

PHILOSOPHY

Catechesis is the story of the church about the story of humanity. Its content is scripture, tradition, and the magisterium. Catechesis is Christocentric; it is about the integrity of the gospel message, the Word of the church, its hierarchy, and its message of salvation and the kingdom of God.

The two primary catechetical documents and the basic reference sources for the Religion Course of Study and Curriculum Guidelines are *The General Directory for Catechesis* and *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

The 6 tasks of catechesis, as listed by *The General Directory for Catechesis*, are:

1. Promoting knowledge of the faith
2. Liturgical education
3. Moral formation
4. Teaching to pray
5. Education for community life
6. Missionary initiation (#85)

The Religion Course of Study and Curriculum Guidelines reformatted them to basically add the two new ones to the four from the GCD. So in the Guidelines (and reformatted for the Course of Study in religion) the 6 aims of catechesis read as follows:

1. To proclaim the Christian message and promote the knowledge of the faith
2. To prepare for prayer and worship
3. Instruct for moral formation
4. Motivate for Christian living and service
5. Build a sense of community and understand the Church as communal life
6. To foster a missionary initiative.

In light of the theology of catechesis and the six aims of catechesis, religion, then, is the primary subject to be taught in a Catholic school, and all other subjects are in some way oriented to it. "The intellectual and the religious work of the schools mutually enhance and illumine one another. While 'being faithful to the newness of the gospel,' Catholic schools at the same time respect 'the autonomy and the methods proper to human knowledge (31). While the academic disciplines cannot be seen 'merely as subservient to faith,' this does not mean that 'one can negate spiritual values or prescind from them.' (53). Students entering a Catholic school should

experience an educational environment 'Illumined by the light of faith' and permeated with the gospel spirit of love and freedom' (25). Not merely an institution, the school is a 'community' that gives witness to the values of 'simplicity and evangelical poverty' (29,31). It is not just in the teaching of religion that faith is present; teachers in other subject areas 'can help students see beyond the limited horizon of human reality...God cannot be the Great Absent One or the unwelcome intruder.' (51)" (*The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School: Guidelines for Reflection and Renewal* - Congregation for Catholic Education). The school, in all of its activities, including administrative policies, should reflect gospel values.

The primary agents to carry out the aims of catechesis are the systematic program (the school), the parish (or parishes the school serves), and the families. These agents all work together to nurture the continuing faith development of learners throughout the life cycle. These agents work together collaboratively and form a partnership but the parents are the primary educators. The family models the faith and is the first witness of the Church to children. "Family catechesis precedes, accompanies and enriches all other forms of catechesis" (CT, 68). A family has no choice about whether it will share faith – its only choice is whether it will share faith well or poorly.

The role of culture: The GDC names enculturation as one of its key themes. Catechesis is never done in isolation. The influence of the larger society (both positive and negative) is always a factor to consider. Our children do not come to us from vacuums; they come with their race, ethnic background, and the culture and story of their individual and extended families. Our children live in the information age; an age bombarded by the influence of technology and media. Careful attention needs to be paid to the culture in the planning of all systematic catechesis. Part one of the document, *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School*, "describes the ambiguity and insecurity young people face in a world dominated by utilitarian and technological values. Though 'surprisingly well informed' about the world, many young people lack 'the critical ability' to make moral judgments about the societies in which they live. The document expresses concern for the 'loneliness' and 'depression' of youth suffering from the breakdown of family and community life. A range of social ills from the nuclear threat to poverty and unemployment foster reactions of violence, self-destructive escapist behaviors and widespread religious indifference among youth" (11-15).

The role of the Faculty: In a Catholic school, a principal is the chief administrator. But, first and foremost, he or she is a faith leader. Teachers are more than imparters of knowledge – they are catechists. They form as well as inform. In order for Catholic religion teachers to be most effective in their roles, they not only need to be certified, up to date, and knowledgeable about the subjects they teach, but first and foremost, they need to be growing in their faith and their relationship with Jesus Christ and his church. They need to be actively participating in the sacramental life of the church and modeling their faith in their interpersonal relationships. Principal and faculty share the responsibility of faith leadership. Catechists simply cannot impart what they don't have; this does not mean they have to be perfect; it means they have to be authentic, and constantly trying to grow in their faith amidst the struggles and joys we all face. John Paul II in his address to the Plenary Assembly stated that lay people have an "apostolic responsibility in the field of education" and summoned them "...to participate in a common mission, whose point of convergence is found in the unity of the Church. For all are active members of one Church and cooperate in its one mission, even though the fields of labor and the states of life are different because of the personal call each one receives from God."

(37). Prayer and faith sharing should be a primary and integral part of all faculty training and formation. It is strongly recommended that periods of reflection and retreat be regularly scheduled throughout the school year. In planning such formation opportunities, consult the Adult section of the Curriculum Guidelines. The document, *Adult Catechesis in the Christian Community*, states that there are three principal goals of adult catechesis:

1. To acquire an attitude of conversion to the Lord
2. To live the gift and choice of faith through membership in the Christian community
3. To be a Christian disciple in the world

One should also consult the Developmental Needs and Characteristics of Adults in the Guidelines. (I would also recommend consulting this whole section in your planning for parents and families). Consult the 10 principles and priorities for adult catechesis starting on p.23 of the Guidelines. Consult in the Guidelines, pp.47-55 where the 6 tasks of catechesis listed in the *GDC* are charted to correspond to the three principal goals of catechesis listed above. Our Holy Father, in *Catechesi Tradendae*, stated that catechesis for adults is the chief form of catechesis, and all other forms are, in some way, oriented to it. If in fact Catholic schools are going to be effective agents of catechesis for our children, they have to work with the parents/families of the children they serve and the parish communities.

RATIONALE

Many teachers of Religion are familiar with the expression that “religion is caught, not taught.” This saying supports an important approach to the teaching of Religion in Catholic schools. Religion is the most important subject in a Catholic school. It is the core discipline around which all other subjects revolve. Because of its exalted status among disciplines, Religion is emphasized with a capital “R”.

Religion is not a subject taught only in Religion class. Religion is taught, caught and lived across all disciplines. Because Religion has a sacred status in the life of a Catholic school, one teaches Religion differently than one teaches algebra, social studies or science. While it is important to have clear learning objectives, especially with regard to imparting critical knowledge concerning Church doctrine, sacraments, history, scripture, etc., one must balance the teaching of factual knowledge and sacred truths with opportunities for personal reflection, questioning, sharing and spiritual growth.

The purpose for teaching Religion must always be to help the child grow in his/her love for God, Church and all people. Therefore, a Religion teacher must be a person who is sensitive, open, loving and approachable. He/She must be a good listener. The teacher should strive to create a classroom atmosphere that is relaxed, warm, supportive and conducive to dialogue, sharing and discernment. Students must look forward to Religion class as being a unique experience, a special time each day for prayer, openness and growth. A Religion teacher must be Catholic and a professional who understands and appreciates the privilege he/she has been given to help form a child’s relationship to God, Church and all people. Because a Religion teacher has undertaken this important responsibility, he/she must have

catechist certification and continually further his/her own personal growth and education through on-going catechesis in spirituality and Church-related topics.

Religion must not be taught in isolation. All teachers in the school must share in the teaching of Religion. They must seek and foster tangible ways in which students can experience Christ throughout their daily interactions with other students, faculty and staff. Through Word and Witness, all members of the school faith community (students, teachers, parents) should strive to make Christ a living model and a palpable presence.

The following are general teaching strategies recommended:

1. employ a variety of creative, meaningful student-centered activities
2. encourage meaningful class discussion and cooperative learning activities as much as possible
3. provide opportunities for personal reflection through journaling and sharing
4. provide opportunities for rich, meaningful class prayer experiences
5. allow all students to help with the planning of individual grade level or class liturgies
6. invite parents/guardians/siblings to share in the joy of the child's spiritual and moral development by giving them opportunities to participate (through Religion assignments and/or projects) in this critical aspect of their child's formation. Recognizing that parents are the primary educators of their children, they should be encouraged to be actively involved in their child's spiritual growth and development beyond the parish preparation for First Eucharist and Reconciliation experience.
7. invite men and women in religious life to visit classes and discuss the gift of vocation. Likewise, encourage lay ministry.
8. create service learning opportunities and community outreach projects which reinforce the importance of every person's responsibility to live and proclaim the Gospels.

Grading:

It is recommended that teachers of Religion not evaluate students strictly by traditional, formal means of assessment, such as test or quiz averages or class participation, as Religion is not taught in a strictly academic fashion. Because of the personal and spiritual nature of the discipline, most holistic evaluative tools should be used. When grading, it is therefore recommended that:

1. grades be determined wholistically, after thoughtful evaluation of each student as being a unique gift from God. One should consider the student as

a person, his/her contribution to the class, his/her relationships with classmates and the teacher, and his/her own spiritual development. Teachers are encouraged to focus on the positive qualities of every child. Letter grades, when used, should reflect academic competence measured by quantitative data achieved through formal assessment.

2. balance formal assessment (written tests, quizzes) with informal on-going assessment (teacher observation, samples of student's products, self and peer evaluations, journaling)
3. Whenever possible for each student, teachers should strive to use brief narrative reflections from pull down menus to describe an observable faith response. Observable faith response may be different for non-Catholic students. Religion class is an opportunity for affirmation, more than criticism.

It is also recommended that schools strive for a campus minister, a faith-centered person who can facilitate rich, child-centered faith experiences for the school throughout the year. It is also recommended that middle school grades develop and implement retreat experiences as an integral part of the annual school calendar. These retreat experiences can occur either at school or at the Archdiocesan Monsignor O'Dwyer Retreat House in Sparks, Md., which is a wonderful resource for parishes and schools.

AIMS

Through the experience of Religion class, students will:

- I. develop a positive attitude toward God, Church, and the Catholic faith - Community (GDC)
- II. gain knowledge of Catholic doctrine, sacred scripture, and church history - Message/Knowledge of the Faith (GDC)
- III. develop Christ-centered morals and values - Moral Formation (GDC)
- IV. develop an appreciation of service and community outreach as an integral part of Catholic-Christian life – Missionary Initiation(GDC)
- V. develop a social conscience and a keen awareness of social justice as a fundamental right and responsibility of all people – Service/Missionary Initiation (GDC)
- VI. develop an understanding of and appreciation for religious, cultural and socio-economic diversity – Service/Community/Missionary Initiation (GDC)
- VII. have opportunities to enjoy the benefits of retreat experiences- Prayer (GDC)

- VIII. have opportunities to develop and lead rich prayer services and liturgies – Worship/Liturgical Education (GDC)
- IX. be encouraged to be introspective, prayerful people, who are constantly striving to grow in their love for God, all people and all things – Prayer, Community (GDC)

IN APPRECIATION

The Curriculum Guidelines, *Resounding the Good News*, 2nd edition, was written by Jim DeBoy, William Johnston, Sylvia DeVillers, Joanne Cahoon, and Loyes Spayd. Our heartfelt gratitude to these people who created a masterful document, which will serve well the ministry of catechesis in this Archdiocese for years to come. Also, our deepest thanks to the committee who assumed the daunting task of taking the early childhood, elementary and middle school sections of the Guidelines and re-writing and re-formatting them to conform with the present Catholic School's Course of Study. These committee members were Sr. Rita Michelle Proctor, OSP, Grace Byerly, Michaele Wicks, Marianne Reichelt, Jeannine Mianulli, Janet DiCocco, MaryEllen Brennan, Anne Price, Loyes Spayd and Joanne Cahoon.

