

# Archdiocese of San Francisco

## Elementary Religion Curriculum for Parishes and Schools

### **Introduction**

It is not unreasonable to expect that graduates of parish religion programs and Catholic elementary schools have an age-appropriate knowledge of the major aspect of the Church's doctrines, moral teachings, sacramental and spiritual life. These guidelines will guide programs in the design of Religion curriculum, the selection of appropriate textbooks, and the training of catechists. Given the diversity of the Archdiocese of San Francisco, parishes and schools will need to adapt these guidelines according to local needs.

These concepts were identified in language suited for those adults who are primarily responsible for Religious Education curriculum and instruction. These concepts are to be used in the following manner:

- For use by parish and school personnel in the selection and evaluation of catechetical textbooks
- For use by individual grade level Catechists in order to ensure that these concepts, irregardless of whatever Religion textbook is in usage at the local school, are covered at the grade level of instruction to which they have been assigned

These concepts, along with effective teaching techniques, are presented in age-appropriate language in the textbooks approved by the Department of Catholic Schools and the Office of Religious Education & Youth Ministry in collaboration with the Archbishop.

It is very important that principals, D.R.E's/C.R.P's religion coordinators, and especially grade level catechists understand the meaning of each concept at each level of religious instruction. Certification through the California Catholic Conference of Bishops of Catechists is recommended to help catechists deepen their knowledge and understanding of the faith and how to teach it appropriately.

### **The Organization of These Outcomes**

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* has proven to be an invaluable resource for those entrusted with catechetical leadership and ministry. Because of the comprehensive nature of the *Catechism*, we have decided to base our Elementary School Religion Curriculum on its contents. At each grade level, Religion learning outcomes have been organized according to the four parts of the *Catechism*:

#### *Part One:* The Profession of Faith

These outcomes reflect students' knowledge of God's salvific and gradual revelation of love to the human race, and the human response of faith. Primary among these outcomes is students' awareness of their baptismal call to live in the love of the one God who is three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

*Part Two: The Celebration of the Christian Mystery*

These outcomes reflect students' knowledge of how the sacramental and liturgical life of the Church make present the saving action of Christ's Paschal Mystery and the grace of the Holy Spirit.

*Part Three: Life in Christ*

These outcomes reflect students' awareness of the ultimate human vocation: living a life of holiness. An emphasis on the Church's moral teachings, the Beatitudes, and the Ten Commandments are reflected at various levels of the elementary curriculum.

*Part Four: Christian Prayer*

These outcomes reflect students' awareness of the importance of prayer as an essential means for their growth in the Christian life. The rich heritage of Catholic spirituality and the various prayer forms of the Church are emphasized throughout the curriculum. A special focus is given to the Lord's Prayer as the pre-eminent prayer of Christians.

In addition to these outcomes, this Religion Curriculum also includes a variety of learning activities teachers can use to help students deepen their understanding of these concepts. These learning activities have been grouped according to the four key tasks of Catholic Education envisioned by the United States Bishops' in their pastoral message To Teach as Jesus Did: *Word, Community, Service, and Worship*.

On the following pages you will find:

- "Exit" learning outcomes for 8<sup>th</sup> grade graduates of elementary schools and programs. These refer to the general knowledge of Catholic faith graduating students should have gained over the course of their entire elementary careers.
- Grade level outcomes organized according to the four parts of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Please note that not all religion textbook series organize their materials in the same manner. This is acceptable as long as the contents of the textbooks, at each level, correspond to the learning outcomes identified by the Department of Catholic Schools' K-8 Religion Curriculum.

## **Conclusion**

Religious instruction is at the heart of any Catholic program. For this to be done in a meaningful way, religious instruction must be taught in an environment where the gospel virtues of faith, hope, and love are "living, conscious, and active" in every area of the curricular and extra-curricular programs.

Catechists have been entrusted with a wonderful opportunity to make a significant impact on their students' lives. In these difficult times, the living-out of Jesus' message and example is an urgent mandate. For this reason, only those who live the Catholic faith, know and understand the doctrines of the Church, and are willing to teach Religion in a creative, comprehensive, and meaningful way are qualified to fulfill this important service in an authentic way.

