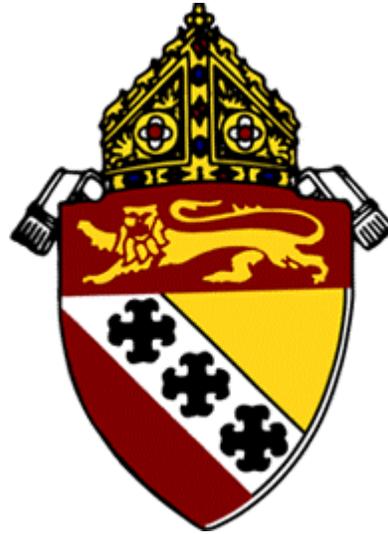


Elementary Religion Curriculum
Catholic Diocese of Charleston



Approved for Implementation by Most Reverend Robert E. Guglielmo
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Under the direction of the Diocesan Board of Catechetical Advisors and the Catholic Schools Office

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” (Philippians 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" (Matthew 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. The Venerable Pope 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 John 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).

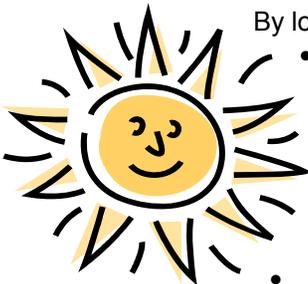
In the end, it is Christ himself who instructs the heart. Everything that we do must be designed to open hearts to receive him.

Parents Forming the Domestic Church: Religious Education and 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?

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.

The Student, Front and 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?

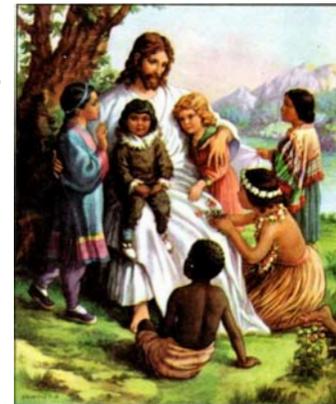
A few key principles come into play here:

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, textbooks and materials 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, parish and school programs may not be able to accommodate every special need, but directors and principals should make every effort to recommend alternatives and to network with others who are able to provide for children with special needs.



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. Thus, the book of Parish Catechetical Leader Guidelines adopted in this diocese in 2006 states the following: “Home-based catechesis should be normally used as a temporary option” (p. 51). Sacramental preparation programs are planned on the parish level, though they may at times include several parishes working cooperatively. 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 DRE or CRE 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 diocesan regulations
- Students are given age-appropriate “safe touch” training
- Children are never left unattended
- Facilities are regularly surveyed for safety issues
- Contact information for victim assistance is posted and known to adults working with children.

The Bishop and 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 and 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 (*Gaudium et Spes*, 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? The same Catholic population, the Catholic population 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. At present, approximately one-third of the priests of the diocese, as well as 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:

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 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 says, “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?

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—the Lady of Częstochowa, Guadalupe, Kibeho, Knock. Another opportunity arises when we present examples of sacramentals used in popular devotions and in the home.

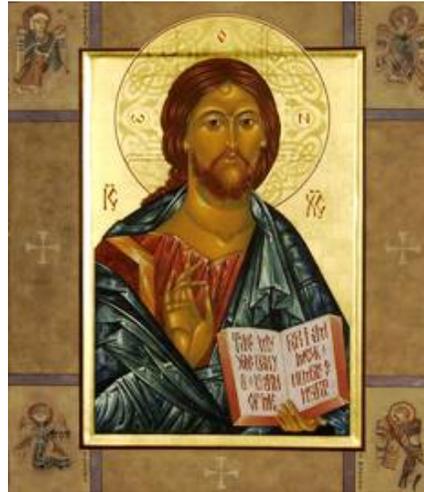
In a time when there is so much public debate about immigration issues worldwide, it is important that catechists faithfully represent the positions taken by the Catholic bishops of the United States in their pastoral *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us*. They remind us all that it is important to see newcomers 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 and Teacher



Christ the Teacher
Anthony Sweere

Center for Catholic Studies, University of St. Thomas (rpt. with permission)

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).

Definition of 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.

The Catechist as Teacher



“Teacher, what good must I do to gain eternal life?” (Mt 19:16) That poignant question touches the heart of each and 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, and 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 as well as 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).



Cathedral of Saint John the Baptist
Charleston, SC

The Place of the Catechist: Home, School, Parish, Diocese and 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. 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).