ABBREVIATIONS and REFERENCES

The following abbreviations have been used throughout the Curriculum Guidelines and the Religion Course of Study.

- AA *Apostolicam Actuositatem: Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People.* Vatican Council II, 1965.
- ACCC *Adult Catechesis in the Christian Community: International Council for Catechesis, 1992.*
- AG *Ad Gentes: Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity.* Vatican Council II, 1965.
- CAC *The Challenge of Adolescent Catechesis: Maturing in Faith, NFCYM, 1986.*
- CCC *The Catechism of the Catholic Church.* Liberia Editrice Vaticana, 1994.
- CCYE *The Challenge of Catholic Youth Evangelization: Called to Be Witnesses and Storytellers, NFCYM, 1993.*
- CD *Christus Dominus: Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church.* Vatican Council II, 1965.
- CG *Called and Gifted: the American Catholic Laity.* National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1980.
- CGTM *Called and Gifted for the Third Millennium.* National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1995.
- CHS *Catechesis for Human Sexuality: Regulations and Guidelines.* Archdiocese of Baltimore, 1994.

- CIC *Codex Iuris Canonici: The Code of Canon Law.* Liberia Editrice Vaticana, 1983.
- CHL *Christifideles Laici: The Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World.* John Paul II, 1988.
- CT *Catechesi Tradendae: On Catechesis in Our Time.* Pope John Paul II, 1979.
- DV *Dei Verbum: The Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation* Vatican II, November 18, 1965.
- EGHL *Educational Guidance in Human Love.* Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1983.
- EN *Evangelii Nuntiandi: On Evangelization in the Modern World.* Pope Paul IV, 1975.
- EV *Evangelium Vitae: The Gospel of Life.* Pope John Paul II, 1995.
- FC *Familiaris Consortio: The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World.* Pope John Paul II, 1981.
- FLFS *Faith Lived - - Faith Shared: Regulations for the Formation and Certification of Catechists.* Archdiocese of Baltimore, 1991.
- FPCS *A Family Perspective in Church Society.* National Conference of Catholic Bishops Ad Hoc Committee on Marriage and Family Life, 1988.
- GCD *General Catechetical Directory: Congregation for the Clergy,* 1971.
- GDC *General Directory for Catechesis.* Congregation for the Clergy, 1997
- GDSCM *Guidelines for Doctrinally Sound Catechetical Materials.* United States Catholic Conference, 1990.
- GE *Gravissimum Educationis Declaration on Christian Education.* Vatican Council II, 1965.
- GS *Gaudium et Spes: Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World.* Vatican Council II, 1965.
- HIA *Here I Am, Send Me: A Conference Response to the Evangelization of African Americans and the National Black Catholic Pastoral Plan,* National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1989.
- HS:ACP *Human Sexuality: A Catholic Perspective for Education and Lifelong Learning.* United States Catholic Bishops, 1991.

IYF	John Paul II, <i>International Year of the Family - Letter</i> , 1994
LG	<i>Lumen Gentium: Dogmatic Constitution on the Church</i> . Vatican Council II, 1964.
MYPH	<i>Message to Youth: Pathway to Hope</i> , NCCB Committee on the Laity, USCC, 1994.
NCD	<i>Sharing the Light of Faith: The National Catechetical Directory for Catholics in the United States</i> . National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1979.
PCFF	<i>Putting Children and Families First</i> . National Conference of Catholic Bishops, United States Catholic Conference, 1991.
RCIA	<i>The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults</i> . National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1988.
RDECS	<i>The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School</i> . Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988.
RM	<i>Redemptoris Missio: On The Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate</i> . Pope John Paul II, 1990.
RTV	<i>Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry</i> . National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1997.
SDL	<i>Sons and Daughters of the Light</i> . National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1996.
SGL	<i>Signs of God's Love: Regulations and Guidelines for Catechesis and Celebration of Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, and Penance</i> . Archdiocese of Baltimore, 1987.
SLF	<i>Serving Life and Faith: Adult Religious Education and the American Catholic Community</i> . Department of Education, United States Catholic Conference.
T & M	<i>The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality: Guidelines for Education Within the Family</i> . Pontifical Council for the Family, 1996.
TJD	<i>To Teach as Jesus Did: A Pastoral Message on Catholic Education</i> . National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1972.
VYM	<i>Vision of Youth Ministry</i> , Department of Education, USCC, 1976.

CHILDREN

INTRODUCTION

"...because you have revealed these things to mere children"
- Matthew 11:25

The following section will deal with guidelines for catechesis for children, from the early childhood years to the intermediate years. It is important to note that this section is to be considered within the context of the other sections of this document, to ensure a wholistic catechetical approach. "It is important also that the catechesis of children and young people, permanent catechesis and the catechesis of adults should not be separate watertight compartments...it is important that their perfect complementarity be fostered." (GDC #72, quoting John Paul II, *"The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School"*, 7 April 1988, Congregation for Catholic Education).

It is undoubtedly obvious that within this wholistic framework, a critical time for religious education and formation is the period of the childhood years. "This age group...possesses, in the light of faith and reason, the grace of the beginnings of life, from which 'valuable possibilities exist, both for the building up of the Church and for the making of a more humane society.'" (GDC # 177, citing ChL # 47). "Infancy and childhood, each understood according to its own peculiarities are a time of primary socialization as well as of human and Christian education in the family, the school and the Church. These then must be understood as a decisive moment for subsequent stages of faith" (GDC #178). When the child comes to the school, the Church, institutions related to the parish, this moment of catechesis is "...aimed at inserting him or her organically into the life of the Church . . . This catechesis is didactic in character, but it is directed toward the giving of witness in the faith. It is initial catechesis but not a fragmentary one, since it will have to reveal, although in an elementary way, all the principal mysteries of faith and their effects on the child's moral and religious life." (CT #37)

Although the systematic catechesis offered in the school or parish religious education is critical, so too is the formation within the context of the family. The GDC refers to the *loci* of catechesis, in this case, the school or parish program **and** the family. "In a certain sense nothing replaces family catechesis, especially for its positive and receptive environment, for the example of adults, and for its first explicit experience and practice of the faith" (GDC #178). Keeping this principle in mind, all curriculum planning resulting from these guidelines should be family sensitive, and involve, as much as possible, the cooperation and participation of the family and parish community.

It is significant to say a few words about the nature of the child. Robert Coles, in his book, *The Moral Intelligence of Childhood*, (Random House, New York, 1997), states that the child, in elementary formation, also given favorable circumstances in the family and the community, "...becomes an intensely moral creature, quite interested in figuring out the reasons of this world: how and why things work, but also, how and why he or she should behave in various situations. 'This is the age of conscience,' Anna Freud once observed, and she went further:

'This is the age that a child's conscience is built – or isn't; it is the time when a child's character is built and consolidated, or isn't.' " Coles goes on to say that "This is the time for growth of the moral imagination, fueled constantly by the willingness, the eagerness of children to put themselves in the shoes of others, to experience that way their life." (p. 99). Sophia Cavaletti, in her book, *The Religious Potential of the Child*, (LTP, Chicago, 1992) states that "In the religious sphere, it is a fact that children know things no one has told them.... Children penetrate effortlessly beyond the veil of signs and 'see' with utmost facility their transcendent meaning, as if there was no barrier between the visible and the Invisible." (p.43). And, lastly, Robert Coles in his book, *The Spiritual Life of Children*, (Houghton-Mifflin, Boston, 1990), quotes a little girl: "You never know who you'll be until you get to that age when you're all grown. But God must know all the time." (p. 310). For parents and catechists, the formation of children is indeed a precious and delicate task, for we want to bring out and build upon all that God has already given them.

THE EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNER (Pre-school and Kindergarten)

INTRODUCTION

A young child's world revolves around self as an important member of family. Each young child needs to know that he or she is important in the religious education program, too. While there are some characteristics true of all pre-schoolers and kindergartners, each is an individual with unique needs. Only by relating to the individual child in a loving way can the catechist establish rapport and create an environment conducive to faith sharing.

DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS AND CHARACTERISTICS

"Life's beginning stages are of critical importance to individual growth and development" (*NCD*, #177). Researchers are discovering that very young children are slowly developing a greater degree of initiative than in the past. To encourage this development, the early childhood catechist needs to be familiar with the personal and faith developmental characteristics of the three to five-year-old. (See Erik Ericson, *Childhood and Society*, Norton: New York, 1950 and Sofia Caveletti, *The Religious Potential of the Child*, Liturgy Training Publications: Chicago, 1992).

Physically, preschoolers are refining their motor skills. Their attention span is limited and thus they change activities frequently, often racing from one to another. Their physical coordination is improving and they enjoy playing with other children.

Psychologically, preschoolers perceive stories in single images, like a slide show. Their imaginations are very active and they appreciate fairy tales and fantasy, learning intuitively through stories. Playtime activities are self-centered and explorative. A friend is whomever one is playing with at the time. Children of this age need assistance in feeling able to cope with the unfamiliar or frightening in their world.

In their faith development, preschool children do not question what they are taught about God. Parents and family strongly influence the faith of the young child primarily through their own loving and trusting attitude toward God and others (See *NCD* #177). The *CCC* states in #2223: "Parents have the first responsibility by first creating a home where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and disinterested service are the rule."

As young children experience the love of their parents and family, they respond in kind. The young child needs to be loved in order to discover the love of God. As Sophia Cavaletti states on pg. 44 of *The Religious Potential of the Child*: "The child's need to be loved depends not so much on a lack that requires filling, but on a richness that seeks something that

corresponds to it." Thus is developed the "religious attitude" that results in a correspondence between God - -who is love- - and the child, who asks for love.

Children in early childhood are concrete learners. Symbolic language is taken in its literal sense and the adult has little control over what meaning a story will have for a young child. Scripture, therefore, must be carefully chosen and taught to avoid stories that are abstract or ambiguous. Group and family prayer are meaningful, and young children tend to pray for concrete things. They like to talk to God about themselves.

In their moral development, preschoolers are in the first stage of moral growth. Their actions are governed by rewards and punishments and they are influenced by the moods and actions of the primary adults in their lives. "Good" is whatever adults wish and "bad" is what brings punishment. Preschoolers need encouragement, love, and acceptance to help them develop morally. A simple moral response of loving service is elicited when very young children observe their families reaching out in service to others. For the young child, the "reward" is being included in the activity of the family and the parish community.

In early childhood there is no mention of sin, for the emphasis is on forming a relationship with God before one focuses on the fracturing of the relationship. Children are rarely rejected from the group no matter how trying they may be. Children must always feel secure in the group which is characterized by care and thoughtfulness for others, even while everyone is expected to be reasonably orderly.

