

Bringing Good News

Elementary School Religion Curriculum

Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 8

2011



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE

Department of Catholic Schools

Department of Evangelization

Introduction

*The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch, but also in communion and intimacy with Jesus Christ.*¹

Every Catholic school must be a place to encounter the living God who in Jesus Christ reveals his transforming love and truth. It is through this encounter with God and by forming a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, that children build a strong foundation for lifelong discipleship. This Elementary School Religion Curriculum is an invaluable resource for teachers in fulfilling this aim and passing on our faith to a new generation.

Our Catholic faith is a shared and proclaimed faith. It demands to be known, celebrated, lived and translated into prayer, as well as lived out in the Christian community and proclaimed in mission. The work of catechesis is addressed in diverse yet interrelated tasks defined in the *General Directory for Catechesis* (GDC). Each of these tasks is important and together they offer a comprehensive approach towards faith formation. These tasks are accomplished both through the transmission of the Gospel message and experience of the Christian life.

Special thanks are due to the Archdioceses of Washington and Chicago for permissions granted to build upon the firm foundation of their standards-based curricula and to use elements of each of their standards and indicators in creating this new Archdiocesan Religion Curriculum Guide. Our work was also greatly enhanced by the guiding principles of the Diocese of Wilmington.

The Tasks of Catechesis

Catechesis must help one to know, celebrate and contemplate the mystery of Jesus Christ. In doing so, catechesis also prepares Christians to live in community and participate actively in the life and mission of the Church. (cf. GDC, no. 85-86). These fundamental tasks, also known as “duties,” of catechesis, as expressed in the GDC are:

¹ Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis*, (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1997), 80.

Promoting knowledge of the faith

Catechesis helps those who have encountered Christ know and love him more. It must lead believers to gradually grasp the content of God's self-revelation which is found in Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition. Catechesis promotes knowledge and understanding of the mysteries of the faith we proclaim in the Creed. By deepening the faith, catechesis nourishes the life of faith and equips Christ's disciples to explain their faith to others. (cf. GDC, no. 85)

Liturgical education

Christ is present in his Church, especially in the sacraments. Catechesis must lead believers to "full, conscious and active participation" in the liturgy, so that they may live out the call of their baptism to carry on the mission of Christ in the world. Catholics experience the closest possible communion with Jesus on earth when they receive his living Body and Blood in the Eucharist. Catechesis for liturgy must also educate the disciples of Jesus Christ "for prayer, for thanksgiving, for repentance, for praying with confidence, for community spirit, for understanding correctly the meaning of the creeds." (cf. GDC, no. 85)

Moral formation

"Conversion to Jesus Christ implies walking in his footsteps." Catechesis must encourage the faithful to give witness to Christ and his Church's teaching in everyday life by transmitting the content of Christ's moral teachings. Evangelization which involves catechesis for morality "displays all the force of its appeal where it offers not only the proclaimed word but the lived word, too. The moral testimony, which is prepared for by catechesis, must always demonstrate the social consequences of the demands of the Gospel." (GDC, no. 85)

Teaching to pray

The most effective catechesis is permeated by a climate of prayer. Communion with Jesus Christ leads the disciples to an attitude of prayer and contemplation. As the GDC says, "To learn to pray with Jesus is to pray with the same sentiments with which he turned to the Father: adoration, praise, thanksgiving, filial confidence, supplication and awe for his glory" (no. 85).

The handing on of the Our Father, the model of all Christian prayer, is a true act of catechesis and the summary of the whole Gospel. (cf. GDC, no. 85)

Education for Community Life

Jesus said to his disciples, “Love one another as I have loved you.” (John 13:34). This command guides the disciple’s life in the Church and in the global community. Catechesis should encourage an apprenticeship in Catholic living, a spirit of simplicity and humility, care for the poor and alienated, fraternal correction, common prayer, and mutual forgiveness. Members of the Body of Christ receive special graces and gifts to help build up the Church. Ecumenical charity and sensitivity as well as zeal for unity among Christians are emphasized. (cf. GDC, no. 85)

Missionary initiation

Catechesis forms disciples who bear witness to their Catholic faith in society through their professional, cultural and social lives. It also encourages vocations to the priesthood and religious life. Catechesis must nourish in all the faithful the attitudes which Jesus taught his disciples when he sent them on mission: “to seek out the lost sheep, proclaim and heal at the same time, to be poor, without money or knapsack, to know how to accept rejection and persecution; to place one’s trust in the Father and in the support of the Holy Spirit; to expect no other reward than the joy of working for the Kingdom.” Catechesis recognizes that other religious traditions reflect the “seeds of the Word” that can allow for both “interreligious dialogue” and “evangelization.” (cf. GDC, no. 86)

Standards-based Curriculum

The Archdiocese of Baltimore Catholic Schools Curriculum, *Bringing Good News*, is a standards-based curriculum that flows from the Six Tasks of Catechesis, as published in the *General Directory of Catechesis* and described above.