God’s Pedagogy – the Art of Catechesis

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 and Series to Be 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 United States 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 on the USCCB website, by clicking on:

www.usccb.org/catechism/document/Currentlist.pdf

How Religious Education is Caught and 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



There are also **Secondary 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



Intrapersonal 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

***Students with Special Needs**

Focusing on how all children share similar needs is important for the educator to emphasize. Many Religion books give ideas to teachers of special needs students.

Guidelines for Content, from Pre-K (K-4) – 8th Grade

In the pages which follow, topics for each grade level are listed in three categories: Doctrinal Content, Prayers and Sacramentals, and Activities. **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. The Doctrinal Content includes essential matters of faith which we learn from Sacred Scripture and Tradition. **Prayers and Sacramentals** includes the teaching of basic Catholic prayers and acquaintance with various Catholic devotions, along with the sacred objects which augment our worship of God. **Activities** are meant to help 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” as well as “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, 158



Pre-Kindergarten (K-4)

Pre-kindergarten may or may not be provided in parish religious education programs. For parishes and schools which offer this level, these are age-appropriate suggestions.

Doctrinal Content	Prayers and Sacramentals	Activities
God made me.	Sign of the Cross	Children's Bible stories
God loves me.	Hail Mary	Coloring—religious themes
God wants everybody to be happy.	Our Father	Arts and crafts for Christmas and Easter
God made everything, and everything God made is good.	Grace before meals	Simple religious games
God wants us to love him.	Angel of God	Projects or crafts for parents and others
God wants us to help our parents.	Holy water	Activities that promote sharing
God wants us to love people and help them.	Palms	Christmas play or skit
God wants us to help other people.	Prayers for people who are sad or sick	Palm Sunday play or skit
Jesus came to help us know all about God.		Easter play or skit
Jesus teaches us how to love and be kind.		
Jesus is the Son of God.		
The Blessed Mother, Mary, is Jesus' mother.		
The Blessed Mother is our mother, too.		
Saint Joseph loved Jesus and Mary.		
Saints are good people who pray for us.		
God made spirits—called "angels."		
We all have a guardian angel.		
Guardian angels pray to God and help us, too.		
Angels want us to do good things.		
God wants us to be good.		
Praying and learning about God helps us to be good.		
Christmas is the birthday of Jesus		
People who didn't want to be good killed Jesus.		
Jesus rose from the dead so we can live forever in heaven.		
Jesus teaches us that people are happy when they go to heaven, and they still care about us.		

Kindergarten (K-5)

Doctrinal Content	Prayers and Sacramentals	Activities
* Introduction or review of all Pre-K content	* Introduction or review of all Pre-K prayers and Sacramentals	* Any Pre-K activities
Bible, God's special book	Glory Be	Bible enthronement
Creation (Gen 1 and 2)	Grace after meals	Dramatizations
Adam and Eve (Gen 2:18-3:24)	Spontaneous prayer	A prayer corner
Bad angels, the Devil, and evil (Gen 3)	Paying attention in church	Quiet prayer times (going into my "heart room")
Noah's Ark (Gen 6:5-8:19)	Genuflecting in church	Advent and Christmas activities
Jonah and the Whale (Jon 1:1-2:11)	Kneeling, standing, sitting at Mass	Lent and Easter activities
The Nativity (Mt 1:18-2:12)	Hymns	St. Francis and why we bless animals
The Good Shepherd and the Lost Sheep (Mt 18:12-14)	Candles, Advent wreaths, Nativity scenes	St. Patrick and the shamrock
The Last Supper and the Mass (Mt 26:17-30)	The crucifix	Rice bowl
The Passion of Jesus (simplify, telling the story)	Statues	Pennies and small change for the poor
Easter	Family prayer	Art activities tied to lessons
Why we go to Mass	Rosaries	
Church as building and people		
Family life		
Priests and deacons		
Why we care about poor people		



