

RELIGION CURRICULUM OVERVIEW: K3/4-12



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JANUARY 2020

Introduction

Anyone who attends Catholic school or a parish religious education program is expected to know certain key truths of our faith: truths about God— Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; why we go to Mass and receive the sacraments; why the Bible is so vital to our Christian lives; how a follower of Christ acts; why and how we pray; what the Blessed Virgin Mary, the saints, and believers all around the world mean to us; why we have a Church and how it is organized.

Beyond dogmas and doctrines, rules and customs, children and youth growing up in the Catholic Church need to come to see our faith truly as a way of life and as an exciting way to be in the world. Our religious education programs, then, are about both informing and forming young disciples of Jesus Christ.

The curriculum which follows is an outline of things to be taught and actions to be undertaken with children and youth who are finding their way as followers of Christ. It is a guideline for helping them grow up in the Church. Love, wisdom, and the knowledge of Jesus Christ are its goals.

We begin with foundations: why we do what we do. We then proceed with more specifics about methodology and chronology: what happens as we impart our faith and when it typically happens.

We set forth these guidelines for the Diocese of Charleston in the hope that they strengthen the catechetical ministry of the Church, provide a rich and reliable service to our bishop, and stimulate new vigor as the people of God come to know and love Jesus Christ more and more each day. We commend to the prayers of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of the Apostles, and St. John the Baptist, forerunner of Christ and great patron of this local Church, what we hope for: the fruitfulness and success of our catechetical ministry to the Church of Charleston. We do so lifting our minds and hearts to God, collectively and one by one: My prayer is that your love may more and more abound, both in understanding and wealth of experience, so that with a clear conscience and blameless conduct you may learn to value the things that really matter, up to the very day of Christ (Phil 1:9-10).



The Church's Teaching Heart

The catechetical ministry of the Church flows from, and has constant reference to, the Church's essential nature and mission, announced by the Lord Jesus Christ in his farewell address to his friends: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt 28:19). From this command the Church goes forth, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to every place and age preaching the saving Gospel of her Lord and Bridegroom, Jesus Christ. He is the orientation, the focus, and the energy of every effort of evangelization and catechesis. Only Jesus Christ can lead us to the heart of the Father in the Holy Spirit. Only Christ can invite us to participate in the life of the Most Blessed Trinity. This participation in the divine life — here and in the world to come — is the destiny which God intends for every human life. Helping others to realize this call is the goal of all evangelization (spreading of Gospel truth) and catechesis (instruction in the faith).

The Lord Jesus entrusted the ministry of teaching to his apostles and their successors, the bishops. From the earliest days of Christianity, the bishops have communicated the truths of our faith to men, women, and children throughout the world. As the Church has grown, its bishops have increasingly relied on their priests, members of religious communities, and trained lay people to carry on this great ministry of preaching. This ministry of teaching seeks to communicate not only a body of knowledge about the faith — its content — but, most importantly, to communicate Christ himself. Therefore, the person of Christ is central and holds the position of top priority in the work of catechesis, and our ongoing renewal of catechesis, in the Diocese of Charleston. As Pope Benedict XVI has said, every member of the Church must continue to "be surprised by the Gospel, by the encounter with Christ" and, from that amazement, to go forth energetically to introduce and reintroduce others to him (*Benedict XVI, "Homily for the Mass of the Inauguration of the Pontificate," April 2005*).

The documents on catechesis that have been issued by the supreme pastors of our time have all emphasized Christ's primacy in catechesis. Pope St. John Paul II wrote: "At the heart of catechesis we find, in essence, a Person, the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, 'the only Son from the Father...full of grace and truth,' who suffered and died for us and who now, after rising, is living with us forever" (*John Paul II, quoting Jn 1:14, in Catechesi Tradendae, 5*). All evangelization and catechesis must be oriented towards Christ, because, as the late Holy Father has said, "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" (*Cat. Trad., 5*).

The bishops of the Church and, from their authority, the pastors and the people of faith who have been designated as parish catechetical leaders, principals, youth ministers, catechists, teachers, and members of RCIA teams are charged with imparting the **Good News of Jesus Christ**, which is both his "person and message." We recognize that this Good News is gradually received by those baptized in infancy or early childhood. Thus, the Church, in its teaching, has a special mission to arouse faith, open hearts, establish trust, and prepare children for adherence to Christ as they come to Christian maturity. In order for this to happen, it is essential that "every catechist...constantly endeavor to transmit by his or her teaching and behavior the teaching and life of Jesus" (*Cat. Trad., 6*). In the end, it is Christ himself who instructs the heart. Everything that we do must be designed to open hearts to receive him.

Parents Form the Domestic Church

Religious Education & the Family



Evangelization is at the core of who we are as People of God. The great commission given to “make disciples of all nations” lies at the heart of the mission of the Church and thus at the heart of what parents are called to do in raising their children. Parents are called to share with their children the Good News that Jesus Christ was born, ministered among the people, suffered and died and was raised up on the third day. In the power of his resurrection, we are freed from sin when we are baptized. The ancient call that ends the gospel of St. Matthew empowers parents and emboldens their faith. It is not only a call to action but also a reminder that parents are not alone: “I am with you always, until the end of the age” (Mt 28:20).

The role of parents in the passing on of our Christian beliefs and practices is primary. As the Church’s General Directory for Catechesis states, “Parents are the primary educators in the faith” (*GDC*, 255). So important is the family in the imparting of our faith that the Second Vatican Council insisted that parents form, in their households and with their children, “the domestic Church” (*Lumen Gentium*, 11), where parents serve as “heralds” of the faith, the first evangelizers. The family becomes “an outstanding school of the lay apostolate” (*LG*, 35) as its members mature in faith and reach out to those around them.

Catechesis, thus, begins in the home — with parents who themselves are open to learning and growing in their faith and understand this learning and growth as a lifetime endeavor. They must actively engage in the sacramental life of the Church and involve themselves with their own particular parish community. Our faith is not one of separation and individuality but one of a people joined in community who work and worship together.

By looking at and thinking and/or praying about the following questions, parents can see how their child’s vision of God might be formed:

- What sort of educational opportunities do parents provide?
- What is the relationship like among the adults in the home?
- How do the adults handle conflict?
- What do parents choose to discuss when the family is together?
- Does religion or God enter the conversation?
- Are there any religious symbols in the home? How does the number compare with the number of computers, iPods, TV’s, cell phones, etc.?
- Does the family’s daily language make any reference to scripture stories?

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These are questions that parents may want to consider simply as conversation starters. Parents are stewards of their children's faith development. No one expects parents to be theologians.