<p style="text-align: center;">GOAL OF CATECHESIS IN THE EARLY CHILDHOOD YEARS (PRE-SCHOOL AND KINDERGARTEN)</p>

"Too much too soon" is a phrase which can be applied to some experiences of early childhood catechesis. Too much content-centered learning, too soon in the learners' developmental state of growth, has, in the past, curbed the enthusiasm, spontaneity and awe which should be the hallmark of the preschool child. In #72, *GDSCM* recommends that curriculum be designed to always "use language and images appropriate to the age level and developmental stages and special needs of those being catechized."

For the very young child, the lively sense of joy in creation and in self forms the basis of the curriculum because it is seen as a gift from God. Elements of the universe are viewed and examined through the perspectives of sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste. It is important to recognize that it is through these gifts that we appreciate the other gifts of creation.

The early childhood learner is becoming more aware of self in relationship to others. Responding to loving relationships and learning to be responsible for one's actions are evidence of spiritual readiness in themselves. Helping the child to be polite and courteous to others prepares the way for listening and dialogue when more formal lessons begin. One of the most significant experiences in preparing the young child for Christian maturity is the sense of community, which permeates the religious education class.

The *NCD* and the *CCC* recognize four dimensions necessary for effective catechesis. In #6, the *CCC* states clearly these elements of catechesis which pervade the entire catechetical curriculum, including early childhood: "...catechesis is built on a certain number of elements of the Church's pastoral mission which have a catechetical aspect, that prepare for catechesis, or spring from it. They are: the initial proclamation of the Gospel...; examination of the reasons for belief; experience of Christian living; celebration of the sacraments; integration into the ecclesial community; and apostolic and missionary witness."

In other words, the components of message, community, worship, and service form the basis for catechesis for people of all ages. (The *GDC* adds two more: moral formation and the missionary initiation) The *GDSCM* in #72, however, cautions that it is important for catechists to "use language and images appropriate to the age level and developmental stages and special needs of those being catechized."

The basic curriculum for early childhood programs, then, will reflect these cautions while including the elements of catechesis insisted upon by the *NCD*, the *CCC* and the *GDC*. The following concepts are among those presented to children in early childhood. Formal catechesis includes these concepts but is not limited to them. In schools having no Pre-K, these objectives will be met/covered in kindergarten.

I – Introduced

D – Developed

M – Mastered

1. Word or Message

PK K

Objectives: children will understand and experience that:

- God made everything that is good. _____ I D
- God wants to share all good things with us. _____ I D
- God gives us many special gifts: life, friends, pets, families, the beautiful world around us. _____ I D
- God is a loving father/parent. _____ I D
- God loves us as we are. _____ I D
- Jesus is our brother. _____ I D

(For further clarification of this section, see *CCC* references: #295, #299, and #733)

- Mary is Jesus' mother and is like our mother. _____ I D
(For further clarification, see *CCC* reference: #1655)

- The Bible is God's special book. _____ I D
(For further clarification, see *CCC* references: #81, #98, and #105)

2. Worship and Prayer

Objectives: children will understand and experience that:

- We go to Mass to spend time with God. _____ I D
- When we pray we usually begin and end with the Sign of the Cross. _____ I M
- At Mass we sing the Amen and the Alleluia, and some other songs. _____ I

- | | PK | K |
|--|-----------|----------|
| • At home we thank God for our food before we eat. _____ | I | D |
| • We tell God "good morning" and "good night" each day. _____
(For further clarification of this section, see CCC references:
#2598, #2655, and #2665) | I | D |
| • We say we're sorry when we hurt someone. _____
(For further clarification, see CCC references #1422 and #1950) | I | D |

3. Service and Christian Living

Objectives: children will understand and experience that:

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| • All people are part of God's family. _____ | I | D |
| • We treat everyone fairly. _____ | I | D |
| • At school we work and play together. _____
(For further clarification of this section, see CCC references:
#1700, #1946, and #1947) | I | D |
| • We try to help people who need special care. _____ | I | D |
| • I help my family when we take food or clothing to people who need them. _____
(For further clarification of this section, see CCC references:
#544, #2044) | I | D |
| • There are people in the church who are examples of special helpers. _____
(For further clarification, see CCC references: #2030) | I | D |

4. Community

Objectives: children will understand and experience that:

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| • We are part of a special family. _____ | I | D |
| • We love our parents, sisters, brothers, and other family members. _____ | I | D |
| • Our family belongs to a bigger family, too. _____
(For further clarification of this section, see CCC references:
#738, #834, and #1655) | I | D |
| • Our parish family is special and loves me. _____ | I | D |
| • We go to Mass to pray to God and to be with my parish family. _____ | I | D |
| • The people who lead our parish (Father, Sister, Deacon,
Pastoral Associates and Directors, catechists, teachers) care for us
and teach us God's love. _____ | I | D |
| • Our school is another part of our parish family. _____ | I | D |
| • I learn about God at school or religious education class. _____
(For further clarification of this section, see CCC references:
#833, #871, and #781) | I | D |

5. Moral Formation

Objectives: children will understand and experience that:

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| • Jesus teaches us to be good. _____ | I | D |
| • To obey our parents and teachers. _____ | I | D |

(For further clarification of this section see CCC references:
#426, #517, #531-534, and #564)

6. Missionary Initiation

Objectives: children will understand and experience that:

- Jesus teaches us how to love. _____ I D
- We are to tell others about Jesus. _____ I D
- We need to help people who are poor. _____ I D

(For further clarification of this section see CCC references:
#520, #426, #458, #1716, #544, and #2444)

**DESIRED FAITH RESPONSE IN THE EARLY CHILDHOOD YEARS
(PRE-SCHOOL AND KINDERGARTEN)**

It is important to remember that content is not primary in nurturing the faith life of the early childhood learner. What is critical is that the very young child's natural sense of God is fostered by the important people in the child's world: parents, siblings, catechists and teachers, and the parish community.

It is precisely because of a loving Creator that the beauty of the world reveals God's presence to us. It is this beauty that nourishes the faith life of the preschool child. The *GDSCM* states in #12 that it is important to "arouse a sense of wonder and praise for God's world and providence by presenting creation, not as an abstract principle or as an event standing by itself, but as the origin of all things and the beginning of the mystery of salvation in Jesus Christ."

In understanding this approach to early childhood catechesis, it is evident that the desired faith response of the young child will be centered around the natural awe and wonder that these very young children experience in their world. The development of skills is not the major consideration; they will be taught more completely as the young child grows and develops. The natural spirituality of the very young child results in attitudes toward God that do not require much nurturing. Rather, it might be said that we would want to preserve the natural receptivity to mystery and spirituality in the young child as that child grows and develops.

It is clear, then, that as a result of the catechetical experience, children in the earliest years can be expected to respond in faith by learning a few beginning catechetical skills and by finding ways to express their own unique understandings of God in somewhat "traditional" words and actions.

✓ = Being done in Pre-K and/or kindergarten

Skills:

- | | PK | K |
|---|----|---|
| Objectives: the children will: | | |
| • learn the Sign of the Cross, Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be. _____ | | ✓ |
| • learn to talk to God in prayer. _____ | ✓ | ✓ |
| • be encouraged to speak about God in their own way. _____ | ✓ | ✓ |

	PK	K
• learn to say and sing the liturgical "Amen" and "Alleluia." _____	✓	✓
• exhibit appropriate behavior in dealing with conflict. _____	✓	✓
• participate in family service projects. _____	✓	✓
• learn to share. _____	✓	✓
• learn about God's creation through music, art, gestures, and stories. _____	✓	✓
• learn to care about others. _____	✓	✓
• learn to do what our parents and teachers ask us to do. _____	✓	✓

Attitudes:

Objectives: the children will:

• know that God loves them as they are. _____	✓	✓
• understand that God's creation is a gift to all of us. _____	✓	✓
• recognize that their families reflect God's love for them. _____	✓	✓
• know that their parish family cares for them in a special way. _____		✓
• begin to learn about forgiveness. _____	✓	✓
• express their thoughts about God, church, and loving people. _____	✓	✓
• begin to understand how they can contribute to the peacefulness of the group. _____	✓	✓
• understand that it is important to help others. _____	✓	✓
• know that God will help us be good. _____	✓	✓

THE PRIMARY CHILD (Grades 1 – 3)

INTRODUCTION

The primary age child has a limited amount of lived experience to draw on. This young child is still quite dependent upon her or his family for identity and security. The primary child is beginning to relate to others, however, as he or she continues to develop mentally and physically at a rapid pace. This child now is able to describe reality but often cannot define it. These factors must be considered when we concern ourselves with the faith life of the primary child. The religious education program in the parish or school supports the lived experience of the primary child and of his or her family as it aids in welcoming the child as part of the Christian community.

We see a profound change in faith life of children between grades one and three. For the primary learner, catechesis does indeed move them along towards the beginnings of maturity of faith (*NCD*, #33). During the primary years, the young child is introduced into a wider social circle that includes a catechesis containing an immediate preparation for the celebration of the sacraments. This catechesis is "initial" but not fragmentary: it gives meaning to the sacraments as having a "living dimension, ...not merely doctrinal, and it communicates to the child the joy of being a witness to Christ in everyday life" (*CT*, #37).

The everyday life of the primary child is connected to the person of Jesus through the teachings of the faith tradition (*CCC*, #426-427, *CT*, #5-6). The faith community provides the environment for catechesis of these young children when Christians "bear witness to their faith..." as they "hand it on to their children" (*CT*, #24).

It is, then, the responsibility of the entire parish community to bring primary children to faith in Jesus, especially as they prepare for the sacrament of Eucharist (*RCIA*, #9, *CT*, #67). Catechists, also, have a vital and specific role in this effort. As people of faith, they express their faith authentically, accurately, and in ways suitable to the developmental level of the children (*NCD*, #213).

In catechetical programs designed for the primary learner, it is important that the religious message that emerges from family, catechist, and faith community be consistent in the life of the young child. These children learn about God's love by being loved; they learn about God's fairness by being treated fairly; they learn about God's mercy by being forgiven; they learn about God's call to justice by being treated with respect. Catechesis includes all of these elements.

DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS AND CHARACTERISTICS

According to developmental research, primary age children have an attention span of around 20 minutes and tire easily. They learn by doing, not watching. Concepts need to be simple and presented one at a time. Primary age children can play simple sports and like to manipulate objects. They are very active, have temper outbursts, and would rather play than work. Their sexual development matches their physical growth, and they are becoming more aware of sexual differentiation.

Children in the primary grades learn best from their own world of family, school, and life experience. They are interested in the concrete or factual rather than the abstract. Primary age children have active imaginations and can often retell a story from beginning to end although they cannot yet articulate the meaning of the story. These children are beginning to learn social skills and to give and take responsibility. They are breaking out of monologue forms of communication and are moving into a dialogical and conversational mode.

In the area of faith development, primary age children think of God in human terms and God and Jesus are thought of interchangeably. They are unable yet to view bible stories in the abstract, but these stories and images are significant in encouraging imaginative and analogous thinking.

To primary children, the understanding of God as a loving parent who keeps order is important. Though every child's experience of a parent may not be positive, she or he can grasp the meaning of a loving person by experiencing loving, caring catechists and other adults within the parish faith community.