Grade One

Doctrinal Content	Prayers and Sacramentals	Activities
*Review of previous years' content	*Review of previous years' prayers and sacramentals	*Build on previous activities
Baby Moses and the Call of Moses (Ex 2-3)	Introduce mysteries of the rosary (as telling the story of Jesus and Mary)	Attend Sunday Mass with the family
Escaping from Egypt and Crossing the Red Sea (Ex 13:17—14:31)	Introduce the Stations of the Cross	Attend Stations of the Cross or participate in Living Stations
David and Goliath (1 Sm 17:1-11)	Baptismal font	Celebrate anniversary of child's baptism
Daniel in the Lions' Den (Dn 6:2-29)	Jesus at the consecration and communion of the Mass	St. Elizabeth Ann Seton (January 4) and why we celebrate Catholic Schools Week (begins last Sunday in January)
Baptism of Jesus (Jn 1:29-34)	Jesus in the tabernacle	St. Bernadette (April 16) and Our Lady of Lourdes (February 11)
Jesus Feeding the Multitudes (Mk 8:1-10)	Medals	St. Joseph's Day and custom of St. Joseph's bread (March 19)
Let the Children Come (Mk 10:13-16)	Holy pictures	St. Monica and St. Augustine (August 27 and 28)—and prayers for our family members
Jesus Walks on Water (Mk 6:45-52)	Holy cards	Decorate classroom prayer space
The Church is God's Family—called the People of God and the Body of Christ—and the Church building is God's house (reverence, quiet)	Ashes and palms	Have a mini-retreat
We are all called—to be married; to be priests or deacons; to be religious sisters or brothers; to be unmarried people helping others and the Church	Prayer or intercessions for vocations	Invite people in to talk about their vocations and how they help people
God wants us to love Him and everybody		Do special things to help people, families, and/or animals
God wants us to share		
God wants us to obey Him, our parents, our teachers, and older people who help us		
We have special words that we should know: Baptism, Eucharist, Gospel, Grace, Sin, Forgiveness, Catholic, Creation, Kingdom of God, Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter		

Grade Two

Throughout this year, children in parish religious education programs and Catholic schools are preparing for First Reconciliation and First Eucharist. Parishes in general have special sacramental preparation programs and sessions with parents and children. All children preparing for the sacraments must participate in these special programs. It is assumed that regular religious education will also be thoughtfully integrated with topics coming up in sacramental preparation.



Doctrinal Content	Prayers and Sacramentals	Activities
*Review previous years, as appropriate or Needed	* Review previous years as appropriate or Needed	* Review or repeat previous years
The Israelites on the way to the Promised Land and Quail and Manna in the Desert (Ex 16)	Sign of the Cross and what it means (remembering our baptism)	Vestments and what the colors mean
Covenant at Sinai: the Ten Commandments (Ex 19-20; Dt 5:6-21)	Mass responses and acclamations	Church tour and identification of altar, ambo, presider's chair, paten, chalice, cruets, ciborium, baptismal font
The Golden Calf (Ex 32:1-29)	Act of Contrition	Celebrate American saints and "blesseds" (Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, St. John Neumann, St. Katharine Drexel, St. Frances Xavier Cabrini, etc.)

The Fiery Furnace (Dn 3:4-26; 90-97)	Exposure to the Joyful Mysteries	Visits to Blessed Sacrament
Psalm 23	Exposure to the Luminous Mysteries	May Crowning
What a Parable is	Exposure to the Sorrowful Mysteries	Project for the Missions
The Good Samaritan (Lk 10:29-37)	Exposure to the Glorious Mysteries	Sharing about the Sunday Gospels
The Lost Coin, the Lost Sheep, and the Prodigal Son (Lk 15)	Examination of Conscience	St. Therese of Lisieux, the Little Flower (Oct 1); tell about her request to the pope to let her receive Holy Communion at a younger age than was usual in her time
Loving enemies and forgiving people (Lk 6:27-36)	Morning Offering	St. Pius X (Aug. 21) and why he is important for children and the age for Holy Communion
Zaccheus (Lk 19:1-10)	Paschal Candle	
Bread of Life (Jn 6:15)	Holy water fonts	
The Last Supper (Lk 22:19-20)	Brown scapular	
The Good Thief (Lk 23:39-43)		
Jesus' Appearances after the Resurrection—to Mary Magdalene, the Apostles in the Upper Room, Thomas, on the Beach (Lk 24; Jn 20-21)		
Parts of the Mass: Liturgy of the Word and Liturgy of the Eucharist		
What happens in Baptism, Reconciliation, and Eucharist		
Actual Grace		
Sin and sorrow for sin		
Pastors, Priests, Deacons		
Being a member of the Church through Baptism		
Love of neighbor and sharing with people		
Vocations		