Religious education programs exist to support parents, but they never replace them. There's no reason parents can't pray before meals, attend Mass, go to reconciliation and integrate scripture into their lives. The scriptures are God's inspired revelation, passed on by word of mouth and then written down for us. Parents can call children's attention to the scriptures read on Sunday and ask if there is something that catches their ear or attention. Having a Bible at home and using it — starting with a children's Bible — makes the scriptures more relevant to the life of the children and of the whole family. **Remember: Parents are not alone.** There are people and resources ready at hand.

Aside from promoting a religious atmosphere in the family, parents must always strive to create a continuity between the life lived at home and the life lived with their parish community. Parents are accountable to their pastors for the manner in which they tend to the formation of their children in the faith and the regularity with which they participate in the life of the Eucharistic community centered in their parish. This unity and continuity is foundational to a child's growth in faith. If there is significant discord between one's home life and one's experience at church or in religious education, the child gets a distorted view of membership and belonging. Given that our God, the Trinity in unity, is a community of love, it is important that community is modeled in the child's day to day encounters. A sense of integration, of joint effort, is vitally important to what happens in the "domestic Church." It can only be achieved when parents, catechists, teachers, directors, principals, and clergy cooperate harmoniously and consistently in transmitting the faith.

Thus it is appropriate that parents expect and request the help they need in the religious formation of their children, and it is appropriate that Catholic parishes and schools have basic expectations of parents in terms of attendance and active participation.



Students: Front & Center

At that time the disciples approached Jesus and said, 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' He called a child over, placed it in their midst, and said, 'Amen, *I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever receives one child such as this in my name receives me*' (Mt 18:1-5).

Jesus put a priority on treating children with dignity and respect and also responding to their needs for affiliation, understanding, and a sense of closeness to God and holy things. Keeping the spotlight on why religious education exists – namely, to nourish the faith of young people and their families and to educate them in the ways of the Roman Catholic faith – will enable parishes to develop loving and caring religious education programs and dynamic faith communities in Catholic schools.

In conducting a parish religious education program or a religion curriculum in a school, pastors, DRE's, and principals need to consider those being served. Children and their parents come from differing ethnic, economic, and academic backgrounds and, in some cases, from families whose beliefs and religious practices vary widely. They have different interests, needs, learning styles, ability levels, customs, and priorities. Thus, it is all important to assess the student population and to get a sense of the situations of their families.

- *Who are these families?*
- *What do they need?*
- *Are they excited and invested in religion, curious but uncertain, apathetic, or grudgingly dutiful?*
- *Are there personal issues or matters of parental custody which affect the child's attendance and attitudes?*
- *Is there a way to accommodate children with learning disabilities or special emotional or physical needs?*
- *What response should be made to those who prefer home-schooling?*

A few key principles come into play here:

- **FIRST OF ALL**, religious education is the responsibility of parents, who are entitled to receive assistance from the parish. It is also the responsibility of pastors, who oversee the instruction of the faithful in the name of the bishop. Thus it is also the duty of the parish to provide resources which meet children's needs.
- **SECOND**, instructional materials, including textbooks, should be reviewed regularly and replaced as needed. Aside from doctrinal content and condition of materials, attention should be given to the way in which different learning styles and backgrounds are appealed to and acknowledged.
- **THIRD**, inability to contribute to the cost of books or other materials used in parish programs ought not to be a deterrent to a child's participation. In Catholic schools it is reasonable to charge tuition and fees, but efforts should be made to provide scholarships or other forms of assistance. Catholic education, in whatever form, ought to be as accessible as possible.
- **FOURTH**, while parish and school programs may not be able to accommodate every special need, parish catechetical leaders and school leaders should make every effort to work with families to provide the necessary accommodations and incorporate those with special needs into catechetical sessions as much as is possible.


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- **FIFTH**, the Church respects the right of parents to oversee the education of their children and indeed affirms the role of the family as having “the primary responsibility for faith formation.” However, the Church is ecclesial – that is, communal – in nature, and catechesis ordinarily embraces the larger community of faith as well. Even when catechesis is taking place according to a home-centered model, a sense of larger Church must be communicated, modeled, and experienced. Sacramental preparation programs are planned on the parish level, though they may at times include several parishes working cooperatively. These sacramental programs include segments for the parents and guardians of children preparing for each sacrament – *Reconciliation, Eucharist, or Confirmation*. All children are to participate in the parish program for each sacrament which they are preparing to receive.
 - *The Guidelines state:* “A parish sacramental program should bring together Catholic, private, and public school children, and those being home schooled” (p.30). Across the diocese the number of joint sessions, involving students from various educational settings and their parents, varies from two to six, with three to four being typical. Those preparing for the sacraments are to follow the directives of the parish catechetical leader and their pastor.
- **FINALLY**, a Christ-like reverence for life and human dignity dictates that every parish and school religious education program be especially vigilant that all provisions for and safeguards of a safe environment be in place. This means that;
 - Paid staff and adult volunteers have **appropriate background checks** and diocesan Safe Environment training, in accordance with all diocesan regulations set forth by the Office for Child and Youth Protection;
 - Students are given **age-appropriate safe environment** training;
 - **Children are never left unattended;**
 - **Facilities are regularly surveyed** for all safety issues;
 - **Contact information for victim assistance is posted** and known to adults working with children.



Catechizing

Persons with Special Needs



All baptized Catholics have a right to catechesis. Those with special needs are no exception to this rule. Whether one has a cognitive, developmental, learning, emotional, physical, or other disability, he or she is an integral part of the family of God. Thus, the National Directory for Catechesis (NDC) urges that, as much as is possible, persons with disabilities of any kind be integrated into ordinary catechetical programs (NDC 207).

All members of the Body of Christ should be catechized in a manner suited to their abilities. Pastorally, meeting the variety of special needs that individuals may have is a challenging task, but consultation with family members and other experts within the community can prove to be very valuable to a catechist or catechetical leader who needs guidance and/or assistance in this task.

In June 2017, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops approved a revised edition of the ***Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities***. These guidelines emphasize inclusivity as a visible manifestation of the richness of Church. They provide some concrete guidance to pastors, catechetical leaders, catechists, and all who serve persons with special needs.


These guidelines can be found on the USCCB website:

<http://www.usccb.org/about/divine-worship/policies/guidelines-sacraments-persons-with-disabilities.cfm>

Furthermore, it ought to be remembered, as the National Directory for Catechesis notes, that individuals with special needs are not simply passive recipients of the faith, but are also active agents of the Gospel: “All persons with disabilities have the capacity to proclaim the Gospel and to be living witnesses to its truth within the community of faith and offer valuable gifts. Their involvement enriches every aspect of Church life” (NDC 207).