Children of this age can participate in community celebrations at a feeling level and they know what it means to belong to a group. They imitate the faith practices of their families, teachers, and adults who are significant in their lives.

The catechetical program for these children needs to be designed to include them in liturgical celebrations that meet their needs even though they may not yet have experienced Eucharist. Their interest in rituals, prayer, images of Jesus, and stories from scripture can be taken into account when these liturgical celebrations take place.

Primary age children are developing morally from the pre-conventional stage into the conventional stage. While expectation of rewards and fear of punishment is still the motivation to "good" behavior, they are beginning to follow community expectations and they take their responsibilities seriously. They are easily disturbed by criticism from authorities.

Children of this age are developing sexually although it is not always easy to observe a great deal of development in this area. However, these children are beginning to be aware of sexual differentiation and need to be reassured of their specialness in being a boy or a girl. Their friends are often of the same sex, and appropriate social behavior is often related to peer interaction. For further understanding of the sexual development of children of this age, see pp.

61-66 of *Catechesis for Human Sexuality: Regulations and Guidelines*, Archdiocese of Baltimore, 1994. See also *Human Sexuality: A Catholic Perspective*, United States Catholic Bishops, USCC, 1991.

Descriptions of the child's developmental abilities are always applied to the "average" child. No one child will display all of the characteristics described as being in the average range. Many will be greatly advanced or significantly slower in their cognitive, physical, and moral development. The catechist must discover the individual needs of each child and must also develop a sensitivity for the cultural, social, and family background of each child.

GOALS OF CATECHESIS IN THE PRIMARY GRADES (Grades 1 – 3)

The primary learner is a child just beginning a life-long journey of faith. The primary years present opportunities for building on the natural curiosity of children that will result in a mature search for truth in their adult years.

The faith tradition that is taught in a systematic, intentional, and flexible way during the primary years focuses on some basic concepts: Jesus is God, the Spirit is Jesus' presence in our lives today, Jesus comes to us in the bread and wine of Eucharist, God loves us and forgives us, the bible tells us about God and Jesus, our church consists of people who care for one another, and so on. These basic concepts and others present the formal catechetical component in the primary grades. Informal catechesis continues through the process of participation in family, parish, and community life.

The goals of catechesis in the primary years center around the four tasks of catechesis as stated in the *NCD*, #213. These are:

- 1) to proclaim Christ's message
- 2) to participate in efforts to develop and maintain community
- 3) to lead people to worship
- 4) to motivate them to serve others

The GDC (#175) adds two more:

- 5) to live morally
- 6) to spread the missionary dimension

The primary years provide opportunities to begin to attempt to accomplish these tasks or goals through the formal catechesis that is offered these young children.

The following concepts are among to those presented to primary age children. The formal catechesis includes but is not limit to these concepts.

I – Introduced

D – Developed

M - Mastered

1. Word or Message

Grades: 1 2 3

Objectives: the children will understand and experience that:

- God is the creator of all that is good. _____ D D M
- The Holy Spirit helps us to live in peace. _____ I D M
(For further clarification of this section, see CCC references:
#295, #299, #525, and #733)
- The Church consists of people who love and care for each other. _____ D D M
- Our church has good leaders: the Pope, the bishops and priests,
Pastoral Directors and Associates, and ordinary people. _____ I D
- The Bible is a special book that was written by people who loved God. _____ D D M
- The Bible helps us to know about God’s love for us. _____ D D M
- The Bible tells us about God, Jesus, and people of faith. _____ D D M
- The Bible has two parts: the Old Testament (about God’s people) and
the New Testament (about Jesus). _____ I D M
- We read from the Bible at Mass. _____ I D M
(For further clarification of this section, see CCC references:
#81, #98, and #105).
- Death is the beginning of new life with God. _____ D D M
- After we die we will live with God forever. _____ D D D
(For further clarification of this section, see CCC references:
#1010 and #1020).
- We honor Mary, the mother of Jesus, because she shows us
how we can love Jesus too. _____ D D D
(For further clarification see CCC #1655)
- The saints are special people who can teach us how to be good. _____ D D D
(For further clarification see CCC #2030)

2. Worship and Prayer

Objectives: the children will learn and experience:

- The Lord’s Prayer _____ M M M
- The Hail Mary _____ M M M
- The Sign of the Cross _____ M M M
- Glory Be _____ M M M
- Creed _____ D
- Act of Contrition _____ I D
- Spontaneous prayer. _____ D D D

Grades: 1 2 3

- Quiet, reflective prayer. _____ I D
- Mass, or Eucharistic Liturgy, is a time on Saturday or Sunday when we all come together to praise and thank God. _____ D D D
(For further clarification of this section, see CCC references: #2598, #2655, and #2665)
- Our church celebrates God's presence at special times in our lives. _____ D D D
- Sacraments are celebrations that help put us in touch with God. _____ I D D
- Some of the sacraments take place at special times when friends and family gather at church to welcome a new baby to the parish, celebrate a wedding, meet Jesus in the bread and wine, or say they're sorry for hurting God or each other. _____ D D D
- Baptism brings us into the family of God. _____ D D D
- Penance shows God's loving mercy and forgiveness. _____ I D
- Eucharist is Jesus who comes to us in a unique way in the bread and wine at Mass. _____ D D D
- Confirmation helps us share what we have learned about Jesus' love. _____ I D
(For further clarification of this section, see CCC references: #1210 - #1666)
- Lent is a time when we prepare for Easter. _____ D D D
- At Easter we celebrate the new life of Jesus when he rose from the dead. _____ D D M
- Easter is a time of new life in the church when many people are baptized. _____ I D D
- Advent is a time when we prepare for the birth of Jesus. _____ D D D
- Christmas celebrates the birth of Jesus. _____ M M M
- On Holydays we honor the saints and celebrate special events in the lives of Jesus and Mary. _____ D D D
(For further clarification of this section, see CCC references: #1167 and #1171)

3. Service or Christian Living

Objectives: children will understand and experience that:

- Jesus teaches us how to be loving people. _____ D D D
- God's commandments teach us to love one another and to love God. _____ D D D
- Whenever we help other people we show our love for Jesus. _____ D D D
- We treat other people the way Jesus treated other people. _____ D D D
- We try to do things that are right because we know it's what God wants of us. _____ D D D
- Our church leaders teach us what is right to do also. _____ D D D
(For further clarification of this section, see CCC references: #544 and #2044)

4. Community

Grades: 1 2 3

Objectives: the children will learn, understand, and experience that:

- The Catholic Christian church is a community of people who follow Jesus Christ. _____ D D D
- Catholics are God's people who live out Jesus' love in caring for each other. _____ D D D
- Our families show us that we are loved and cared for. _____ D D M
(For further clarification of this section see CCC references: #738, #834, and #1655).

- It is good to invite people to come to Mass with us. _____ I D D
- We pray for one another. _____ D D D
- We try to get to know people who are new in our neighborhood or school. _____ D D D
- The sacraments are celebrated at Mass, with people from our parish. _____ I D D
- We invite people to learn about our parish community. _____ I
- People who are different from us have much to teach us. _____ D D D
- We care for all of God's people. _____ D D D
- Jesus wants the church to include all people. _____ D D D
(For further clarification of this section, see CCC references: #544 and #2044)

5. Moral Formation

Objectives: the children will learn, understand, and experience that:

- God calls us to goodness and glory. _____ D D D
- Sometimes we sin (fail to be good). _____ I D D
- God's grace, given to us through Jesus, will help us to be good again. _____ I D
- We are responsible for making good choices. _____ D D D
- God forgives us when we say we are sorry. _____ D D D
(CCC #2411, 1716, 1950, 2033)

6. Missionary Dimension

Objectives: the children will learn, understand, and experience that:

- We need to respect and care for all of God's creation. _____ D D D
- God wants us to be fair and just. _____ D D D
- Jesus wants us to help the poor. _____ D D D
- Jesus wants us to help out the Church when we grow up. _____ I
(CCC #898-900, 2415-2418, 544, 244, 1807)

<p style="text-align: center;">THE DESIRED FAITH RESPONSE IN THE PRIMARY YEARS (GRADES ONE TO THREE)</p>

We believe that faith deepens and matures as a result of many experiences in the lives of people. Formal, systematic, and intentional catechesis is merely one of the

ways in which the faith life is nourished. However, it is reasonable to expect that out of the catechetical experience and the life experience within a loving community of faith some changes in attitude and behavior can evolve.

Primary age children are beginning to develop skills that are not necessarily “religious” or catechetical but which nonetheless can be applied to their growing awareness of God in their lives. These children are beginning to read, create, reason, and interact socially. The catechist will encourage the children to use these skills in activities that are connected with the faith life of the child. In other words, the child can respond in faith to the catechetical experience as it matches the life experience.

Catechesis, however, must always be sensitive to the child who does not conform to the group norm in the development of skills. Some children do not read by age eight. Some children cannot reason well yet. Some children have yet developed socially as far as others. On the other hand, some children are reading or reasoning far beyond their grade level, some are artistically gifted, some exhibit well developed leadership qualities. The catechist needs to be aware of each child’s unique gifts, talents, and personality and will be the one who personifies God’s love to all of the children.

A faith response is one that emerges from a combination of formal catechesis, life experience, and the grace of the Spirit. When they come together, attitudes and behavior change. God’s presence is very real in the lives of primary age children, and they are capable of a faith response that cannot always be measured but often can be observed. (See Sofia Cavaletti, *The Religious Potential of the Child*, Liturgy Training Publications: Chicago, 1992. Robert Coles, *The Spiritual Life of Children*, Houghton Mifflin: Boston, 1990. Jonathan Kozol, *Amazing Grace: The Lives of Children and the Conscience of a Nation*, Crown Publishers: New York, 1995).

It is clear, then, that as a result of the catechetical experience, primary children can be expected to respond in faith by learning new catechetical skills and by developing new understandings and attitudes. As with the content of formal catechesis, they include but are not limited to the following skills and attitudes that describe some ways in which this can happen.