Grade Three



Doctrinal Content	Prayers and Sacramentals	Activities
*Build on previous years	*Build on previous years	*Use ideas from previous years and build
Abraham and Sarah (Gen 18:1-15 and 21:10-13)	Learn mysteries of the rosary	Advent wreath and Advent calendars
Abraham and Isaac (Gen 22:1-19)	Recite the Divine Praises	Jesse tree
Story of Jacob (Gen 25 and 27)	"Aspirations" and short spontaneous prayers	Family rosary
Story of Joseph (Gen 37-50, summarized)	Expose to Angelus and Regina Caeli	Do something special for the feasts of the Four Evangelists: St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke, St. John
Moses and the Exodus (Ex 6 ff)	Apostles' Creed	Act out the conversion of St. Paul
The Annunciation (Lk 1:26-38)	Pray for the Pope and his intentions	Learn about and see DVD's about Blessed Teresa of Calcutta, Dorothy Day, Venerable Solanus Casey, Venerable Pope John Paul II

Jesus, the Good Shepherd (Jn 10:1-21)	Mass cards	Observe some ethnic religious customs
Commissioning the Apostles (Mt 28: 16-20 and Acts 1:8)	Relics	Participate in rice bowl or other Lenten activity which involves sacrifice and outreach to the poor
Early Church and the Holy Spirit		
The Ascension (Acts 1)		
Review Baptism, Reconciliation, Eucharist		
Introduce Confirmation		
Introduce Anointing of the Sick		
Introduce Sacraments of Vocation: Matrimony and Holy Orders		
Review major liturgical seasons: Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter		
Introduce Pentecost (Acts 2)		
Holy Days of Obligation		
The 4 Marks of the Church: One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic (explained simply)		
What it is to be a disciple		
God is in charge of human life		
How our conscience helps us know right from wrong		
Caring about peace and justice		
Pope, bishop and what a cathedral is		
Giving to the Church		
Expanding vocabulary: Ascension, Pentecost, Lectionary, Sacramentary, ordination, original sin, actual sin, moral, immoral, Trinity, apostle, disciple		
Memorize the Seven Sacraments		

Grade Four



Doctrinal Content	Prayers and Sacramentals	Activities
*Build on previous years	*Build on previous years	*Build on previous years
People in God's image and likeness	Hail, Holy Queen	Trade saint cards or holy cards
The Great Commandment of the Old Testament (Deut 6:4-9)	Learn the Divine Praises	Join in parish blessing of animals (St. Francis of Assisi's feast day, October 4)
Memorize the Ten Commandments (Deut 5:6-21)	Examination of Conscience	Learn about house blessings and do something to bless the family home and/or classroom
Joshua and Jericho (Josh 1-6 summarized)	Introduce some of the saints' favorite prayers and/or hymns written by saints	Observe the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe and the Memorial of St. Juan Diego
The Story of Ruth (Ruth)	Incense and when it is used	Observe feasts of African saints: St. Augustine, St. Monica, St. Cyprian, St. Martin de Porres, the Ugandan martyrs, St. Josephine Bakhita
Epiphany (Mt 2:1-12)	Sprinkling rites	Observe feast of the Vietnamese martyrs
The Beatitudes (Mt 5:3-12)	Icons	Observe feast of the patron saint of the parish
The Holy Eucharist in the New Testament (Mt 26:26-30)	Rosary as a prayer for peace	Write a letter to the pope

God's forgiveness (Lk 7:36-50)	Blessings	Participate in parish activities related to the works of mercy
God's law of love: the Two Great Commandments (Lk 10:27-28)		
Jesus and the Law (Lk 6)		
Paul and the spirit of the Law (Gal 5:22-25)		
Parable of the Talents (Mt 25:14-30)		
The Blessed Mother in Scripture (Lk 1 and 2; Mt 1:18-2:23; Acts 1 and 2, Rev 12)		
Temptation, mortal sin, venial sin		
The Immaculate Conception and the Assumption of the Blessed Mother		
Mary as Mother of the Church		
Precepts of the Church		
Corporal Works of Mercy		
Spiritual Works of Mercy		
Vocation and "States in Life": Married, Single, Ordained or Consecrated Religious		
Some basic principles of Catholic social teaching: dignity of human life, care for the poor, freedom for the oppressed, peacemaking, obeying just laws, care for the Earth, respect for people's property		