TASK	STANDARD
Task 1	Standard 1:
Promoting knowledge of the faith	CREED: Understand, believe and proclaim the Triune and redeeming God as revealed in creation and human experience, in Apostolic Tradition and Sacred Scripture, as entrusted to the teaching office of the Church.
	Standard 2:
	SACRED SCRIPTURE: Read, comprehend and articulate salvation history as conveyed in God’s revelation through Sacred Scripture.
Task 2	Standard 3:
Liturgical Education	SACRAMENTS: Understand and participate in the sacraments of the Church as efficacious signs of God’s grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church.
	Standard 4: LITURGY: Understand and celebrate the liturgical rites of the Church as expressed in the Church Year and celebrated in the Eucharist as the source and summit of Christian life.
Task 3	Standard 5:
Moral formation	CONSCIENCE: Develop a moral conscience informed by Church teachings.
	Standard 6: CHRISTIAN LIVING: Understand and live the moral teachings of the Church through a life of discipleship in Jesus Christ .
Task 4	Standard 7:
Teaching to pray	CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY AND PRAYER: Understand and express the Catholic tradition of prayer individually and communally as the way we deepen our relationship with God, recognizing the context of community, the work of the Holy Spirit, and the meaning of self-surrender to God.

Task 5	Standard 8:
Education for Community Life	CATHOLIC CHURCH: Understand and appreciate the mystery of the Church, the Body of Christ, the community of believers, as expressed in the Church’s origin, mission of evangelization, hierarchical structure, marks, charisms, members and the communion of saints.
	Standard 9:
	VOCATION: Understand and live discipleship in Christ by responding in faith to our baptismal call to participation in the life and mission of the church and by being open to a specific call to life in the church.
	Standard 10:
Task 6	CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING: Know and apply social justice and stewardship principles to societal situations in a way that acknowledges and affirms the dignity of the human person and community.
	Standard 11:
	ECUMENISM AND INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOUGUE: Understand and participate in the call of the Church to be a sign of unity in the world through knowledge of and collaboration with Christian churches and all faith traditions.
Missionary Initiation	Standard 12:
	MISSION: Participate in the Catholic mission of evangelization through apprenticeships with family, school and/or parish communities in witness and proclamation, word and sacrament, interior change and social transformation.

Christian Service

Catholic schools provide opportunities within our Church to encourage children and young people to participate in Christian service. We participate in service out of a desire to love. “To love someone is to desire that person's good and to take effective steps to secure it. Besides the good of the individual, there is a good that is linked to living in society: the common good”².

Each Catholic school in the Archdiocese of Baltimore should prepare a plan of service-learning for each grade level. Service-learning integrates meaningful Christian service with instruction

² Pope Benedict XVI, encyclical letter, Charity in Truth (*Caritas in Veritate*, 2009), no. 7.

and reflection which enriches the learning experience. When children and youth serve the poor and the marginalized, they encounter Christ.

Catechesis for Family Life

The Archdiocese of Baltimore is committed to providing children and their parents/guardians a holistic catechesis for family life. This catechesis includes an understanding of the call to live a chaste life. *Catechesis for Family Life* enables participants to develop an understanding of the dignity and value of all human life. It also includes safe environment training for children and education about sexual abuse. Catechesis for Family Life is an integral part of the curriculum for faith formation in the Catholic school. For further information, refer to the Archdiocesan website, <http://www.archbalt.org/family-life/marriage-family/family-enrichment/family-life-child-protection.cfm>

Evangelization

The Catholic school is, in essence, an evangelizing ministry, guided by the Holy Spirit and faithful to the continuing mission of the Church (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Go and Make Disciples*, 136 D). Evangelization occurs when people are so ablaze with the fire of God's love that they cannot help but witness to and share their faith with others. The essential mission of the Church today is the same as it was over two centuries ago, to proclaim the Good News, to bring the message of salvation and the Kingdom into every facet of human life, and to transform our culture through the power and love of Jesus.

Documents

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| CCC | <i>Catechism of the Catholic Church</i> , promulgated by Pope John Paul II, October 11, 1992 |
| CFCL | <i>Catechetical Formation for Chaste Living</i> , United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2008 |
| Compendium | <i>Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church</i> , Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 2006 |

GMD	<i>Go and Make Disciples: A National Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization in the United States</i> , USCCB, 1990
GDC	<i>General Directory for Catechesis</i> , Congregation for the Clergy, August 15, 1997
GIRM	<i>General Instruction to the Roman Missal</i> , United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2003
NDC	<i>National Directory for Catechesis</i> , United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, May 2005
USCCA	<i>United States Catholic Catechism for Adults</i> , United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, June 2006

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