Skills:

Grades: 1 2 3

Objectives: the children will:

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| • know and be able to recite formal prayers: | | | |
| Lord’s Prayer_____ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Hail Mary_____ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Sign of the Cross_____ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Creed_____ | | | ✓ |
| Act of Contrition_____ | | ✓ | ✓ |
| • know how to pray both spontaneously and reflectively._____ | | ✓ | ✓ |
| • learn how to forgive others._____ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| • know and be able to say some of the liturgical prayers and responses._____ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

	<u>Grades:</u>	1	2	3
• be able to sing appropriate sung liturgical responses. _____		✓	✓	✓
• behave appropriately at liturgical celebrations. _____		✓	✓	✓
• learn and practice traditional Catholic behavior in church: blessing themselves with holy water, genuflection, kneeling, and the sign of the cross. _____		✓	✓	✓
• begin to read from the Bible or children's lectionary. _____			✓	✓
• listen attentively when scripture is being proclaimed. _____		✓	✓	✓
• understand the vocabulary used in formal catechetical sessions. _____			✓	✓
• be able to define some religious beliefs in their own words. _____			✓	✓
• present their ideas in writing. _____			✓	✓
• join enthusiastically in service projects. _____		✓	✓	✓
• use appropriate forms of address for clergy and religious. _____		✓	✓	✓

Attitudes:

Objectives: the children will:

• come to know, speak of, and pray spontaneously to Jesus as friend, brother, and God. _____		✓	✓	✓
• articulate their appreciation for the goodness and beauty of creation and be able to thank God for all that God gives to us. _____		✓	✓	✓
• express in spontaneous spoken or written prayer their thanks, petitions, praise, and contrition. _____		✓	✓	✓
• express in language, art, gestures, or music an understanding of God's presence in their lives. _____		✓	✓	✓
• exhibit at an age-appropriate level forgiveness, hospitality, cooperation and kindness to others. _____		✓	✓	✓
• help and assist those who have special needs. _____		✓	✓	✓
• contribute to the peaceful atmosphere in the group. _____		✓	✓	✓
• recognize the importance of treating others fairly and with respect. _____		✓	✓	✓
• begin to understand the difference between right or wrong behavior and attitudes. _____		✓	✓	✓
• appreciate the good people in our lives who show us God's love. _____		✓	✓	✓

THE INTERMEDIATE GRADE LEARNER (Grades 4 and 5)

INTRODUCTION

The intermediate grade child has been described as vibrantly alive, always in motion and full of enthusiasm. This child is in a "middle" stage of development, between childhood and early adolescence. It is sometimes difficult to determine where the child stops and where the early adolescent begins as these children reach the latter stages of the intermediate grades. This section focuses on the dynamic and energetic person who is "busy growing up" and who thrives on challenges -- the intermediate age child.

DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The human development of the fourth and fifth grader is probably described by the term used to identify his or her level of schooling -- intermediate, or "older elementary" school. Children at this age are at a plateau stage of development, both physically and psychologically, though they do show increased intellectual ability and developing moral growth.

Physically, students at this age have gained a certain stability. They have greater control of large motor activities, and an increased mastery of fine motor skills. They enjoy group activity and interaction and are capable of more complex skills than a younger child because of their increased bodily coordination. Just as their physical growth has reached a plateau of sorts, so has their sexual development, though the latter part of this stage will be characterized by new growth and development in these areas. For further understanding of the sexual development of children of this age, see pp. 61-66 of *Catechesis for Human Sexuality: Regulations and Guidelines*, Archdiocese of Baltimore, 1994. See also *Human Sexuality: A Catholic Perspective*, United States Catholic Bishops, USCC, 1991.

The psychological development of intermediate grade children parallels their physical development. They are inclined to join consistent groups, to choose leaders and to form interests from within these groups. Boys and girls are likely to separate from each other at this level and can become highly competitive. There is less evidence of the need for that security which arises from a parent relationship than for that security which develops from belonging to a distinct group.

Students in the intermediate grades evidence increased intellectual skills of memory and reasoning and are anxious to investigate, observe, and draw conclusions. Their attention span and verbal ability improve as does their sense of history, though their notion of time is still somewhat restricted to the present and the immediate future. Students begin to draw conclusions and judgments based on their observations. They enjoy knowing the details of a problem and completing the research needed to solve these problems. Adventure, fantasy, risk, success, and humor form the elements of a successful story for the nine to eleven year old.

Morally, intermediate grade children begin to show growth in conscience development, grasping deeper insights into moral behavior. The motivation or intention behind an action takes on increasing significance. Children at this age, however, grow to be legalistic, developing a high regard for the law itself rather than an appreciation for the spirit of the law. Though the peer group is seen as the community of importance within which relationships are developed, the students also begin to appreciate persons of other faiths and cultures. The desire to identify with and to be of service to their own community of faith begins to take root at this time.

GOALS OF CATECHESIS IN THE INTERMEDIATE GRADES (GRADES FOUR AND FIVE)

Intermediate grade children are Christians in formation. The faith-life that they received in Baptism must be understood as a developing gift. Involving the whole child in this development means acknowledging the importance and uniqueness of the human intelligence, emotions, and behavior. The children should be taught through a "...variety of strategies, activities, and auxiliary resources that can enrich instruction, deepen understanding, and facilitate the integration of doctrine and life" (*GDSCM*, #83). Experience is vital to the learning process. The catechist must see to it that the students experience a community of faith as a vital and loving environment in which the message of Jesus Christ is explored and celebrated.

Scripture must hold a primary place in the catechesis of intermediate grade students. Parents and teachers should help the child to listen to God's Word in scripture and to "...integrate biblical themes and scriptural reference in the presentation of doctrine and moral teaching and encourage a hands-on familiarity with the Bible" (*GDSCM*, #73). Prayer should accompany the frequent reading of sacred scripture, as the *CCC* advises in #2653; "...so that a dialogue takes place between God..." and the child.

GOALS OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION FOR GRADES 4 AND 5

In the catechesis of children in grades four and five, the six tasks mentioned earlier are presented in specific and age-appropriate ways. It is around the six tasks of message, community, worship and prayer, service, moral formation, and the missionary initiation that the objectives for the systematic catechetical program are focused.

GDC

- 1 • To establish scripture as the primary source of God's Word and message revealing who God is and who God created us to be. (*CCC* #105 –108, #124-126, #288)
- 2 • To understand and experience the role of prayer and worship in our relationship with God both as individuals and as a community of faith. (*CCC* #2655, #2665)

- 3 • To expand the understanding of faith development to include service to others as a natural response to God's love for us. (CCC #1928, #1933)
- 4 • To learn and experience the truth that as members of the Mystical Body of Christ and the Communion of Saints each individual member has a unique role to play in the building of God's Kingdom. (CCC #737-738)
- 5 • To understand the necessity of assuming moral responsibility as a living expression of faith and as a means of deepening our relationship with God and our concern for one another. (CCC #1422, #1798, #1950, #1970, #2033)
- 6 • To implement the missionary nature of the church by recognizing the need not only to receive the "Goods News" but also to share it with others. (CCC #434, #542, #787, #425, #1816, #618, #243, #725, #1724, #820-822, #1694, #825, #542-543, #914-916, #944-945)

N.B. It is important to note that the content and competencies listed for grades 4 & 5 have often been introduced at an earlier grade level. As the student progresses through the elementary grades, such content and competency is deepened and expanded in accord with the appropriate developmental stage of the student at each grade level. Therefore just as the religious instruction and understanding of the student in grade 4 builds on, deepens and expands knowledge introduced at an earlier age, the same is true for the way in which the content and competencies of grade 5 relate to those of Grade 4.

CONTENT GRADE 4

Word:

- Jesus reveals God to us
- Jesus preaches the "Good News" of the Kingdom/reign of God often using Parables
- Jesus gathered and empowered disciples to continue his mission
- Jesus' message is one of love, healing, and forgiveness
- Pentecost and the sending of the Holy Spirit
- The Covenant of Mt. Sinai and the People of Israel
- The Ten Commandments
- Christ and the New Covenant
- The Law of Love

Message/Moral Formation/Community/Service/Missionary Initiation:

- Paschal Mystery
- Dignity of the human person
- Sin and forgiveness
- Beatitudes and Ten Commandments as guidelines for building God's Kingdom through right relationship with God and with one another

- Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy as ways of caring for and respecting the physical, spiritual, and psychological dimensions of the human person
- We are members of Christ's Mystical Body, the Church and as such, are called to receive and spread the "Good News"
- The understanding of Eucharist as meal, memorial, sacrifice, and real presence
- Original sin Vs. Original goodness
- Free Will as God's gift
- Sins of omission and commission
- Capital Sins
- The Holy Spirit's role in the life of the individual and the church
- Laws/precepts of the church as guidelines for living within the Roman Catholic community of faith
- Responsibility for forming a Correct Conscience
- Communion of Saints

Liturgy/Prayer/Worship:

- The flow of the liturgical year
- Special Feasts and Holy Days of Obligation
- Sacraments as signs of God's love (All 7)
- Baptism
- Reconciliation
- Eucharist as our central act of praise and thanksgiving
- Familiarity with devotions such as Eucharistic Adoration, Benediction, the Mysteries of the Rosary, and the Stations of the Cross
- Traditional Prayers committed to memory such as Hail Mary. Our Father, Act of Contrition, Glory Be, Morning Offering, Grace before and after meals, the Apostles and Nicene Creeds

<p>DESIRED FAITH RESPONSE GRADE 4 (SKILLS AND ATTITUDES)</p>

A developing understanding of:

- The importance of the Bible
- The difference between the faith of the Israelite people and that of the followers of Jesus in the New Testament
- Such concepts as revelation, creation, salvation, and covenant
- The story of Moses and the exodus journey
- Parables

A developing facility for:

- Praying the basic prayers of our faith, the liturgical responses for the Mass, and the Rosary
- Being comfortable with a wide variety of prayer forms including discursive, meditative, spontaneous, intercessory, and written
- Expressing the meaning of God's presence in their lives through language, music, art, and gestures

A developing understanding of:

- The basic structure and function of the local, diocesan, and world church
- The call and the process of evangelization
- Jesus' presence to us both in Word and Sacrament in our liturgical worship
- The need for communal worship
- The ways in which the Mass is our greatest prayer of praise and thanksgiving
- The role commandments, beatitudes, and church law in helping us to live in accord with God's will for us
- Sin as the breaking of relationship with God and with one another
- The essence of Jesus' message as love God and one another
- Our call to discipleship and what that call means to us as individuals
- Jesus as the model for love of God and service to others
- The ways fourth graders can be faithful disciples

A developing ability to:

- Internalize the meaning of the Ten Commandments and the Law of Love and then offer practical ways in which they can live out that meaning in their everyday lives
- Make moral decisions through practical steps so that they are better able to choose right from wrong
- Understand our God as a forgiving God and recognize the gift we have in the Sacrament of Reconciliation
- Participate in projects that contribute to peace and justice in their school, neighborhood, city, and the wider world
- Plan and carry out service projects that assist those in need
- Become more actively involved in parish events and projects
- Grow in appreciation of our Catholic roots and traditions
- Understand that they have a place in God's plan both now and in the future
- Be more confident in their ability to spread the "Good News"

CONTENT GRADE 5

Word:

- The Bible is our primary source of God's Self-Revelation
- The Old Testament records the faith of the People of Israel
- The New Testament offers us a record of the teachings of Jesus as well as an expression of the faith of Jesus' followers
- In Jesus, God's Self-Revelation is complete. Therefore, how Jesus speaks and acts tell us something about God.
- Jesus introduces and preaches the concept of the Reign/Kingdom of God in Parables
- Jesus' teaching shows the relationship between the Kingdom and the "Law"
- Jesus as the paradigm for healer and reconciler offers us an exemplary model for human relationship
- The words and actions of Jesus serve as a model for the legitimacy of the "preferential option for the poor"

- Jesus' mandate that we continue his mission of compassionate service is revealed to us in the Sermon on the Mount and in Matthew's description of the final judgement (Mt. 25:31-46)
- In the Act of the Apostles, we see the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church
- The mission of the church begins with Jesus' Ascension and the Descent of the Holy Spirit
- The New Testament is the root of our understanding of Jesus as the "Bread of Life"
- The New Testament is the source of our understanding of the "Real Presence" of Jesus in the Eucharist
- St. Paul is the source of our understanding of Baptism as a dying and rising with Christ
- The Holy Spirit is made known to us in this life through her Gifts and Fruit (St. Paul)