The living witness of persons with special needs is a powerful testimony to the glory of God active in the world, and the Church’s proclamation of the Gospel is strengthened by it. Those with special needs demonstrate to world the rich diversity of ways in which the good news of salvation can be received and communicated. Catechists and catechetical leaders are called to help prepare all the faithful to live out this essential mission of the Church according to their needs and ability.

The Bishop & the Pastor



Parents, catechists, catechetical leaders, teachers, principals, and all the faithful must understand that the Church's proclamation of the Good News depends on the special teaching office of the bishop. The bishop is entrusted with the duty to communicate the truths of the faith with clarity, fidelity to the apostolic tradition, and fervor. Preaching the Gospel is, in fact, the "first task" of the bishop (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 888). The bishop is charged with assuring that God's people enjoy "the objective possibility of professing the true faith without error... Thus, the pastoral duty of the Magisterium is aimed at seeing to it that the People of God abides in the truth that liberates" (CCC, 890).

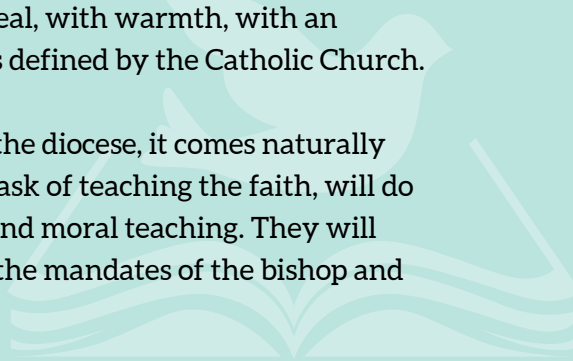
The Bishop of Charleston is, thus, the first teacher of the faith throughout the diocese. He is "the visible source and foundation of unity in [his] own particular church" (CCC, 886) – namely, this geographically widespread diocese in which we find ourselves. All of our parish programs, Catholic schools, and home-based catechesis look to the bishop for leadership and approval in our teaching of the faith.

In order to assure that the faith is being taught soundly and well, the Office of Catechesis and Christian Initiation has the task of overseeing religion programs and providing guidelines so that the bishop's mandate to teach is fulfilled. Our bishop has the solemn task of assuring the orthodoxy of our efforts. Along with his brother bishops, and under the authority of the Holy Father, the bishop is the primary teacher of faith and morals as well as being the primary celebrant and guarantor of the Church's liturgical life. What is often called "Creed, Code, and Cult" – the dynamic of doctrine, moral teaching, and liturgical celebration – is all led by the bishop as shepherd.

In the earliest days of the Church, the faithful were initiated into the faith by their bishops. It was only with the expansion of the Church into broad geographic regions that more and more tasks were delegated to the priests serving as pastors. The Catechism makes it very clear that the priests of the diocese preach, celebrate liturgy, and teach the faith by delegation from, and under obedience to, our bishop. Our pastors, ordained administrators, and parochial vicars serve as "co-workers" with the bishop in the transmission of the faith (CCC, 888).

These pastors, then, select leaders for their many parish programs. Primary among these programs is religious education. Both the leaders of programs and the catechists may be chosen from among ordained deacons, vowed religious, and laity who may serve in compensated or volunteer positions. The pastors, in collaboration with diocesan offices, see to it that catechetical leaders are qualified and certified. Pastors are encouraged to know the children in their religious education programs and their schools and to work closely with DRE's and CRE's, principals, teachers, and catechists to assure that the faith is taught with zeal, with warmth, with an inviting spirit, and with adherence to the dogmas and doctrines defined by the Catholic Church.

As a reflection of the unity which the bishop himself brings to the diocese, it comes naturally that all the faithful, and particularly those entrusted with the task of teaching the faith, will do so in union with the letter and spirit of the Church's doctrinal and moral teaching. They will serve cooperatively and always with charity as they carry out the mandates of the bishop and their pastors.



Parish & Community

Our Catholic faith is a way of life and of being in the world!

“The faithful are called to be a community of love in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Using Christ as the model of leadership which he handed on to Peter, the Church as community focuses on the people. Additionally, the Church is an institution with structures, committees, rules and laws which need to be maintained. All are necessary to build the bond of love” (*United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*, 121).

An actively engaged pastor working in conjunction with committed parish leadership supports the family in being the “first Church”. Established within a diocese and under the care of the pastor, “the parish is the primary experience of the Church” for most Christians (*National Directory for Catechesis*, 254).

The parish is not principally a structure, a territory, or a building, but rather “the family of God, a fellowship afire with a unifying spirit.” It is “a familial and welcoming home” and truly “the community of the faithful.” It is a Eucharistic community, founded on the Church’s profound experience of Christ and grounded in its foundational theology (*Christifideles Laici*, 91-94). The parish provides the center where the child, within the individual family, gathers with the larger community. Under the leadership of the pastor, the children and families together celebrate sacramental life, pray and worship, participate in acts of justice, engage in fellowship, and help support the financial needs of the local Church (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 9-10). The parish and faith community provide continuity for the child to further learn and put into practice the Catholic values and principles instilled in family life.


Our Catholic faith understands that the Holy Eucharist is the “source and summit” of our Christian lives. Thus, Sunday Mass is the focal point of parish activity. The Church teaches that the believer encounters Christ present in several ways in every Eucharistic liturgy. The most prominent is in the consecrated bread and wine which become the Body and Blood of Christ. But Christ is present, too, in the Sacred Scripture proclaimed and preached, in the priest who acts in persona Christi – that is, in the person of Christ, and in the community of believers assembled (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 7). Thus, even more important than participation in catechetical or school programs is participation in the weekly Eucharistic celebration of the parish church.

It is from a vibrant life of worship that the Catholic faith radiates out to the larger community. Members of the Church become increasingly attentive to the needs of those for whom the Church always prays: the leaders of the Church, the leaders of nations, families, the poor, the sick and afflicted, those suffering because of wars or natural disasters, the dying, the grieving, the souls of those who have died. Inclusion of these larger needs in prayer provides a prompting to action on behalf of human need.

Thus, parish life is the bridge to the diocese and the Church in the world. The parish faith community helps foster a sense of belonging and deeper spiritual purpose for the child whose family is actively involved in the faith life of the community. Thus, the parish and community are vital to the spiritual growth and development of the student in the Catholic school or parish religious education program.

The Bigger Picture

The Church in the World



Jesus was Jewish. He was born in a specific moment in history, in a specific region of the world, and he assumed a specific cultural identity which, for many centuries, was linked to a religion professing to be God's chosen people.

Yet the Gospels do not portray Christ as a fervent nationalist, nor do they depict him showing partiality toward any given socio-political circle. On the contrary, his preaching consistently gave a message which went beyond human categories of social organization, class or heritage. The early Church followed his lead when, at the Council of Jerusalem, it eased the way for the inclusion of Gentiles in the first Christian communities (Acts 15).