Grade Five

Doctrinal Content	Prayers and Sacramentals	Activities
*Build on previous years	*Build on previous years	*Build on previous years
God creates companionship and marriage (Gn 2:21-24)	Clarify difference between sacraments and sacramentals	Attend a parish mission or special family devotion
God's everlasting love (Is 49:13-16)	Gregorian chant and other Church music	Participate in Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament
The call of Samuel (1 Sm 3)	Deepen understanding of liturgical year: Advent and Christmas seasons, Lent, the Triduum, and Easter season, ordinary time—and vestment colors used for various seasons, feasts, and memorials	Participate in a holy hour, visit an adoration chapel, 40 Hours' Devotion, or join in some other Eucharistic celebration
David's anointing (1 Sm 16:1-13)	"Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them . . ."	Make a collection of prayers or share a booklet of prayers
Friendship: David and Jonathan (1 Sm 18:1-5 ; 19:1-7; and 20:1-42)	Acts of Faith, Hope, and Love	Write and illustrate your own prayer
The call of Jeremiah (Jer 1:4-19))	Nicene Creed	Review lives of saints and be able to tell the story of a saint
The Baptism of Jesus (Mt 3:13-17) and the Temptation in the Wilderness (Mt 4:1-11)	Prayer to the Holy Spirit (Come, Holy Spirit)	Develop a vocabulary game or contest, including words like: sacraments; sacraments of initiation, sacraments of healing, sacraments of vocation, Old Testament, New Testament, Gospels, Acts of the Apostles, conscience, consecration, Liturgy of the Word, Liturgy of the Eucharist, Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, Easter Vigil, catechumen, Pentecost, original sin, repentance
The Wedding Feast at Cana (Jn 2:1-12)	Exposure to the Memorare	
Healing of the Centurion's Servant (Mt. 8:5-13)	Reverence for the Church and sacred things	
Call of the Disciples (Lk 5:1-11)	Blessing of throats	
The Good Samaritan and contemporary applications (Lk 10:30-37)		

The Poor Widow (Lk 21:1-4)		
The Raising of Lazarus (Jn 11:1-44)		
Peter's Recognition of Jesus (Mt 16:13-19) and the Papacy		
Institution of the Eucharist in three Gospels: Matthew (Mt 26:26-30); Mark (Mk 14:22-26); Luke (Lk 22:14-20)		
The Agony in the Garden (Lk 22:41-46)		
Judas' Betrayal of Jesus (Lk 22:47-53)		
Peter's Denial of Jesus (Lk 22:54-62)		
The Blessed Mother and St. John at the Foot of the Cross (Jn 19:25-27)		
The Disciples on the Road to Emmaus (Lk 24:13-35)		
Pentecost (Acts 1:13-2:47) and the birth of the Church		
Missionary activity springs from Pentecost		
Sanctifying grace		
Grace received when we receive sacraments		
"Matter and form" of sacraments: bread and wine, Body and Blood		
Sacraments of Initiation, Healing, and Vocation		
Heaven, Hell, Purgatory		
The Communion of Saints		
Learn more about deacons		
Learn about the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults		
Overview of the Creed and review of content		
A deeper look at vocations and one's own sense of call		
Responsibility to care for others, to resolve conflicts fairly and peacefully		



The Testing of Abraham

Grade Six

Doctrinal Elements	Prayers and Sacramentals	Activities
*Build on previous years	*Build on previous years	*Build on previous years
Overview of Old Testament—Creation and the overall theme of Covenant	Laying on hands and blessings	Pray certain psalms to begin class: 8, 19, 23, 67, 96, 24,67, 96, an 8-line section of Psalm 119, 148, 150
The Covenant with Noah (Gen 9)	Religious symbols of faith, hope, love	Reverence for the Bible, Bible enthronement
The Covenant with Abraham (Gen 15)	Paying attention to responsorial psalms	Have a Seder supper
Abraham and Isaac (Gen 21 and 22)	The Paschal candle and other candles	Reflect on Sunday readings
The Patriarchs and their stories: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (Gen 11:27 through 50—overview)	Votive lights	Have a time of quiet, guided meditation
The story of Joseph (Gen 37-50)	Litany of the Saints	Find examples of religious art or statues used by various ethnic groups (Polish Black Madonna, Oriental or African crucifix, Our Lady of Guadalupe, or any other)
Review of Moses, Passover, the Exodus, the Covenant at Sinai, the Promised Land (Ex 1-40 and Joshua 1-24 highlights)	Seder Supper	Develop a religion “Jeopardy” game or adapt “Are You Smarter Than a <i>Fifth Grader</i> ?” to <i>Sixth Grade</i> questions

