



Diocese of Joliet

Office of the Bishop

425 Summit St.
Joliet, Illinois 60435

April 19, 2005

Dear Catechetical Leader,

One of my responsibilities as Bishop is to be “chief catechist” of the diocese. In carrying out that charge, I am happy to present to you the *Faith Formation Curriculum* for Kindergarten thru Grade 8 for the Diocese of Joliet. I hope that you will find it a useful tool to assist with the catechesis of children, whether your ministry is in a Catholic school or in a parish religious education program.

The mission of the school or parish program is not merely to teach facts and practices of our Catholic faith. Today, it is clear that catechists, in cooperation with families and the entire parish community, are called to form the interior life of young disciples as well. The faith formation of young people should provide an evangelizing encounter with the living presence of Christ that will transform them and set them on the lifelong journey of faith.

Both the General Directory for Catechesis and the textbooks recently approved by the Bishops’ Committee on the Catechism emphasize this transforming encounter with Christ. The diocesan Religious Education Office has teamed with the Catholic Schools Office to develop a new curriculum. This curriculum is flexible enough to fit a variety of parish and school faith formation models, yet realistic enough to correlate with common local practices as well as the approved childrens’ textbooks commonly in use.

I am grateful for the long hours and careful process that went into producing this curriculum. I thank the committee of parish and school leaders and the diocesan staff who developed this curriculum under the direction of Sister Helen Jean Kormelink and Tom Quinlan. I ask you to begin to integrate this document into your local faith formation programs for Kindergarten thru Grade 8, beginning with the 2005-06 school year.

Thank you for sharing your faith with our young people. The teaching ministry in this diocese is enriched by your efforts. May the Lord bless your efforts.

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Joseph L. Imesch
Bishop of Joliet



Diocese of Joliet

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April 19, 2005

Welcome to the *Faith Formation Curriculum* (K-8th Grade) for the Diocese of Joliet! This curriculum document is the product of much study, discussion and labor by the committee of parish directors of religious education and Catholic school principals, working under the joint direction of the Catholic Schools Office and the Religious Education Office. Our deep gratitude goes to all who provided input and worked diligently to develop such a sound and comprehensive curriculum!

This diocesan *Faith Formation Curriculum* was produced with an understanding that faith formation is a lifelong journey. It has been structured according to the “four pillars” of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Its three competencies have been drawn from the *General Directory for Catechesis*. It is correlated to the Bishops’ Committee on the Catechism textbook protocols, allowing for easy use with any approved text series. And this curriculum is flexible enough to be used with family and intergenerational approaches (i.e. *Generations of Faith*) to faith formation.

Our *Faith Formation Curriculum* establishes an appropriately high standard for the level of Catholic faith appropriation to which we in Catholic parish and school leadership must strive, as we form young hearts and minds to Christ and Catholic faith. Indeed, the principle mission of the Church to evangelize and catechize lies at the very heart of our ministry. Nonetheless, we invite you to embrace the challenge of achieving these standards, not with anxiety but with joy and a sense of eager anticipation. It is reasonable to presume that it may take some time to make the necessary systemic modifications to reach the goals to which this curriculum is calling us.

While assessment is a vital element to Catholic faith formation, you will find this *Faith Formation Curriculum* imbued with a spirit that grades can never be a complete measure of one’s theological, spiritual or moral development. Ultimately, the aim of holistic, well-integrated formation must transcend this measure. Outcomes must be rooted in a living witness to and in a reflection of the person of Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God.

Please be aware that an assessment component will be completed and made available to you by the fall of 2006. This instrument is intended to be helpful in determining how well students are doing in measurable areas of knowledge and skills.

In the joy of the Easter Season, please receive this diocesan *Faith Formation Curriculum* as a help and a guide. May God bless you greatly for your commitment to Catholic education and formation and your daily efforts to proclaim Christ’s *good news* and serve the mission of the Church!

Yours in Christ,

Sr. Helen Jean Kormelink, OSB
Superintendent, Catholic Schools Office

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FAITH FORMATION (RELIGION) CURRICULUM AND STANDARDS DIOCESE OF JOLIET

Introduction

Welcome to the Faith Formation (Religion) Curriculum Standards for children for the Diocese of Joliet. We hope you find this new approach to catechesis refreshing, challenging and helpful to your important work of sharing faith with the children of our diocese.