# ARCHDIOCESE OF SAN FRANCISCO

## Religious Education Exit Outcomes

Upon graduation from the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, elementary students will have a basic understanding of the following concepts:

### Area #1: ***The Profession of Faith***

1. The human person is made in the image and likeness of the Triune God, has a basic capacity to experience God's presence, and is capable of knowing God through the natural light of reason.
2. God reveals "religious and moral truths which humans cannot possibly arrive at by their own powers." These truths belong to the order of Divine Revelation.
3. Beginning with his Covenant with the People of Israel, and in gradual stages thereafter, God revealed the mystery of His plan of loving goodness. This plan has its origins and fulfillment in the incarnation and mission of Jesus Christ.
4. Divine Revelation is given in two distinct ways: Sacred Scripture and Tradition. Both of these have been entrusted to the Church in order to help the faithful see the presence of Christ in every age.
5. Scripture, Tradition, and the Church's Magisterium help Catholics grow in their understanding of Divine Revelation and serve as a guide through all the stages of life.
6. Sacred Scripture is the inspired Word of God. Included in this concept are an understanding of the major principles of Catholic biblical interpretation and a basic knowledge of the stories and teachings of the Old and New Testaments.
7. The core beliefs expressed in the Creed: the Trinity, the salvific life and message of Jesus Christ, the nature of the Church, grace, sin, redemption and the afterlife.
8. The Church, as the People of God and Body of Christ, extends Christ's proclamation of the Kingdom of God in every age and culture.
9. That God is present in and works through all people of good will and that Christians are called to respect all person's rights to religious freedom.
10. That each person has unique gifts and is called to use these gifts to build God's Kingdom.

### Area #2: ***The Celebration of the Christian Mystery***

1. The liturgy is the primary way Catholics gather for worship and is a "reflection of and participation in God's work of salvation." This sacred action surpasses all other activities of the Church.

2. Liturgical celebrations are an experience of Jesus' priestly ministry. By participation in the Church's liturgical life, Catholics join Jesus in worship of the Father through the power of the Holy Spirit.
3. Through liturgy Catholics participate in the Paschal Mystery of Christ's suffering, death and resurrection. Liturgy is the "foretaste of the heavenly worship to which all Christians are called."
4. The various signs and symbols, words and actions, music and holy images utilized in sacred places and liturgical functions.
5. The importance of Sunday as the Lord's Day, and the celebration of the Mass through the various seasons of the Liturgical Year.
6. The nature of the seven sacraments as signs of God's grace given to the Church by Christ. How these sacraments "touch all the stages and all of the important moments of the Christian life."
7. The meaning and rites of the Sacraments of Initiation, Sacraments of Healing, and Sacraments at the Service of Communion.
8. The use of "sacramentals" and other spiritual practices celebrated by Catholics universally and those celebrated by the various cultural groups in the Archdiocese of San Francisco.
9. The local parish as the primary community in which Catholics live out their faith in Christ and join in worship of God.
10. How to design, implement, and participate in liturgical and other prayer services.

### Area #3: ***Life in Christ***

1. The human person is endowed with an immortal soul and is destined for eternal happiness with God in union with all the saints.
2. The human person is given the gift of reason and is capable of understanding the order of things established by God. Because of this, the human person is able to find ultimate happiness by "seeking and loving what is true and good."
3. The human person, by virtue of the spiritual powers of intellect and will, is endowed with freedom that finds its fullest expression in recognizing the voice of God which urges him/her "to do what is good and avoid what is evil."
4. That humanity, tempted by the Evil One, abused its freedom at the beginning of history by giving in to the temptation to do evil. Although human persons still desire the good, their nature still bears the wounds of original sin.
5. Through Christ's incarnation, death, and resurrection, humanity was delivered from sin and evil and freed for new life in the Holy Spirit.

6. A disciple of Christ is called to mature in grace, be capable of acting rightly and doing good, and “attain the perfection of charity which is holiness.”
7. The basic tenets of Catholic Moral Teachings such as: Human Freedom and Christian Beatitude; Freedom and Responsibility; the formation of a Moral Conscience; the Virtues; Sin; Social Justice; Law and Grace; the role of the Magisterium.
8. The importance of the Beatitudes and the Decalogue in the formation of a Christian moral conscience.
9. How the Precepts of the Church, and the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy help Christians grow in holiness and integrity.
10. The centrality of a respect for human life in all its diversity, stages of development, and social contexts.
11. The importance of developing a sense of stewardship over the gift of Creation.
12. The importance of service to the local and global communities as a primary way of modeling Christian discipleship.
13. How Mary and the saints model Christian holiness, justice, mercy, and service.
14. How the major figures of the Old and New Testaments model holiness, justice, mercy and service.

#### Area #4: ***Christian Prayer***

1. That prayer, in all of its variety and settings, is a primary way of developing a vital and loving relationship with God.
2. That prayer is a response to God’s loving invitation to enter into a relationship with each human person.
3. That prayer is directed to God the Father, in union with Jesus Christ, and is made possible by the grace of the Holy Spirit.
4. How the holy men and women of the Old and New Testaments serve as models of prayer.
5. How Christian prayer is patterned after the example of Jesus: solitary and communal prayer; prayers of adoration, praise, petition and intercession, and thanksgiving.
6. How the “Our Father” is a summary of the Gospel and the primary prayer of the Church.
7. How to develop a personal prayer life that allows each student to grow in faith, hope, and love.