Message/Moral Formation/Community/Service/Missionary Initiation:

- The Incarnation as the Mystery of the humanity and divinity of Jesus
- Jesus is the sacrament of Jesus Christ
- Faith describes our personal relationship with God. It is based on faith and trust in God's providential care
- The Catholic Faith is dependent not only on scripture but also on Tradition. Our traditional beliefs and practices evolved through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit throughout the ages
- Faith is the core that gives meaning to our lives and directs our actions lovingly toward God and others.
- The four Marks of the Roman Catholic Church are that it is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.
- It is in Jesus' name that the church serves, heals, and forgives
- Sacramentals are blessings, actions, and objects that remind us of God's presence with us and God's care for us
- The seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit are:
 1. Wisdom
 2. Understanding
 3. Knowledge
 4. Fortitude
 5. Counsel
 6. Piety
 7. Fear of the Lord
- The Fruits of the Spirit are:
 1. Love
 2. Joy
 3. Peace
 4. Patience
 5. Kindness
 6. Goodness
 7. Faithfulness
 8. Gentleness
 9. Self-control
- Theological Virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity
- Corporal Works of Mercy
 1. Feed the hungry
 2. Give drink to the thirsty
 3. Clothe the naked
 4. Shelter the homeless

5. Visit the sick
 6. Ransom the captive
 7. Bury the dead
- Spiritual Works of Mercy
 1. Instruct the ignorant
 2. Counsel the doubtful
 3. Admonish the sinner
 4. Bear wrongs patiently
 5. Forgive offenses
 6. Comfort the afflicted
 7. Pray for the living and the dead

Liturgy/Prayer/Worship:

- An increased awareness of the flow of liturgical seasons including the connection with the scripture proclaimed during the Liturgy of the Word
- The Liturgical Year is a cycle of seasons and feasts celebrating Christ with us
- There are five seasons of the liturgical year: Advent, Christmas, Lent, Triduum, including Easter, and Ordinary Time which is divided into two segments
- A deepening understanding of each individual sacrament as a celebration of god's love for us
- A greater appreciation for the sacraments within the context of liturgical worship
- The seven sacraments are effective signs of God's life and love in us
- There are three groupings of sacraments:
 - a) Sacraments of Initiation which are Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist
 - b) Sacraments of Healing which are Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick
 - c) Sacraments of Service or Commitment which are Matrimony and Holy Orders
- The Mass is divided into two parts: the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist
- In addition to the basic prayers listed for grade four, fifth graders should have memorized an Act of Faith, Hope, and Love, The Angelus, The Memorare, the Mysteries of the Rosary, and the Stations of the Cross; an introduction to and an awareness of the Liturgy of the Hours

<p>DESIRED FAITH RESPONSE GRADE 5 (SKILLS AND ATTITUDES)</p>

In addition to the faith responses listed for Grade 4, the following responses could be reasonably expected from students during fifth grade.

A developing understanding of:

- The role of the prophets in salvation history
- The major teachings of Jesus as they are presented in the new Testament
- Other religions and an awareness of the good that can be found in them
- An appreciation for the ways in which the seven sacraments mark special events as holy in the lives of Catholic Christians

A growing ability to:

- Exhibit a deeper curiosity about scripture and tradition and the ability to verbalize their questions and concerns regarding the faith
- Express their faith more fully through design of and participation in service projects
- Become more involved in the planning and orchestration of prayer experiences, liturgies, and service projects

A heightened:

- Awareness and integration of the flow of the liturgical seasons with daily life
- Ability to evangelize and incorporate a deepening understanding of faith into their lives especially within their own family systems

A developing facility for:

- Expressing the meaning of God's presence in their lives through language, music, art, and gestures

YOUNGER ADOLESCENTS

INTRODUCTION

Over the last 12-15 years, we have been encouraged by sociologists, developmentalists, psychologists, and those who pay particular attention to fostering faith, to consider adolescence as a developmental period with particular characteristics that find their beginnings in the life of the individual as early as age 10 or 11 and continue into one's early 20's. For the sake of these guidelines, we will use the terms younger and older adolescents to denote 11/12-14/15 year olds and 14/15-18/19 year olds respectively. This delineation is found in *The Challenge of Adolescent Catechesis: Maturing in Faith*. [This document was written in collaboration with the USCC, NCEA, NFCYM, and the then NCCD (now NCCL) and represents a comprehensive national effort to define the aim, content, focuses and principles of adolescent catechesis as it should be implemented in parish and school settings also through a collaborative effort of parish and school personnel.] It finds confirmation in those who make it their aim to study young people (As in the Center for Early Adolescence, formerly out of the University of North Carolina, Search Institute, and writers in the fields of religious education and youth ministry) as well as in catechetical documents. [Including *Sharing the Light of Faith: National Catechetical Directory for Catholics of the United States* (cf. NCD #180, #200) and the *General Catechetical Directory* (cf. GCD #83), and the *General Directory for Catechesis*, 1997] This course of study will pay particular attention to the younger adolescents in **Grades Six through Eight**.

In the recent letter of the United States Bishops to young people we see the intrinsic value of young people—not only as people on the way to being adults or “the church of tomorrow”—but as themselves today, as “the church of today.”

Dear young people...in you, we see the face of God. You are the young Church of today and our hope for the future. You are a mosaic of life reflecting the diversity of our nation and Church. You are truly a gift, and we praise and thank God for you. You are a special gift to the Church and to the World! (MYPH)

And Pope John Paul II has made clear the value he places on youth through instituting international and national celebrations of World Youth Day and through his many words of encouragement and challenge.

In the young there is, in fact, an immense potential for good and for creative possibility. Whenever I meet them in my travels throughout the world, I wait first of all to hear what they want to tell me about themselves, about their society, about their Church. And I always point out: “What I am going to say to you is not as important as what you are going to say to me. You will not necessarily say it to me in words: you will say it to me by your presence, by your song, perhaps by your dancing, by your skits, and finally by your enthusiasm.”

We need the enthusiasm of the young. We need their joie de vivre. In it is reflected something of the original joy God had in creating.... (John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.: New York, 1994, pp. 124-125)

And his understanding of this unique period is punctuated by his desire that young people come to know Christ in an even deeper way than they were able to as children.

In this search, they cannot help but encounter the Church. And the Church cannot help but encounter the young. The only necessity is that the Church have a profound understanding of what it means to be young, of the importance that youth has for every person. It is also necessary that the young know the Church that they perceive Christ in the Church, Christ who walks through the centuries alongside each generation, alongside every person. He walks alongside each person as a friend. (*Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, pp. 125-126)

It has increasingly been a concern that we, as church community, learn to more effectively convey the riches of our Catholic Christian faith to young people who are involved in the process of coming to increasing levels of self awareness and self determination. The Church must know the young, as Pope John Paul II so well put it, and the young must know the Church and in the Church find Christ who accompanies them. This journeying with the young is a guiding paradigm for youth ministry best captured in the gospel account of the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35). (*VYM*, p.5 - The Emmaus account is set forth as the scriptural model for youth ministry) Youth ministry, like Jesus' presence with the disciples on the road to Emmaus,

...begins with a presence to the young which engenders the confidence and hope to ask questions...By drawing out of the youth reflections on the action of God in the events of his or her own life, this sharing enables the young person to begin formulating answers in the light of witnessed tradition and gospel values. (*VYM*, p.5)

As we investigate appropriate curriculum for younger adolescents, we must remember that adolescent catechesis is most effective within a context of total youth ministry (cf. *NCD*, #228). Both the insights of documents and experience tell us that the art of effective adolescent catechesis is best expressed when the community knows its own story - knows Jesus - and can speak its story and its savior in a language that young people can understand. For catechesis "includes both the message presented and the way it is presented." (*NCD* #5) There is no doubt that Jesus is the primary message, and the life of the community, of the family, of the catechist/religion teacher/youth minister and the community's worship, rituals, and life in the world constitute the major ways in which the Good News is presented to the young.

KNOWING YOUNG PEOPLE SO AS TO COMMUNICATE THE GOOD NEWS

There is a wonderful story told by Wayne Rice (Rice, Wayne. *Junior High Ministry*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Youth Specialties, Inc., 1987, p. 50) that speaks of a young adolescent who received an archery set for his birthday. The day after his birthday, his father walked out the front door of his home to see his son shooting arrows at the side of the barn. Coming carefully around the other side of the barn he saw that there were arrows in the center of the targets. Knowing that his son had not used an archery set before, he approached him and said, "Son, you did a great job. But how did you do it? It's really impressive." And his young adolescent son said, "Dad, it was really easy. I shot the arrows and then painted the target around them."

There are times when the Good News is told, when programs are run, when activities are planned for young people and they do not respond. Perhaps we shoot the arrows of positive messages, of Scripture accounts, of traditions lovingly retold...but we do not shoot where they are. We assume that if we tell the story they must respond. And yet we are not really speaking to them. We do not even know who they are or where they are. Certainly our God has been the best model in being attentive to this in sharing the Good News. To speak to us God became one with us in Jesus - "God has visited his people" (CCC, #442) and the "Word became flesh so that thus we might know God's love" (CCC, #458).

Catechesis, therefore, should convey the word of God, as it is presented by the Church, in the language of the men to whom it is directed. (cf. DV, #13), (GCD, #32).

To be effective sharers of the Good News, we must know the young people with whom we are speaking. We must "visit" them where they live and speak the word in a language that they can understand. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* points out, quoting the Roman Catechism:

Above all, teachers must not imagine that a single kind of soul has been entrusted to them, and that consequently it is lawful to teach and form equally all the faithful in true piety with one and the same method! ...Those who are called to the ministry of preaching must suit their words to the maturity and understanding of their hearers, as they hand on the teaching of the mysteries of faith and the rules of moral conduct. (CCC, #24)

Although the message of the Good News is in some ways very simple:

The whole concern of doctrine and its teaching must be directed to the love that never ends. Whether something is proposed for belief, for hope or for action, the love of our Lord must always be made accessible, so that anyone can see that all the works of perfect Christian virtue spring from love and have no other objective than to arrive at love. (CCC, #25)

Still, this means of conveying that message must suit the hearer. "Catechetical materials are adapted to the stages of intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical development" (NCD, #181). So let us investigate the context of the adolescent with whom the community of faith wishes to in a most effective manner share the Good News anew.

DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The teenage years represent the critical period of transit from childhood to adulthood, during which physical, psychological and social growth is more concentrated than at any comparable time span in life. Since the development of faith is tied directly to the interpretation of meaning in one's life and experiences, the teenage years are an important juncture for the individual's spiritual development. The youth begins to forge a personal sense of meaning and set of values and becomes capable of a deeper personal relationship with Christ and responsible Christian action. (VYM, p. 8)

All human beings experience change during adolescence. This change can be exciting if it awakens a deeper sense of self-identity, leads to the expansion of authentic freedom, enhances our ability to relate to others, and promotes greater maturity. However, the changes of adolescence can also be depressing, alienating, and filled with self-doubt and anxiety. Precisely because of the many divergent possibilities, the time of adolescence is a unique opportunity for the Catholic Christian community to affirm, support, and challenge young people to grow as persons and believers. (CAC, p.3)

It is not news to adults in today's world that the adolescent years in an individual's development are crucial. If an adult's own life experience is not sufficient to bear this out, there are voluminous amounts of studies, ongoing research, easily accessed information, and even a plethora of institutions and companies who prey on adults/parents concerns about the healthy development of the teens they care about---and who may even make a business out of it. Accurate information is key so that those who wish to assist young people in their growth as persons and as persons of faith can know best what issues and needs they are addressing.