As the late priest-theologian Henri de Lubac has said, "By revealing the Father and being revealed by him, Christ completes the revelation of man to himself" (*Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*, trans., 1988 reprint). These same words resurface some twenty-five years after they were written in the Second Vatican Council, in *Gaudium et Spes*, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World:

The truth is that only in the mystery of the Incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light. For Adam, the first man, was a Figure of Him Who was to come, namely Christ the Lord. Christ, the final Adam, by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and His love, fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear (GS, 22).

What significance could these words play in the guidelines for a religious education program in a Roman Catholic diocese in the United States which is set in a state which has less than 5% of its population being Catholic? This same population, the Catholics of South Carolina, includes people whose parents emigrated generations ago and many who have arrived recently from many other parts of the world: Mexico, Korea, Brazil, Colombia, Vietnam, the Philippines, and Poland, to mention the more numerous.

Approximately one-third of the priests of the diocese, and over half the Catholic population in South Carolina, come from countries outside the United States. The importance of these diverse cultures as a medium for both receiving and transmitting the Gospel and furthering the salvation of humankind cannot be underestimated. *Gaudium et Spes* continues:

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The Church, living in various circumstances in the course of time has used the discoveries of different cultures so that in her preaching she might spread and explain the message of Christ to all nations, that she might examine it and more deeply understand it, that she might give it better expression in liturgical celebration and in the varied life of the community of the faithful (GS, 22).

There are also among us Catholics from Eastern churches who celebrate in their own rite or at times, because of the difficulties accessing parishes in their own rite, join our parishes. Among these are Maronite, Chaldean, and Byzantine Catholics. These other Churches and their traditions are revered – and are in union with the Holy Father, the patriarchs, and the bishops of each of the Catholic rites. Their sacramental practice varies from that of the Latin rite, so it is not unusual to discover, for example, that a child from one of these churches was confirmed at the time of his or her baptism.

Pope St. John Paul II, in his encyclical *Faith and Reason*, reminded us that we are embedded in particular times and particular cultures and yet we cannot be confined to them. “The wisdom of the Cross,” he wrote, “breaks free of all cultural limitations ... and insists upon an openness to the universality of the truth which it bears” (*Fides et Ratio*, 23).

How, then, do we respect the many cultures and traditions which our students and their parents hold dear? How do we help students to respect the rich variety of cultures and expressions? How do we use art, images, crafts, and the latest available technology to help our students perceive that true “catholicity” embraces a wide world of religious expression and many different, though genuine, spiritual styles?



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Parents, catechists, and teachers in our schools must be careful not to fix on one model of learning, of prayer, or of religious song as preferable simply because it is their own. A religious education program should, to the best of its ability, focus on those elements which most unite us as Catholics while encouraging legitimate, diverse expressions of the faith which greater reflect the universality of the Church. A great opportunity to do this arises when students are taught about the saints of many lands and nations or when they examine the images of the Blessed Virgin which have been popularized worldwide – Our Lady of Częstochowa, Guadalupe, Kibeho, Knock. Another opportunity arises when we present examples of sacramentals used in popular devotions and in the home.

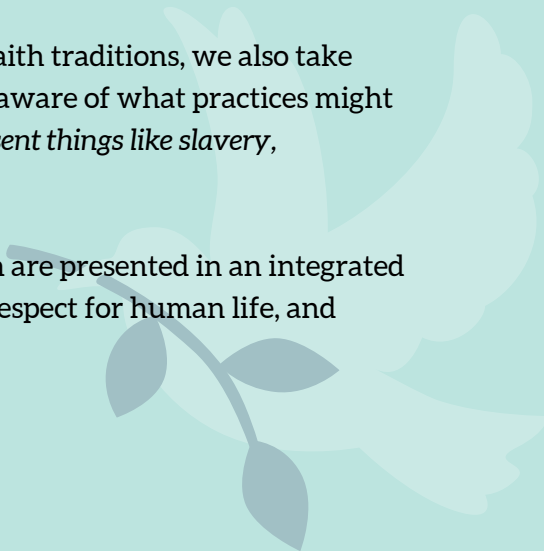
In a time when there is so much public debate about immigration issues worldwide, it is important that catechists faithfully represent the positions taken by the Catholic bishops of the United States in their pastoral *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us*. They remind us all that it is important to see newcomers as enriching the Church. They urge Catholics to support laws and policies which treat all human beings with dignity and respect. In order to help the children we teach to have a truly Catholic sense that we are equal in God's eyes, we remind them of the words of St. Paul: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (*Gal 3:28*).

Therefore, **our curriculum must introduce the students to:**

- The Church as the Body of Christ
- The liturgy and its celebration in different parts of the world, with some features of different cultures
- The unity that they can experience when sharing with Catholic students from other cultures and also with people of other faiths
- The richness added by multi-cultural customs and traditions as well as varied ethnic heritages
- The four marks of the Church, with a focus on how we are Catholic and catholic
- The call to peacemaking and how we witness peace to the world
- Ways to welcome immigrants and refugees, with conversation about how and why the Church is involved
- How we apply the Great Commandment, the Beatitudes, the works of mercy, and Catholic social teaching to contemporary issues and problems

As we educate our students in respect for the many cultures and faith traditions, we also take care to help them to be discriminating in the constructive sense – aware of what practices might be contrary to the Gospel. (*Examples would include such past or present things like slavery, apartheid, voodoo, Santería, etc.*)

The concepts of human dignity, image of God, and mystery of faith are presented in an integrated way with practical points about how we live compassion, mercy, respect for human life, and forgiveness.



The Catechist: *Evangelizer & Teacher*

Catechesis within the Church's Mission of Evangelization

Evangelization is an essential – it is the essential – mission of the Church, and catechists are in the privileged position to share closely in that mission. Catechesis, a foundational element of evangelization, is much more than spending one hour a week in a classroom setting explaining tenets of the faith. In their classrooms, homes and parish halls, catechists engage in their apostolate by:

- Fostering in the heart of students an experience of personal conversion to Jesus Christ leading to renewal of one's Christian commitment and participation in the life of the Church
- Encouraging a greater knowledge of the Holy Scripture and Sacred Tradition
- Focusing efforts and resources on the conversion and renewal of every parish
- Bringing students to a greater appreciation for the presence and power of Christ in the Word and the Sacraments of the Church, especially the Eucharist, and a commitment to celebrating the Eucharist each Sunday
- Encouraging students to regular prayer in their daily lives
- Incorporating social doctrines of the Church in lessons and Christian life (NDC, p. 52).

The communication of the faith in catechesis is an event of grace, realized in the encounter of the Word of God with the experience of the person (GDC, 150).