The Book of Judges (highlight Deborah, Gideon, Samson—Judges 4-5, 6-8, 13-16)	Review creeds and parts of the Mass	
The Book of Ruth	Statues of the Blessed Mother	
The kings of Israel (highlights on Saul, David, Solomon—1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings)	Show how the Magnificat is related to the prayer of Samuel's mother Hannah (see 1Sm 2:1-10)	
The vocation of the prophet and examples (Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Amos, Hosea, John the Baptist); consideration of modern prophets (Archbishop Romero, Blessed Teresa of Calcutta, others?)	The Stations of the Cross in depth	
Overview of Wisdom books: Psalms and Proverbs, Job, in particular		
The Exile (relate to Ezekiel, Ezra, Nehemiah)		
Baptism calls us to be holy and to be missionaries no matter where we live or what our current job is		
Discuss religious prejudice and especially anti-Semitism, the Holocaust, other ethnic or religious persecutions in more recent years (Bosnia-Serbia, Rwanda)		
Develop scriptural-religious vocabulary: inspiration, revelation, oral tradition, Torah, Passover, prophet, salvation, salvation history, synagogue, temple, etc.		
Being pro-life in every way: a simplified account of main teachings in "The Gospel of Life," by John Paul II		
Exploring more saints, including the patron saints of nearby churches		
Family Honor, Grade 6 program, recommended for students and parents		



Symbols of the Four Evangelists: Man (Matthew), Lion (Mark), Ox (Luke), Eagle (John)

Grade Seven

Doctrinal Elements	Prayers and Sacramentals	Activities
*Build on previous years	*Build on previous years	*Build on previous years
Review the history of the Chosen People as related to the background of Jesus	Retreats and days of recollection—learn about various types and share experiences	Find passages in the New Testament that say what a disciple or follower of Christ does and how he or she acts
Review the prophecies of the Old Testament that are relevant to the coming of the Messiah (Isaiah, Zechariah, Micah); include Advent OT readings	Jesus in sacred art, especially depictions of the Passion and Crucifixion and Resurrection	Do a personal family tree and compare with the genealogies of Jesus in Matthew and Luke, focusing on what they mean
Read and study the entire Gospel according to St. Mark	Music inspired by Christian themes—including anything from Handel’s “Messiah” to Christian rock	Tell a contemporary version of or act out one of the parables or miracles of Jesus
Learn about the approximate dates, authorship, intended audience, and theological emphasis of each Gospel	Christian symbols: HIS, INRI, ICHTHYS, Alpha and Omega	Sit together as if in a lecture hall and listen to the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) and decide what Jesus as Teacher is trying to tell the “class”

Read and study the Infancy Narratives in St. Matthew and St. Luke	All Souls Day and various customs (Day of the Dead, Mass in cemeteries, etc.)	Research more recently canonized saints, saints of the twentieth century: St. Gianna Molla, St. Maximilian Kolbe, St. Edith Stein, etc.
Stories of the Apostles		Participate in a rosary for life or pro-life rally
Martha and Mary (Lk 10:38-42 and Jn 11)		Host or attend a vocation day which features the various states in life (married, ordained, consecrated religious, single)
Read and study the Passion Narratives in each Gospel		Explore and highlight saints of the month
Read 1 Cor 11:17-34 and 1 Cor 12 regarding the Eucharist and the Church		Plan a Mass—readings, hymns, intercessions—and become familiar with Lectionary and Sacramentary
Read and define the basic “kerygma”—using 1 Cor 15:3-5 and Acts 2:14-41		
A short course in Christology: the Paschal Mystery, Jesus as Messiah, Incarnate Word, Son of God and second person of the Trinity, true God and True Man		
Real Presence, the various types of Eucharistic adoration, processions, celebrations and the meaning of “transubstantiation”		
The Body of Christ: resurrected body of Jesus, the Eucharist, and the community or communion of believers; include our communion with the saints and the souls in purgatory		
Why membership in the Church supersedes nationalism or patriotism		
The Church and its call to be missionary		
Become acquainted with the Liturgy of the Hours/the Divine Office and who in the Church is obligated to say it		
The precepts of the Church—discuss in depth and memorize		
Review the Beatitudes		
The Judgment and Matthew 25		