...AND THE YOUNGER ADOLESCENT

The young adolescent is in definite flux. Explosions of growth in every possible area of life are normal. There is little stability, little that the early adolescent can call consistent.

Early adolescents will experience a rate of physical growth, second only to infancy, during this stage of life. This time, however, they will live through it self-conscious and self-aware! In addition, their growth may be "crooked", with different aspects of their development happening at different speeds. Early adolescents may be beginning to stretch cognitively as well, varying between black and white concrete thinking and the very beginnings of abstract thought. They are often engaged in cognitive aerobics as they explore and exercise new paths of thoughts asking questions by making statements ("I don't want to go to Mass" rather than "Why do we go to Mass?"), exploring double entendre and puns and plays on words or images. They alternate between a concrete worldview and the suspicion that there is another way to see, which they can only glimpse now and then and cannot hold onto.

The early adolescent's need for connection, affiliation, and identity is strongly expressed in the "whom do I belong to?" search. Peers become more than the collection of best friends that an elementary child may have. They are a group in which they find security in conformity, even when everything about them seems to be frustratingly distinct...the early adolescent finds it extremely painful to be different when developmentally they cannot be otherwise. They need to be "normal" and like everyone else, even when there is no such thing as "normal."

This poignant description Annie Dillard gives of her own early adolescence well describes the flutter of emotions - conscious or unconscious - that accompanies the piecemeal awakening process, which is early adolescence.

I woke in bits, like all children, piecemeal over the years. I discovered myself and the world, and forgot them, and discovered them again. I woke at intervals until...the intervals of waking tipped the scales, and I was more often awake than not. I noticed this process of waking, and predicted with terrifying logic that one of these years not far away I would be awake continuously and never slip back, and never be free of myself again. (Dillard, Annie. *An American Childhood*, New York: Harper and Row Publisher, 1987, p. 11)

The high energy, the exhaustion, the finding themselves present and in their own way, the sense of being looked at by everyone and the need to get attention -- their own and others -- on anything and anyone but them, the deep loyalties, the utter embarrassment, these are part of the emotional interplay the early adolescent wakes to. No wonder early adolescents are confusing and somewhat scary to many adults. They are at least doubly so to themselves! (Cahoon, Joanne M. "Prayer and the Early Adolescent", found in *Access Guide to Youth Ministry: Early Adolescent Ministry*, New Rochelle, New York: Salesian Society Inc., Don Bosco Multimedia, 1991, pp. 197-198)

In the midst of so much change and simultaneous increase in awareness, the young adolescent finds him or herself in particular need of belonging to communities where support, identification, belonging and affiliation can happen. The Church has an opportunity at this time in an individual's life, perhaps not exceeded at any other time, to provide a needed safety and a

place where the individual can learn about relationships and develop friendships with peers that can provide much needed support.

THE AIM OF ADOLESCENT CATECHESIS

Once there is a basic understanding of who younger adolescents are it is appropriate to ask what is our aim in the catechesis of adolescents. The collaborative bodies of NCEA, USCC, NCDD, and NFCYM have defined that aim with one voice that echoes clearly from our tradition.

The primary aim of adolescent catechesis is to sponsor youth toward maturity in Catholic Christian faith as a living reality.

We adults guide, challenge, affirm, and encourage youth in their journey toward maturity in faith. We have two tasks: to foster in youth a communal identity as Catholic Christians and to help them develop their own personal faith identity. To accomplish the first task, we present the faith convictions and values of the Catholic Christian tradition and invite adolescents to adopt and own these values and convictions. To effect the second, we help adolescents respond to God in faith, in prayer, in values, and in behavior. The sense of belonging experienced by youth in an active Christian community supports these two tasks of adolescent catechesis. (CAC, p.8)

JESUS...TO COME TO KNOW AND TO PROCLAIM

The person that young people need most to meet in their journey of faith is Jesus of Nazareth. This is true for all catechesis:

“At the heart of catechesis we find, in essence, a Person, the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, the only Son from the Father...who suffered died for us and who now, after rising, is living with us forever.” To catechize is “to reveal in the Person of Christ the whole of God’s eternal design reaching fulfillment in that Person. It is to seek to understand the meaning of Christ’s actions and words and of the signs worked by him.” Catechesis aims at putting “people...in communion...with Jesus Christ; only he can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity.” (CCC, #426)

The increased outreach to young people throughout the U.S. through youth ministry and adolescent catechesis efforts needs always to have at its heart this proclamation of the person of Jesus. It is this relationship with Jesus that will best strengthen young people for the

challenges they face, and which will guide them through years of change and life impacting decisions.

Our ministry to young people needs to include the explicit verbal proclamation of the Good News. Youth need to literally hear the Good News of Jesus. "There is no true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, are not proclaimed." (*EN #22, CCYE*, p. 11)

As methodologies become more creative, and catechetical materials become more grounded in the language and the culture of youth (as is appropriate...see...above), these cannot replace the proclamation of the person of Jesus. For catechesis is not only the way it is presented, it is the message. (*NCD, #5*) One of the most poignant invitations of the US Bishops to young people echoes that of Pope John Paul II in the introduction to this section of the guidelines.

God our Father invites you to discover the meaning of life centered in Jesus Christ. This conviction provides a foundation for your life. It gives you values and beliefs that can keep your dreams alive as you face the many challenges of life...

We invite you to know Jesus Christ as a companion and friend, teacher and savior, and to discover what he has to offer as you live your life today. See in Jesus Christ the one God-man whose life gives meaning to the joys and sufferings of millions of people over thousands of years. See in Jesus Christ the One who can help you live your life to the fullest! "I came so that you may have life and have it more abundantly." (*JN 10:10*)(*MYPH, 1995*)

This should remind all engaged in adolescent catechesis that we are but servants of a work we know only part of...and that both we and the young people we share with are disciples of the same Jesus. To teach Jesus is never to go wrong.

Whatever be the level of his responsibility in the Church, every catechist must constantly endeavor to transmit by his teaching and behavior the teaching and life of Jesus. (*CT, #6*)

Young people who come to know Jesus as companion and friend are the best evangelizers of their peers.

Young people who are well trained in faith and prayer must become more and more the apostles of youth. The Church counts greatly on their contribution, and we ourselves have often manifested our full confidence in them. (*EN, #72*)

Pope John Paul II counts on them too to proclaim that which they have received.

Do not be afraid to go out on the streets and into public places, like the first Apostles who preached Christ and the Good News of salvation in the squares of cities, towns and villages. This is no time to be ashamed of the Gospel. It is the time to preach it from the rooftops.... (John Paul II, Excerpt from homily at World Youth Day in Denver, Colorado, August 1993)

Young people then, are invited to come to know Jesus and, in knowing him, to let their hearts be moved by that which moves his heart. They, with the entire Catholic Christian community, are called to be disciples of Jesus who work for justice, who preach the Gospel, who wash feet, who love enemies, who live life abundant at home, work, and school. They are called to be...

SIX TASKS OF CATECHESIS

The Course of Study is rooted in the 6 tasks of catechesis, as listed by *The General Directory for Catechesis*:

1. Promoting knowledge of the faith
2. Liturgical education
3. Moral formation
4. Teaching to pray
5. Education for community life
6. Missionary initiation (#85).

These tasks are reflected in the following framework.

A FRAMEWORK FOR ADOLESCENT CATECHESIS

When The Challenge of Adolescent Catechesis: Maturing in Faith was published, its authors from the various youth serving national agencies and the USCC took seriously their charge to identify appropriate faith themes to be handled with adolescents - both younger and older - in order to provide a systematic, orderly and focused presentation of the Catholic Christian tradition. Seven faith themes were identified as appropriate for younger adolescents and nine for older adolescents. In addition there were to be six dimensions woven through each faith theme treated. Recent catechetical materials for adolescents have taken seriously the charge of this document and addressed the identified faith themes.

Given that an individual Catholic Christian will be continually engaged in the process of better understanding and integrating one's faith, *The Challenge of Adolescent Catechesis* took on the task of identifying what specific aspects of the Good News are particularly appropriate for focus given the developmental reality of young people, their readiness, their questions, and preparing them for life as an adult disciple of Jesus.

Reprinted here is Chapter #4 of the document *The Challenge of Adolescent Catechesis: Maturing in Faith*. (CAC, pp. 12-15) Note that with each faith theme identified, there have been added correlating sections from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

By focusing on key faith themes, adolescent catechesis provides a systematic, orderly, and focused presentation of the Catholic Christian tradition. Six integral dimensions are woven throughout each of these themes.

Jesus Christ - Every faith theme includes a discussion of its relationship to Jesus and the Gospel. Thus the adolescent develops an understanding of Jesus and his message and is invited to a personal response in faith to both.

Scripture - The catechesis for each faith theme is grounded in Scripture. This fosters in adolescents a deepening knowledge and appreciation of the Scriptures in Church's tradition and in their own lives.

(Writer's note: We recognize that the Hebrew scriptures, traditionally the focus of the sixth grade curriculum, is one appropriate lens for reflecting on and treating the content in the faith themes that follow.)

Church - Each faith theme affirms the vision of the Church as a historical community of people committed to the vision, values, and mission of Jesus. In seeking to create experiences of such a community, ministers establish this Church in the minds and hearts of the young people.

Prayer - Each faith theme leads to and flows from prayer. Adolescents learn to pray by personally and communally experiencing prayer.

Action/Lifestyle - Each faith theme leads to action that reflects a Christian lifestyle. This empowers young people to live a more faithful Christian life -- personally, interpersonally, and socially/politically.

Interpretation and Critical Reflection - Each faith theme seeks to promote critical reflection and interpretation that affirms and critiques the values and behaviors of culture and society. This enables young

people to interpret their own culture, ethnic culture, society, and life experience in the light of the Catholic Christian faith.

This framework presents faith themes designed in light of the learning needs of younger adolescents and older adolescents. The framework, which can be used as the basis for developing the scope, sequence, and objectives of a curriculum, is not intended to serve all the needs of a given situation. Local leaders need to adapt the framework to the particular needs of their youth, and they may also need to include additional faith themes not presented in this paper.

The suggested content for the faith themes is drawn from the Catholic Christian tradition and the developmental, sociological, and cultural research on youth. The selection of each faith theme is designed to “shed the light of the Christian message on the realities, which have greater impact on the adolescent.” (*GCD #84*) The catechetical focus for each faith theme is in keeping with the developmental and social readiness of the adolescent. Themes that occur for both younger and older adolescents are given new perspectives in light of the adolescent’s experience.

FAITH THEMES FOR YOUNGER ADOLESCENTS

Church (see *CCC #36, 551-553, 748-972*)

Focus: This faith theme helps younger adolescents understand and experience the Catholic Christian story and mission and become involved in the Christian community.

