choices
 - are beginning to develop an internalized morality as a pattern for living
 - are able to exercise moral judgments in matters of greater complexity
 - have an emerging capacity for adult spiritual insight

2. Appropriate learning activities include:
 - brainstorming, reflection, evaluation and application
 - case study analysis and solutions
 - discussion groups with summary and follow-up
 - creative writing
 - journal-keeping
 - interviews
 - field trips followed by interpretation and evaluation
 - research and reporting
 - guest lectures
 - role playing or simulation games
 - Bible encounters
 - audio visual with reflections
 - rock music analysis
 - exploring and addressing social justice issues
 - appropriate retreat experiences

3. Key considerations for teachers at this level:
 - need to understand and like older adolescents
 - need to present issues of faith in ways that are attractive to thinking persons
 - need to be comfortable responding to questions about religious matters
 - need to help youth critique their thinking rather than censure youth
 - need to help youth critique their culture and its many expressions in music, video, clothing, etc.

- need to provide educational activities which allow young persons to analyze situations, look for new sources of information and make judgments based on evidence
- need to let older adolescents have specific input into their learning activities
- need to present a consistent value system
- need to avoid moral clichés, lectures and “because it is law” response to moral behavior
- need to help youth understand that freedom is not an absolute and that their rights and desires are limited by God’s will and the rights of others
- need to support the search for meaningful personal identity
- need to be comfortable with a variety of learning experiences
- need to be a credible model of discipleship
- need to relate the gospel message in language and images which are understandable to youth without diluting one’s adult faith stance

FAITH AND IDENTITY

Message: The students are expected to:

1. explore that each person is made in the image of a God who loves us unconditionally (355-379)
2. describe Jesus' vision of what it means to be fully human as articulated in the Beatitudes (1716-1724)
3. identify their talents and gifts (791; 794)
4. identify the positive and negative influences of relationships, peer groups and culture on self image and Catholic Christian identity (154)
5. recognize the teaching role of the Church through the Pope, Bishops and Councils as an authoritative guide for faith development (874-896)
6. distinguish the difference between external practice (rituals) and internal faith and identify the relationship (748; 836-838; 2104-2109)

HEBREW SCRIPTURE/OLD TESTAMENT

Message: The students should:

1. explore the Bible as a sacred book of God's self-revelation (101-133)
2. study elements of the literary development of the Old Testament (115-123)
3. relate the two ways God is revealed to us: Tradition and Scripture (80-84; 95; 781)
4. describe the concept of covenant as the central theme of the Old Testament (2056-2063)
5. identify major themes of the Hebrew Scriptures such as God's promise of a Redeemer, the equality of all men and women, social justice, covenant relationship and movement from slavery to freedom (53-64; 121-122; 2568-2589)
6. study the lives of major Old Testament persons (145-147)

JESUS AND THE GOSPELS

Message: The students will:

1. study/review the tools for biblical study and examine the construction of the New Testament (76; 101-102; 124-130)
2. review Jesus as the fulfillment of God's revelation and the realization of the New Covenant (128-130; 422-424; 652)
3. define Jesus as the fully divine Word of God and fully human through his Incarnation (120; 422-424)
4. explore the titles of Jesus, e.g., Messiah, Savior, Lord, Son of God, Son of Man, etc. (430-451)
5. interpret the events of the Paschal Mystery as the reality of freedom from sin and death, freedom from self in Christ, freedom from the old Law (571-591; 599-618; 908; 1741)
6. explore the political and religious setting in which Jesus lived (527; 531; 535; 574-591; 595-597)

JUSTICE AND PEACE

Message: The students should:

1. relate social justice to the Gospel command to love (1889; 1897-1917)
2. recognize that the sin of people, not God's will, is the source of injustice (953; 1869; 2302-2306)
3. review the Church/Scriptural responses to societal injustices, e.g., Jesus' action, prophets and social doctrine (2419-2449)
4. review Catholic pro-life doctrine regarding the fundamental rights of every person (2258-2317)

LOVE AND LIFESTYLES

Message: The students will:

1. consider the sanctity of human life which comes from God and is fulfilled in God (2258-2262; 2288-2291)
2. recognize an appropriate lifestyle for a Christian: as a single person, married person, priest, permanent deacon, or vowed religious (916-919; 922-933; 1617-1620)
3. recognize the family as the domestic church and therefore the nucleus of Christian community (1655-1658; 2201-2218)
4. discuss the meaning and purpose of human sexuality as a gift of God as articulated in the teaching of the Church (355-357)
5. evaluate the styles and levels of communication that they use in their various relationships (2465-2470; 2475-2487)
6. contrast appropriate (life-giving) and inappropriate sexual behavior (2331-2359)
7. review moral decision-making skills in areas such as chastity, substance abuse, goal-setting and career choices (84-95)

MORALITY

Message: The students should:

1. compare Jesus' values with their personally-held values; examine the implications on lifestyle if Jesus' value are adopted (1700-1709; 1763-1766; 1805-1809; 1905-1917; 1996; 2083-2550)
2. review the Ten Commandments, the Beatitudes, the Two Great Commandments, and Catholic Christian moral principles as the foundation of an informed conscience (84-95; 1749-1775; 1949-1974; 2030-2040)
3. review the steps to making a good moral decision and apply to practical daily situations and moral dilemmas (84-95)
4. describe the relationship between intellect and free will and one's responsibility for actions (311; 1704)
5. investigate the reality and nature of sin, our need for forgiveness, and the effects of sin upon the individual and society (953; 1846-1869; 1430-1433; 1472-1479)

PAUL'S LETTER TO THE CHURCH AND REVELATION

Message: The students will:

1. explore the historical background and the transformation of Paul from persecutor to faith-filled apostle after his encounter with the living Jesus (75-79; 758-766)

2. examine the guidelines and instruction Paul set up as basic for the Christian churches (722; 2636)
3. probe Paul's image of the Church as the Body of Christ as a call to Christian interdependence (737-741; 865)
4. explain why literal or fundamentalist interpretation of Scripture is not consistent with Catholic teaching (78-95; 109-113)

PRAYER AND WORSHIP

Message: The students should:

Personal Prayer

1. examine Jesus as a person of prayer and his teaching on prayer (2598-2616)
2. reflect on the variety of images of God available from Tradition and Scripture (35-43; 80-83; 279; 370; 2084; 2809)
3. demonstrate that prayer is continuous bonding between self and God, enabling one to turn to him in times of joy, sorrow and need (2650-2651; 2659-2660)
4. define the five types of prayer and experience some of the various styles of prayer (2626-2643)

Communal Prayer

1. describe liturgy as the action in and by which we are drawn into the Paschal Mystery of the glorified Christ (1113-1130)
2. identify that the Mass is a re-enactment, in the present, of the Paschal Mystery and will name the various components which make up its structure (1322-1405)
3. review various aspects of sacrament: as sign, as Christ-centered, and as offered of God's grace (1077-1109; 1113-1130; 1145-1162)
4. analyze the Church's liturgical life in relation to both nature and seasons and in terms of celebration of human rituals and custom (1066-1071; 1163-1173; 1204-1206)

WORSHIP

Upon completion the students should:

1. participate weekly in parish weekend liturgies and celebrate the holy days of the liturgical year (2174-2188)
2. celebrate the Triduum with the parish community (1168)
3. plan and celebrate a youth/parish liturgy (1348-1335)
4. plan and participate in a variety of prayer forms guided by Catholic tradition, e.g.,
 - meditation (2505-2708)
 - spontaneous (2700-2701)
 - silence and contemplation (2709-2724)
 - song (2702)
 - guided imagery (2705-2708)
 - dance and drama (2703)
 - Rosary (971; 2678; 2708)
 - Scripture story (2653-2654)
5. experience a variety of Catholic devotions, e.g.,
 - Stations of the Cross (2663)

- Forty Hours (2663)
 - Benediction (2663)
 - Liturgy of the Hours (1174-1178)
 - Marian devotions (2673-2679)
6. plan and participate in prayer services related to the individual faith themes, their experience, local and world events, and their personal call to discipleship (2745)
 7. experience various styles of prayer within the retreat day (see community #1) (2691)
 8. celebrate a communal penance service with opportunity for Sacramental Reconciliation as a source of personal growth, healing and peace (1457-1458; 2042)
 9. pray with the youth community about important issues:
 - guidance in the decision making process
 - those in authority (e.g., parent(s)/guardian(s), catechists, teachers, church leaders, government leaders)
 - respect and dignity for all life
 - troubled/broken relationships and families in distress
 - God's help in dealing with the difficulties of everyday life
 - missions, both domestic and international
 - peace: family, school, national and global
 10. experience a Seder meal (1164; 1340)
 11. take part in faith-sharing experiences

COMMUNITY

Upon completion the students should:

1. participate in Christian fellowship through retreats (at least overnight), youth rallies, ecumenical youth activities, etc. (905; 2691)
2. invite other youth to participate in parish, diocesan, state and national youth activities (425)
3. take an active role in community building activities within the parish, e.g., parish festival, dinner, picnics (971; 974)
4. have access to a yearly activity/workshop relating to family interaction, e.g., communication, conflict resolution and adolescent development (2203-2231)
5. have opportunities to interact with persons of various age and vocational choices, e.g., young singles, retired persons, vowed religious women, priests and seminarians (897-933; 2337-2350)
6. demonstrate that sharing non-threatening areas of their lives is an essential part of the Christian community

SERVICE

Senior High level students should be able to demonstrate that service (stewardship) is essential for the Christian life by: (544; 2204-2246)

1. participating in acts of loving service to their family (2208)
2. ministering to the needs of peers in a manner appropriate to their talents and gifts (908-913)

3. having the opportunity to receive peer ministry/leadership training within a four-year period (168; 1816)
4. contributing to parish programs, such as the food pantry, social concerns, liturgical ministry, parish organizations, festivals, etc. (1716-1729)
5. engaging in service to the missions and/or the needs of the local community, e.g., poor, elderly, ill, disabled, children (consider ecumenical efforts) (1822-1829; 1905-1917; 1928-1942)
6. performing the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy (2447)
7. participating in a spiritual gifts discernment process as the basis for selecting their service/ministry (618; 1826)
8. reflecting on and discussing the service performed