The Catechist as Evangelizer

By virtue of our baptism, all Christians are called to be evangelizers and to share faith with others.

Christian education is directed toward the fulfillment of the whole person intellectually, morally, and spiritually, and to give glory to God in all things including creation, cultures, and all human endeavors. Catechists seek to “help in the Christian formation of the world that takes place when natural powers, viewed in the full consideration of man redeemed by Christ, contribute to the good of the whole society” (*Gravissimum Educationis*, 2).

Catechists spread the Good News, usually in a parish or school environment, sowing the Good Seed of Christ. Through their students and families, catechists touch and enlighten the parish and larger community. Catechesis, by its nature, challenges us to initiate faith and conversion to Christ, that “profound change of mind and heart, a change of life, a ‘metanoia’” (NDC, 17A).

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Definition of a Catechist

A catechist is a practicing Catholic in good standing with a heart fixed on God and His Bride, the Church. He or she responds to the universal call to holiness by teaching Jesus Christ and His message of forgiveness, mercy and salvation to others. Catechists are those teachers who endeavor to bear witness through words and deeds to the Truth that is Christ – and to put people not only in touch but in communion with Him (*Catechesi Tradendae*, 5).

Catechists must be diligent about their own proper formation and at the same time give primacy to the working of the Holy Spirit who bestows the charity, grace and charisms which allow them to teach the fullness of Truth. Catechists rely particularly on the supernatural charisms of wisdom, understanding and knowledge as special gifts to teach the faith with particular effectiveness.

*The most important element in religious education is not the facility,
the textbook series or the quality and/or quantity of classroom materials.
It is the personal witness of a well formed and faithful teacher touched
with the zeal of the Holy Spirit who brings the lessons to life.*

Catechists working under the auspices of the parish or local church are necessarily:

- Faithful, active Catholics with a sound sense of Church doctrine, moral teaching, Sacred Scripture and consistent in their commitment to their apostolate
- Approved by the pastor, administrator or DRE, in good standing with the Church, trained in the diocesan Safe Environment program
- Willing to subscribe to the diocesan code of conduct and successfully screened with the appropriate background checks
- Faithful to the Magisterium, loyal to the pope and the local bishop
- Respectful toward diverse religious practices and devotions
- Able to explain the faith clearly and to share the blessings of their lives of prayer and worship
- Willing to motivate students to be actively engaged in society and culture, specifically as believing Christians engaged in missionary activities and with respect to the social doctrines of the Church
- Comfortable with the challenges, ambiguities and complexities presented by students and their families
- Conscientious in preparing for catechetical sessions, seeking answers to inquiries to which they cannot immediately respond, and ready to make referrals, when needed, to appropriate authorities.

continued ...

The Catechist as Teacher

“Teacher, what good must I do to gain eternal life?” (Mt 19:16) That poignant question touches the heart of every catechist as he or she teaches Jesus Christ and Him crucified to his or her students. While recognizing the primacy of parents as the first and most important educators of their children, the Church recognizes her responsibility and the importance of offering assistance to both families and the community.

To transmit the faith authentically, catechists use both divine and human pedagogy and materials that clearly convey the loving message of Jesus Christ and the salvation He brings. “Truly the effort for evangelization will profit greatly – at the level of catechetical instruction given at church, in the schools ... if those giving catechetical instruction have suitable texts, updated with wisdom and competence, under the authority of the bishops” (*Evangelium Nuntiandi*, 44).

Therefore, in an organized and systematic manner the catechist:

- Promotes knowledge of the faith by teaching the “basics”: Creed, Revelation, Scripture and Tradition
- Educates about our liturgical traditions by helping students know and understand our celebrations of faith, especially the sacraments
- Promotes moral formation based on the teaching of Jesus Christ – His fulfillment of the Law in the Ten Commandments; the realization of blessings and joys placed in the human heart for those who follow Jesus and His way of life, as expressed in the Beatitudes
- Teaches prayer as a conversation – listening and talking to God
- Educates and encourages participation in service as a witness of the Faith in the parish and society
- Promotes a missionary spirit that prepares the faithful to be present as Christians in society (*NDC*, pg. 59-62).

The Place of the Catechist: *Home, School, Parish, Diocese, the World*

The Kingdom of God encompasses heaven and earth – every mind and will, every heart and soul. Whether one is an ordained, religious or lay catechist, we are all called to continue Christ’s mission to go out and teach all nations by emphasizing the relationship of faith and life. The message that is Christ should impact learners holistically, personally, culturally, economically and politically, in order to live a life of sanctity and service. Catechists are active agents of inculturation, teaching the Good News in the language and culture of the hearers in homes, parishes, dioceses and the world – just where you would expect to find them as members of a universal Church.

continued ...

As communicators of a living faith, catechists search for ways:

- To discover the seeds of the Gospel that may be present in the culture
- To know and respect the essential elements and basic expressions of the culture of the persons to whom it is addressed
- To recognize that the Gospel message is both transcendent and immanent – it is not bound by the limitations of any single human culture, yet it has a cultural dimension, that in which Jesus of Nazareth lived
- To proclaim the transforming and regenerating force that the Gospel works in every culture
- To promote a new enthusiasm for the Gospel in accordance with evangelized culture
- To use the language and culture of the people as a foundation to express the common faith of the Church
- To maintain the integral content of faith and avoid obscuring the content of the Christian message by adaptations that would compromise or diminish the deposit of faith (NDC p. 65).

The Art of Catechesis: *God's Pedagogy*

As catechists we follow in the footsteps of the Master Catechist. Catechesis is more than just teaching, just as a curriculum is more than just a textbook. It is both art and science using various materials and methods for the purpose of opening hearts and minds to the Holy Spirit, through Christ to the Father.

Participation in ongoing formation is an indispensable tool for growth in the spiritual life of the catechist as well as providing opportunities to be more effective in forming students authentically in the faith. Through our apostolate, catechists are privileged to share in the redemptive work of Christ.