This curriculum is the result of many hours of work accomplished by very dedicated people including: principals, directors of religious education, teachers and catechists, coordinated by the Religious Education Office and the Catholic Schools Office of the Diocese of Joliet. The process of consultation, of writing and of review has been a long and thorough one, and we hope the fruit it has yielded will provide a new vision, renewed energy and better faith formation ministry for children, for their families and for their communities of faith.

In these standards, we have tried to bring together the current wisdom of the Church about catechesis as expressed in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)*, the *General Directory for Catechesis (GDC)*, and *The Protocol for Assessing the Conformity of Catechetical Materials* from the U.S. Catholic Bishops Office for the Catechism. According to the *GDC*, catechesis should be holistic and should involve three areas: being, knowing and doing. We tried to balance what Catholic students should know, with what they should be able to do, and how they should be living, which will allow them to become true disciples of Jesus Christ.

The Aim of Faith Formation (Catechesis)

True faith formation is both evangelical and relational: "The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch, but also in communion and intimacy with Jesus Christ." (*Catechesi Tradendi*, 5, see also *GDC* 80 and *CCC* 426) Even in a clearly classroom-based faith formation program, we are called to go beyond instilling mere academic knowledge, to providing ongoing opportunities for people to develop a lifelong relationship with Jesus Christ. We are helping form people who will be active participants in their faith community and in its celebration of the Liturgy, of the Sacraments and of Catholic traditions.

This is our mission as catechists. Beginning in early childhood, children should receive the kind of faith formation that equips them with the tools and with the hunger to continue to seek deeper faith formation throughout their lives. As truly well-formed Catholics, they are then sent to fulfill the call and promise of their baptism, armed with a spirituality of openness to growth and to further faith development.

To foster an environment in which persons can be formed in faith, we as religious educators need to be open to our own growth and to our own faith development. Regular participation in the sacramental life of the church, active study of the Word, ongoing exploration of church doctrine and of church tradition and a full prayer life are indispensable to our role as catechists of children and of families. It has been said that while children may not remember every detail of what we teach, they will certainly remember who we are as persons of faith and as disciples of Jesus Christ. For this reason, the Diocese of Joliet has formulated a plan for catechist formation, as outlined in the resource *In Service to the Master: Catechist Certification in the Diocese of Joliet* (Religious Education Office, 2004).

The Curriculum Goals and Standards

This curriculum was created to assist school and parish religious education programs for children in assessing whether all necessary elements of good faith formation are present. It is in no way intended to replace current religious education texts, nor does it legislate the specific program format and delivery for faith formation

within communities. The determination of texts, of program formats and of delivery of the program is properly the right of the local faith community.

The structure of the curriculum is fairly simple. The four Goals are based on the four “pillars” of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: Teachings of the Church (Creed), Liturgy and Sacraments (Worship), Life in Christ, and Prayer. Knowledge of Scripture is integrated into the section on Teachings of the Church (Goal 1). Additionally, the ability to read, to pray and to share faith through Scripture is a part of the section on Prayer (Goal 4).

How the Standards Are to Be Used

Under each of the four Goals appears a statement of Outcome (Being) that gives catechists a picture of the element of discipleship. Within each of the goals are several standards, and within each standard, specific performance descriptors, beginning with “As a result of their faith formation...” These performance descriptors are arranged on three levels: Knowledge, Skill, and Life Application. These are then placed within increments for grades pre-kindergarten-2, for grades 3-5 and for grades 6-8. This breadth of time allows the flexibility for different religious education text series as well as for lectionary-based or intergenerational programs to achieve the stated standards.

As in other content areas, schools and religious education programs need to make reasonable accommodations for students with learning differences. For information regarding students with special needs refer to Appendix A, “Faith Formation Curriculum for Children with Special Needs.”

Assessment

Assessment of all necessary elements of faith formation should be holistic. Faith formation cannot be assessed solely on academic standards in the same manner as other subjects. The outcome of faith formation is to form disciples who “work actively with others to spread the Gospel and build up the Church by witness of their lives and by professing their faith.” (RCIA, 75.4)

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