The Ten Commandments and their applications, with special emphasis on issues around the Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth commandments—and how they challenge youth		
Church as Mystical Body of Christ—with Christ as the head and the pope as his vicar		
The bishops as successors of the apostles: apostolic succession		
Legality and morality: when they are the same and when they are very different		
Building a culture of life and developing a deep understanding of the pro-life ethic		
Develop vocabulary: Gospel, kerygma, ministry, discipleship, heresy, gifts of the Holy Spirit, canonization, celibacy, chastity, moral decisions, moral dilemmas, sins of commission, sins of omission, social justice, social sin, virtue, vice, cardinal virtues, capital sins		

In most parishes, young people begin preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation in grade seven or grade eight (or at ages twelve through fourteen). Depending upon the circumstances of the parish, the preparation may be a one-year or two-year program. Preparation for this sacrament of initiation usually comprises parent sessions, joint preparatory sessions with Catholic grade school, public school, private school, and home-school students. These preparation sessions may certainly be allied with, but yet remain uniquely separate from, regular catechetical classes. Confirmation preparation may include not only doctrinal and sacramental catechesis but also a service component and a retreat.



Grade Eight

Doctrinal Content	Prayers and Sacramentals	Activities
*Build on previous years	*Build on previous years	*Build on previous years
Read and study Acts of the Apostles as history of the early Church, emphasizing the importance of Saints Peter and Paul	Where possible, encourage participation in liturgical ministries (as greeters, servers, choir members, lectors, cantors, ushers)	Visit the cathedral, if possible, and some historic churches and chapels in the diocese
Locate passages from the Old Testament that are referred to in Acts	Participate in a retreat or day of recollection	Participate in a scriptural rosary, living rosary, or rosary for life rally
Read and discuss 1 and 2 Corinthians and 1 and 2 Thessalonians for description of the early Christian communities and their developing theology of resurrection	Be exposed to, and participate in, a common recitation of Morning, Midday, or Evening Prayer of the Liturgy of the Hours	Join the parish youth group
Look up Old Testament references in the epistles mentioned above	Attend celebrations of Baptism, Confirmation, Communal Penance services, or Matrimony as possible	Reflect on Sunday readings
Read selected passages of Philippians for early Christology	Join in the celebration of the Triduum with the parish community	Organize a fund-raiser for a local charity or a mission appeal
Read 1 John and discuss the doctrine of God as Love	Be exposed to the Litany of the Saints—and, if possible, a sung version	Participate in outreach to those in military service or families of military who are overseas

Review Psalms as the only book of the Bible totally addressed to God and as keystone of the public prayer of the Church (Liturgy of the Hours)	Prayer to St. Michael	Visit a museum with a special focus on religious art
Look at a few excerpts from the Book of Revelation (esp. chapters 20-22) and help students realize that the Church resists pinpointing contemporary events as sure signs that the “end time” is near	Prayer of St. Ignatius Loyola	Write a letter to the editor of a local paper on a political issue
Review general dating of Biblical materials and texts, particularly New Testament	Research and study photos or art depicting great cathedrals and basilicas, especially St. Peter’s	Attend the annual rally for life at the State Capital or in Washington if possible
Highlight Church teachings about the Holy Spirit	Study sacred music, art, and architecture in conjunction with periods in Church history	Experience mental prayer or guided meditation
Discuss the historic spread of the Church after the time of the apostles	Learn the <i>Pater Noster</i> in Latin	Learn about saints who are examples of the lay apostolate (St. Thomas More, for example)
The early persecutions and famous martyrs		Choose a saint of the week to learn about
The legalization of Christianity under the emperor Constantine		View the video/DVD “Fire-tried Gold,” showing the history of the Church in South Carolina
The Church’s response to heresies and the definition of basic doctrines concerning Christ, the Trinity, and Mary as Mother of God		
Barbarians and the Fall of the Roman Empire		
St. Benedict, St. Scholastica, and the first monasteries		
The Church as a temporal power		
Feudalism and the medieval Church		
The rise of kings and nations—and how they interrelated with the Church		
The Crusades		
The founding of more religious orders		
The Church preserves art and education		
The Renaissance		
The Protestant Reformation and the Council of Trent		