Suggested Content:

- the story of the Church as related to the younger adolescent’s story;
- Jesus’ mission and ministry as these continue today through the Christian community’s ministries of Word, worship, community building, and service;
- the global and multicultural reality of the Church;
- the community life and ministries in the other major Christian churches; (see *CCC, #2791*)
- involvement in the life, mission, and work of the parish community and family.

Jesus and the Gospel Message (see *CCC, #422-682*)

Focus: This faith theme helps younger adolescents follow Jesus, develop a more personal relationship with Him, concentrate on the person and teaching of Jesus, discover what a relationship with Jesus means, and respond to Jesus from a growing inner sense of self.

Suggested Content:

- Christian faith as a personal response to and relationship with Jesus
- Gospel discipleship or the exploring of what following Jesus and living the Good News means;
- the person of Jesus - his values, intentions, motives, and attitudes;
- the key themes of the Good News (what Jesus teaches us about God, prayer, justice/peace, service, and moral life);
- the impact of the Good News on the adolescent's life;
- the response of the first disciples to Jesus and the Good News.

Morality and Moral Decision Making (see CCC, #1776-1789)

Focus: This faith theme helps younger adolescents apply Catholic Christian moral values as maturing persons who are becoming increasingly capable of using decision-making skills to make free and responsible choices.

Suggested Content:

- Jesus' vision of being fully human as the foundation of Catholic Christian morality; (see CCC, #1691)
- the moral values in Jesus' teachings;
- Catholic Christian moral values that relate to the life of the adolescent;
- the basis of moral decision-making within a Catholic Christian context: conscience, sin, and reconciliation; (see CCC, #396-421, 386-388, 545, 589, 1480-1497, 1846-1850)
- four sources of moral maturing: mind, heart, family/other persons, and Catholic Christian tradition;
- skills for critically reflecting on self, youth culture, and media and society's values in light of Catholic Christian moral values.

Personal Growth (see CCC, #27-30, 33, 343, 355-360, 478, 1701-1705, 2158)

Focus: This faith theme helps younger adolescents develop a stronger and more realistic concept of self by exploring who they are and who they can become.

Suggested Content:

- the building of a strong and realistic concept of self with an emphasis on self-concept, growing autonomy, and self-determination;
- Jesus' vision of being fully human and its impact on the younger adolescent's growing identity as a Christian;
- the response of the Good News and tradition to adolescent struggles (isolation, loneliness, frustration, anger) and problems (suicide, substance abuse);
- the development of skills for handling peer pressure and values, and adolescent problems.

Relationships (see CCC #1878-1882, 2207-2213, 2792-2793)

Focus: This faith theme helps younger adolescents develop more mutual, trusting, and loyal relationships with peers, parents, and other adults by emphasizing skills that enhance and maintain relationships.

Suggested Content:

- the nature of relationships;
- Jesus' life of service and teaching on living a life of loving service;
- relationships in the Christian community;
- the development of responsible relationships with an emphasis on honesty, love, and respect; (see CCC, #1930-1934)
- the development of skills, such as active listening and self disclosure, for communicating with peers, parents, and other adults.

Service (see CCC #1932, 2443-2449, 2831)

Focus: This faith theme helps younger adolescents explore Jesus' call to live a life of loving service, discover that such a life is integral to discipleship, develop a foundation for a social justice consciousness, and participate in service that involves relationships and concrete action.

Suggested Content:

- Jesus' life of service and his teaching on living a life of loving services;
- service as an essential element of discipleship;
- the development of knowledge and skills needed to engage in service;
- service projects;

- reflection on involvement in service projects.

Sexuality (see CCC #2331-2337)

Focus: This faith theme helps younger adolescents learn about sexual development, better understand the dynamics of maturing as a sexual person within a Catholic Christian's value context, and discuss sexuality with their parents using a Catholic Christian value-based approach.

Suggested Content:

- sexual development with an emphasis on accurate information
- sexuality as integral to one's personal identity with an explanation of gender identity and roles; (see CCC #369)
- relationships and dating;
- Catholic Christian understanding of sexuality and sexual moral values.

The recent document *Renewing the Vision, 1997*, confirmed these faith themes and organized them according to the structure of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. *Renewing the Vision* also mandated additional faith themes for younger adolescents including the following:

- *Catholic Beliefs* – understanding the Creed and the core beliefs of the Catholic faith.
- *Holy Trinity* – introduction to God's unique self-revelation as three in one and some implications for living Christian faith and spiritual life.
- *Sacraments* – understanding the role of the sacraments in the Christian life and experiencing the Church's celebration of the sacraments.
- *Church Year* – understanding the meaning of the liturgical seasons of the Church year and the scriptural teachings presented through the Lectionary.
- *Life in the Spirit* – understanding how the Spirit dwells in our midst in a new way since Pentecost and understanding that God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.
- *The Dignity of the Human Person* – recognizing the divine image present in every human person.
- *Grace as Gift* – recognizing God's indwelling spirit in our lives and responding to this gift, which justifies and sanctifies us through God's law.
- *Lifestyles and Vocation* – discerning how to live the Christian vocation in the world, in the workplace, and in marriage, single life, ministerial priesthood, permanent diaconate, or consecrated life.

- *Christian Prayer* – understanding and experiencing the many forms of prayer in the Church – especially prayer through the church year – and the importance of the “Our Father” in Christian prayer.

Desired Pastoral Approach

This framework for adolescent catechesis effectively provides a “scope and sequence” for younger adolescents. Parishes and high schools, in partnership with families, need to provide education in and exposure to the topics outlined in the faith themes. Similar to other disciplines in the course of study, this document provides the curriculum content. Textbooks and other instructional materials are tools to be used to address these content areas. At this time, many school religion texts are not structured to reflect these faith themes. Planning for such a comprehensive approach will necessitate collaboration between parish and school personnel and systematic planning. In parishes, coordinators of youth ministry, directors of religious education, and priests and pastoral associates need to collaborate in their planning and implementation of programming and outreach. There will also be a need to integrate remote and immediate preparation for the sacrament of Confirmation in the midst of regular adolescent catechesis programming. (CAC, pp. 17-18, 15) In schools, principals, campus ministry coordinators, religion department chairpersons, and community service coordinators collaborate in comprehensive planning. (CAC, pp. 18-19) Parishes and schools need to be knowledgeable regarding the programming each makes available to the same young people. Emphasis needs to be placed on deepening the young person’s experience of, affiliation to, and exploring of their faith in contexts (parishes, schools, and families) that complement each other because they are in close communication.

Because frequently younger adolescents are approaching some degree of “school burnout,” it should be remembered that although programs must provide systematic and intentional catechesis - they do not need to appear that way to the adolescent. Effective, adolescent catechesis professionals in schools will use creative methodologies and strive to keep in healthy balance the teaching of religion as an academic course and the call to invite young people to deeper faith affiliation by showing them what is attractive and compelling in the person of Jesus, the content of the Good News and Church doctrine. It would also make no sense for a school to handle the faith themes comprehensively in curriculum planning and then, in implementation, to alienate young people from faith due to ineffective methodology or a lack of pastoral sensitivity. Instead, let us take heart for the real challenge of adolescent catechesis by remembering that:

God’s Word when proclaimed, celebrated, shared, and lived in the Christian community is dynamic and fruitful. What an opportunity exists when the energy and giftedness of young people can be engaged with the vibrancy and richness of God’s Word! The possibilities for personal development and growth in faith are then enormous and can lead to a richer life for the entire Catholic Christian community and for the family. The enthusiasm and challenge offered by young people who become more involved in the life of the Church can energize parish, home, and society. (CAC, p. 3)

DESIRED FAITH RESPONSES

Young people are on a journey toward the realization of a number of characteristics of Catholic Christian maturity. A systematic, planned, and intentional adolescent catechesis addresses these characteristics by blending knowledge and understanding with skills and attitudes and by emphasizing the believing, trusting, and doing dimensions of Christian faith. The following characteristics, which need to be adapted to the social and cultural settings of the ministry, provide a guide to direct the catechetical effort in the adolescent's years (CAC, p.8).

- The maturing adolescent is developing a clear personal identity and is learning how to accept one's self as lovable and loved by God and others.
- The maturing adolescent is developing a commitment to personal faith and taking responsibility for his or her own faith life and ongoing growth as a Catholic Christian, which involves the gradual realization and response to the plan, will, and purpose of God for the world.
- The maturing adolescent is developing a mature relationship with Jesus Christ whom the adolescent has come to know in a personal way in the Scriptures and in the life and teachings of the Catholic Christian community.
- The maturing adolescent is learning the skills of critical reflection that enables one to analyze life experience, society, culture, and Church in light of the Good News of Jesus Christ.
- The maturing adolescent is developing an appreciation for the importance of the Scriptures in the Christian life and learning the skills for reading and interpreting the Scriptures.
- The maturing adolescent is developing a personal pattern of personal and communal prayer and worship and understands and appreciates the sacramental life of the Church, especially the Eucharist.
- The maturing adolescent is developing an appreciation for and knowledge of the Catholic Christian tradition, its doctrinal expression, and its applicability to life in today's complex society.
- The maturing adolescent is actively engaged in the life, mission, and work of the Catholic Christian community and in particular his or her own family, the Church of the Home.
- The maturing adolescent is developing an interiorized, principled Catholic, Christian moral value system and is able to confront moral issues using principles of Catholic Christian moral decision making.

- The maturing adolescent is integrating sexuality into his or her personality in a holistic way within the context of the sexual values of the Catholic Christian community and in particular his or her own family.
- The maturing adolescent is beginning to appreciate deeper relationships and is learning the skills for developing and maintaining relationships.
- The maturing adolescent is developing a life of Christian service modeled on Jesus' life and is learning that life is enriched when one gives one's self for others.
- The maturing adolescent is realizing that Christian faith means a commitment to justice and peace at the personal, interpersonal, and social/political levels of one's life and is acquiring the tools to work for justice and peace.
- The maturing adolescent is discovering how one's spirituality can be lived out through a variety of adult lifestyles. (CAC, p.8)

CONCLUSION

In preparing a curriculum for younger adolescents, there is much to consider. From who it is that we are conveying the message to (adolescent development, ethnic culture, and youth culture) to the person who is the primary message (Jesus of Nazareth) to the characteristics of the catechist/religion teacher/youth minister to the appropriate themes of our faith which deserve particular emphasis during this time of a young person's life. The task is not an easy one, but it is one which deserves all our passion. Young people know when adults or when systems do things they aren't really committed to. We are committed to communicating the faith to young people. "For the love of Christ impels us" (2 Cor 5:14). May we make that love the energy for our efforts to engage in the challenge.

The opportunity of engaging adolescents in the life of the Church challenges us. As youth experience and express their expanding freedom, they resist mediocre or halfhearted efforts. Effective catechesis with youth requires that adult members of our community grow continually in their faith and in their ability to share it with others.....We cannot expect more of youth than we do of adults. The ways we adults learn about, express, and live our faith is a vigorous support or a serious obstacle in effectively catechizing youth. (CAC, p.3)