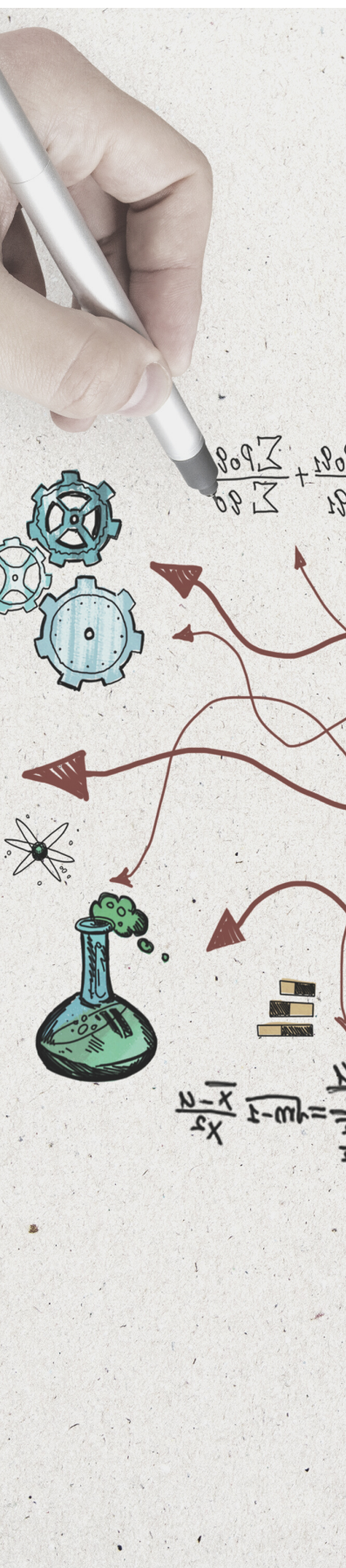
Books & Resource Series: *Used in the Diocese of Charleston*

Every parish program and every Catholic school has its own unique features and needs. As a result, a great many religion texts and series are used throughout the diocese. Any text or series which has been given approval by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Subcommittee on the Catechism is acceptable for use in our diocesan parishes and schools, and in any home-school arrangement which has been made with the authorization of the pastor and/or his delegate. The list of approved materials is regularly updated and may be found the USCCB website: www.usccb.org.



Religious Education

How it's Caught & Taught



Students acquire and retain knowledge in many different ways. **The best way to teach something is to live it.**

Educators use many of the following approaches to present their religion lessons. They have discovered that there are **Primary Learning Styles**:

Visual Learners learn best by seeking information.

- reading from the textbook
- diagrams, maps, graphs, drawings pictures, posters, drawings of the saints
- illustrated Bibles
- DVDs, Power Point presentations, white boards, Smart boards, etc.
- language that stimulates visual images picture
- puzzles, computer illustrations

Linguistic Learners prefer using words, in both speech and writing.

- storytelling, Liturgy of the Word
- discussions of the Commandments
- memorize Bible passages
- written and spoken language
- debate
- sharing in groups
- reading aloud
- listening to others; guest speakers
- word games
- use of glossary, textbooks
- traditional prayers, shared prayers

Tactile/Kinesthetic Learners are “hands on” learners who learn by doing.

- role playing, drama, dancing
- hands-on material
- active while learning
- bright colors for highlighting
- skim through materials first
- demonstrations
- nature walks; outdoor celebrations
- The Sacraments and sacramentals
- Works of Mercy

continued ...

There are also **Secondary Learning Styles**.

Logical Learners prefer using logic, reasoning, and systems.

- problem solving
- classifying
- reasoning, drawing conclusions
- create to-do lists
- brain teasers
- time lines; liturgical calendar

Musical Learners prefer using sound and music.

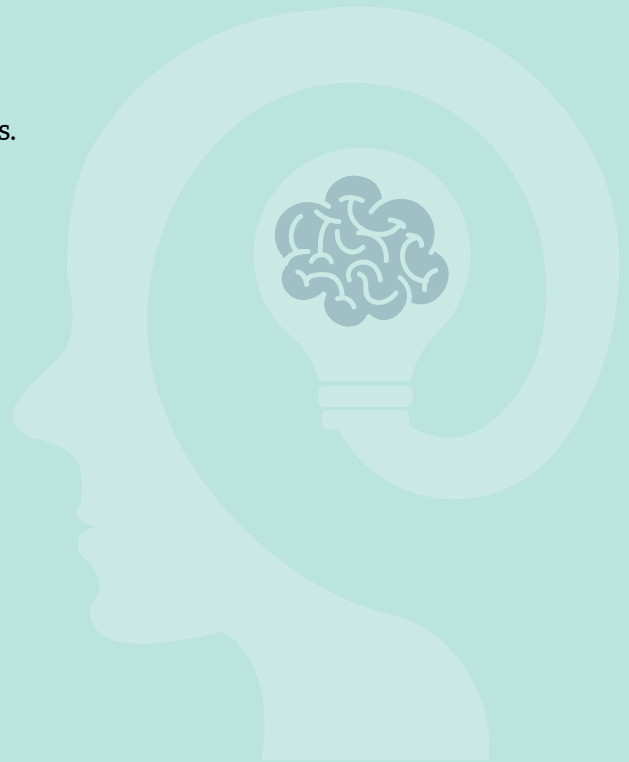
- sing, hum, tap
- many types of religious music
- sensitive to sounds in nature
- play instruments
- remember rhythm
- sing Litany of the Saints

Interpersonal Students prefer to work in groups or with other people.

- acts of charity
- cooperate with others
- learn in groups
- understand others
- enjoy social activities
- projects; community service


Intra-personal Students prefer to work alone.

- try to understand the inner spirit
- recognize their strengths and weaknesses
- use reflective prayer; meditation
- make plans and set goals
- write journals



Guidelines for Content

Pre-K (K4) to 8th Grade



Topics for each grade level are listed in three categories: 1) **Doctrinal Content** includes those things which are considered essential for the student to know and understand: Bible stories, basic beliefs, the core of our Catholic sacramental life. Doctrinal Content includes essential matters of faith which we learn from Sacred Scripture and Tradition. 2) **Prayers and Sacramentals** include the teaching of basic Catholic prayers and acquaintance with various Catholic devotions, along with the sacred objects that augment our worship of God. 3) **Activities** are meant to reinforce learning and worship by giving students hands-on experiences which they can remember. These include devotional experiences, but also projects which appeal to various learning styles and provide memorable moments in catechesis.

Catechists must always remember that faith is “caught” and “taught,” thus, using as many means and media as possible is recommended. The core of catechesis at every level is those matters which are found in The Catechism of the Catholic Church: beliefs declared in the Creed; Catholic sacramental-liturgical practice; the moral life based on the Commandments; prayer, as exemplified in the Lord’s Prayer. Everything taught in our Catholic religious education and faith formation programs, and in our schools, is elaboration on these basics.

It is understood that those who teach the faith will always have to prioritize, and to continue to determine what needs to be emphasized and reviewed. The topics and activities listed for each grade level may be treated in greater or less depth, as time permits. However, basic creedal elements and fundamental understanding of liturgical and moral life are essential. The materials offered under each topic for each grade level are presented at what experienced educators have found to be age-appropriate levels. As parents and catechists will see, the charts which follow presume that there is continuous building on those matters of faith, prayer and action which begin in early childhood and deepen as time goes on.