Missionary activity and the New World		
The First Vatican Council and Papal infallibility		
The Church in the United States		
Who Bishop England and Cardinal John Henry Newman were		
The Church in South Carolina		
The Second Vatican Council		
Introduce the various rites in Catholicism (Latin, Byzantine, Chaldean, et al.)		
Expose students to the two forms of celebration in the Latin rite: the ordinary form (<i>Novus Ordo</i>) and the extraordinary (Tridentine)		
The importance of Church Councils		
Excerpts from papal encyclicals by John Paul II ("The Gospel of Life," for example) and Benedict XVI ("God Is Love," for example)		
Review of basic moral principles, especially those pertaining to property, truth-telling, sexual behavior, care of one's health and one's body, respect for parents, religious leaders, and civil authority		
The Christian obligation to care for those who cannot care for themselves, to seek justice for all people, to treat all human beings with reverence—from womb to tomb, and to respond to the needs of the poor and disadvantaged (see Lk 16:19-31)		
Responsible citizenship		
Deeper consideration of how one discerns a vocation, how one chooses a spouse, and how one determines what career to take up		
Vocabulary: councils, collegiality, curia, ecumenical, encyclical, infallibility, ministry, martyr, monasticism, persecution, solidarity, stewardship, authority, autonomy		
Family Honor, Grade 8, recommended		

Prayers



Sign of the Cross

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

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.

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.

Hail Mary

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.

(Note: "You" and "your" may be
substituted for "thou" and "thy,"
according to local custom.)

Grace before Meals

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

("You" and "your" may be substituted.)

Apostles' Creed

(Catechism of the Catholic Church trans.)

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 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.

Grace after Meals

We give thee thanks for all Thy benefits,
Almighty God,
Who lives and reigns forever. Amen.

(Or use other familiar form)

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, O loving, O sweet
Virgin Mary,

R. Pray for us, O holy mother of God,
That we may be made worthy of
the promises of Christ. 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.

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.

The Nicene Creed

(Revised text implemented Feb. 2011; see parish missalettes)



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.

Regina Caeli

(Recited instead of the Angelus from Easter through 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 revealed them,
who can neither deceive
nor be deceived. Amen.

Act of Hope

O my God, relying on
your infinite goodness and promises,
I hope to obtain
pardon of my sins,
the help of your grace,
and life everlasting,
through the merits
of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Redeemer.
Amen.

Act of Love

O my God,
I love you above all things,
with my whole heart and soul,
because you are all good
and worthy of all my love.
I love my neighbor as myself
for love of You.
I forgive all who have injured me
and I ask pardon of all whom
I have injured.
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.

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, our 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 in 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 away empty.
He has come to the help of his servant Israel
for he has remembered his promise of mercy,
the promise he has made to our fathers,
To Abraham and his children forever.



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.

Prayer to St. Michael

St. Michael, the archangel,
Defend us in battle.
Be our defense 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 the other evil spirits who prowl about the world
seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.

Prayer of St. Ignatius

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

The Mysteries of the Rosary



The Joyful Mysteries

1. The Annunciation
2. The Visitation
3. The Birth of Our Lord
4. The Presentation of the Child Jesus in the Temple
5. The Finding of Jesus in the Temple

The Sorrowful Mysteries

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

The Luminous Mysteries

1. The Baptism of the Lord
2. The Miracle at Cana
3. The Call to Reform
4. The Transfiguration
5. The Eucharist

The Glorious Mysteries

1. The Resurrection
2. The Ascension
3. The Descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles
4. The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary
5. The Coronation of Mary as Queen of Heaven

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.

Prayers in Latin

Sign of the Cross

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

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.

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.

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 many popular devotions in both English and Latin (including litanies) may be found at
<http://www.ewtn.com/library/prayer/latrosar.htm>

Things to Know

The Two Great Commandments

(See Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18, 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 Sabbath 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 anything that belongs to your neighbor.

The Laws (Precepts) of the Church

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

Holy Days of Obligation in the U.S.A.

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

Christmas (December 25)
The Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God (January 1)
Ascension (40 days after Easter unless celebrated on the following Sunday—as, at present, in SC)
Assumption of Mary (August 15)
All Saints' Day (November 1)
Immaculate Conception (December 8)

Corporal Works of Mercy

Feed the hungry.
Give drink to the thirsty.
Clothe the naked.
Visit the imprisoned.
Shelter the homeless.
Visit the sick.
Bury the dead.



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.

Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Wisdom
Understanding
Counsel (Right Judgment)
Fortitude (Courage)
Knowledge
Piety (Reverence)
Fear of the Lord (Wonder and Awe)

Fruits of the Holy Spirit

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

Theological Virtues

Faith
Hope
Charity

Cardinal Virtues

Prudence
Justice
Fortitude
Temperance (Moderation)

Capital Sins

Pride	Envy
Anger	Guttony
Greed	Sloth (Laziness)
Lust	

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