The greatest gift which we can give a child is a knowledge and love of God which results in a real hunger for coming to greater and greater depth and breadth in that knowledge and love. The grace of faith opens ‘the eyes of your hearts’ (Eph 1:18) to a lively understanding of the contents of Revelation: that is, of the totality of God’s plan and the mysteries of faith, of their connection with each other and with Christ, the center of the revealed mystery. In the words of St. Augustine, ‘I believe in order to understand; and I understand, the better to believe.’ (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 158)

Reference: *Important Prayers*

Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. *Amen.*

Hail Mary (*"You" and "your" may be substituted for "thou" and "thy," according to local custom*)

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee! Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. *Amen.*

Angel of God (*Guardian Angel Prayer*)

Angel of God, my guardian dear, to whom God's love commits me here. Ever this day be at my side to light and guard, to rule and guide. *Amen.*

Glory Be

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. *Amen.*

Grace Before Meals (*"You" and "your" may be substituted*)

Bless us, O Lord, and these thy gifts which we are about to receive from thy bounty, through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Grace After Meals (*Or use other familiar form*)

We give thee thanks for all Thy benefits, Almighty God, who lives and reigns for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Prayer for Those Who Have Died

Eternal rest, grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed through the mercy of God rest in peace. *Amen.*

The Apostles Creed (*Catechism of the Catholic Church translation*)

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. *Amen.*

continued ...

Hail Holy Queen

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness and our hope. To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve. To thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this vale of tears. Turn then, most gracious Advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us, and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

V/. O clement (or merciful), O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary!

R/. Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God, that we may be made worth of the promises of Christ.
Amen.

Vocation Prayer

Lord, let me know clearly the work you are calling me to do in life. And grant me every grace I need to answer your call with courage and love and lasting dedication to your will. *Amen.*

Act of Contrition

My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart. In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good, I have sinned against you whom I should love above all things. I firmly intend, with your help, to do penance, to sin no more, and to avoid whatever leads me to sin. Our Savior Jesus Christ suffered and died for us. In His name, my God, have mercy. *Amen.*

Nicene Creed (*Revised text implemented Feb. 2011. See parish missalette.*)

The Angelus

V/. The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary,

R/. And she conceived of the Holy Spirit. Hail Mary...

V/. Behold the handmaid of the Lord,

R/. Be it done unto me according to your Word. Hail Mary...

V/. And the Word was made flesh,

R/. And dwelt among us. Hail Mary...

V/. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God,

R/. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray. Pour forth, we beseech you, O Lord, your grace into our hearts: that we, to whom the Incarnation of Christ your Son was made known by the message of an Angel, may by his Passion and Cross be brought to the glory of his Resurrection. Through the same Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

continued ...

Regina Caeli (*Recited instead of the Angelus from Easter to Pentecost*)

V/. Queen of heaven, rejoice,

R/. Alleluia.

V/. The Son you merited to bear,

R/. Alleluia.

V/. Has risen as He said.

R/. Alleluia.

V/. Rejoice and be glad, O Virgin Mary, alleluia.

R/. Because our Lord is truly risen, alleluia.

Let us pray. God of Life, you have given joy to the world by the resurrection of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Through the prayers of His mother, the Virgin Mary, bring us to the happiness of eternal life. We ask this through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Act of Faith

O my God, I firmly believe that you are one God in three divine Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I believe that your divine Son became man and died for our sins and that he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe these and all the truths which the Holy Catholic Church teaches because you have revealed them, who are eternal truth and wisdom, who can neither deceive nor be deceived. In this faith I intend to live and die. *Amen.*

Act of Hope

O Lord God, I hope by your grace for the pardon of all my sins and after life here to gain eternal happiness because you have promised it who are infinitely powerful, faithful, kind, and merciful. In this hope I intend to live and die. *Amen.*

Act of Love

O Lord God, I love you above all things and I love my neighbor for your sake because you are the highest, infinite and perfect good, worthy of all my love. In this love I intend to live and die. *Amen.*

The Divine Praises

Blessed be God. Blessed be his Holy Name.

Blessed be Jesus Christ, true God and true man. Blessed be the name of Jesus.

Blessed be his most Sacred Heart. Blessed be his most Precious Blood.

Blessed be Jesus in the most Holy Sacrament of the altar.

Blessed be the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete.

Blessed be the great Mother of God, Mary most holy. Blessed be her holy and immaculate conception. Blessed be her glorious assumption. Blessed be the name of Mary, Virgin and Mother.

Blessed be St. Joseph, her most chaste spouse.

Blessed be God in his angels and in his saints.

continued ...

The Memorare

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to your protection, implored your help, or sought your intercession was left unaided. Inspired by this confidence, I fly unto you, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother. To you do I come; before you I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in your mercy hear and answer me. *Amen.*

The Magnificat (*Luke 1:46-55; versions may vary*)

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior; for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant. From this day all generations will call me blessed: the Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is his Name. He has mercy on those who fear him in every generation. He has shown the strength of his arm, he has scattered the proud in their conceit. He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, and has lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. He has come to the help of his servant Israel for he has remembered his promise of mercy, the promise he made to our fathers, to Abraham and his children forever. *Amen.*

Prayer to St. Michael

Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil; May God rebuke him, we humbly pray; And do thou, O Prince of the Heavenly Host, by the power of God, thrust into hell Satan and all evil spirits who wander through the world for the ruin of souls. *Amen.*

Prayer of St. Ignatius of Loyola

Lord Jesus Christ, take all my freedom, my memory, my understanding and my will. All that I have and cherish You have given me. I surrender it all to be guided by Your will. Your grace and Your love and wealth are enough for me. Give me these, Lord Jesus, and I ask for nothing more. *Amen.*

Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love.

V/. Send forth your Spirit, and they shall be created.

R/. And you shall renew the face of the earth.

Let us pray. O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Spirit we may be truly wise and ever rejoice in His consolations, through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Important Prayers continued ...

The Mysteries of the Rosary

The Joyful Mysteries

1. The Annunciation
2. The Visitation
3. The Nativity
4. The Presentation in the Temple
5. The Finding in the Temple

The Sorrowful Mysteries

1. The Agony in the Garden
2. The Scourging at the Pillar
3. The Crowning with Thorns
4. The Carrying of the Cross
5. The Crucifixion and Death

The Glorious Mysteries

1. The Resurrection
2. The Ascension
3. The Descent of the Holy Spirit
4. The Assumption
5. The Coronation of Mary

The Luminous Mysteries

1. The Baptism of Christ in the Jordan
2. The Wedding Feast at Cana
3. Jesus' Proclamation of the Coming of the Kingdom of God
4. The Transfiguration
5. The Institution of the Eucharist

Fatima Prayer (*frequently said after the Glory Be, before a new decade of the rosary is begun*)

O my Jesus, forgive us our sins. Save us from the fires of hell. Bring all souls to heaven, especially those in most need of your mercy. Amen.

Prayers in Latin

Sign of the Cross

In nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti. Amen.

Pater Noster (*The Lord's Prayer*)

Pater noster, qui es in caelis, sanctificetur nomen tuum. Adveniat regnum tuum. Fiat voluntas tua, sicut in caelo et in terra. Panem nostrum quotidianum da nobis hodie, et dimitte nobis debita nostra sicut et nos dimittimus debitoribus nostris. Et ne nos inducas in tentationem, sed libera nos a malo. Amen.

Ave Maria (*Hail Mary*)

Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum. Benedicta tu in mulieribus, et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Iesus. Sancta Maria, Mater Dei, ora pro nobis peccatoribus, nunc, et in hora mortis nostrae. Amen.

Gloria Patri (*Glory Be*)

Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto, sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper, et in saecula saeculorum. Amen.

Many prayers in Latin – and popular devotions in English and Latin (including litanies) – are available here: <http://www.ewtn.com/library/prayer/latrosar.htm>.

Things to Know

The Two Great Commandments

See Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. These were combined by Jesus in Luke 10:27

The Beatitudes

See Matthew 5:3-10

The Ten Commandments (Summarized from Exodus 20:2-17)

1. I, the Lord, am your God. You shall not have other gods besides me.
2. You shall not take the name of the Lord, your God, in vain.
3. Remember to keep holy the Lord's day.
4. Honor your father and your mother.
5. You shall not kill.
6. You shall not commit adultery.
7. You shall not steal.
8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
9. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.

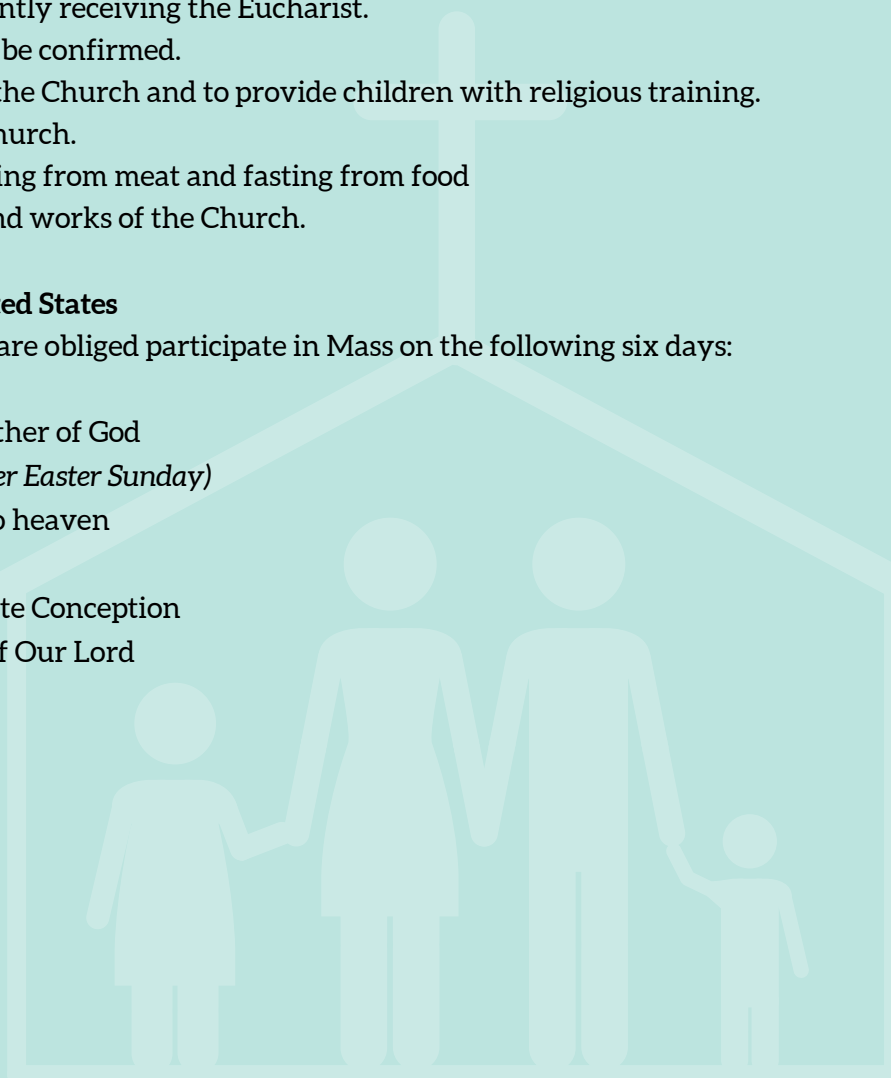
The Laws (Precepts) of the Church

- To keep Sundays holy, and to participate in Mass on Sundays and
- To lead a sacramental life, frequently receiving the Eucharist.
- To prepare for Confirmation and be confirmed.
- To observe the marriage laws of the Church and to provide children with religious training.
- To strengthen and support the Church.
- To do penance, including abstaining from meat and fasting from food
- To join in the missionary spirit and works of the Church.

Holy Days of Obligation in the United States

In addition to all Sundays, Catholics are obliged participate in Mass on the following six days:

1. **Jan. 1:** The Feast of Mary, the Mother of God
2. **Ascension Thursday** (40 days after Easter Sunday)
3. **Aug. 15:** Assumption of Mary into heaven
4. **Nov. 1:** All Saints' Day
5. **Dec. 8:** The Feast of the Immaculate Conception
6. **Dec. 25:** Christmas, the Nativity of Our Lord



continued ...

Spiritual Works of Mercy

- Counsel the doubtful
- Instruct the ignorant
- Admonish the sinner
- Comfort the sorrowful
- Forgive injuries
- Bear wrongs patiently
- Pray for the living and the dead

Fruits of the Holy Spirit

- Charity
- Long-Suffering
- Joy
- Mildness
- Peace
- Faith
- Patience
- Modesty
- Kindness
- Continency
- Goodness
- Chastity

Capital Sins

- Pride
- Anger
- Greed
- Lust
- Envy
- Gluttony
- Sloth (Laziness)

Corporal Works of Mercy

- Feed the hungry
- Give drink to the thirsty
- Shelter the homeless
- Visit the sick
- Bury the dead
- Give alms to the poor

Gifts of the Holy Spirit

- Wisdom
- Understanding
- Counsel (Right Judgement)
- Fortitude (Courage)
- Knowledge
- Piety (Reverence)
- Fear of the Lord

Theological Virtues

- Faith
- Hope
- Charity

Cardinal Virtues

- Prudence
- Justice
- Fortitude
- Temperance (Moderation)



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