



## OCE MEMO

**TO: PAREs  
Youth Ministers  
Elementary Principals**

**FROM: Harry A. Plummer, Executive Director  
Office of Catholic Education**

**DATE: December 6, 2011**

**RE: Addendum to Religion  
Curriculum Guidelines**

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Attached please find a brief addendum to the 2001 document *Archdiocesan Religion Curriculum Guide*. It will be important that you share this with your catechists, religion teachers and any youth ministry volunteers who work with middle school students.

As the addendum states, it is meant to help supplement and clarify several aspects of our Archdiocesan religion curriculum guidelines based on various questions and suggestions from principals, youth ministers and parish administrators of religious education. Reviewing this addendum with those in your charge will be a valuable way of continuing to focus religious educators on the essential content of their efforts.

This document will be discussed at upcoming business meetings but should be distributed in your program without delay. Meanwhile any questions can be referred to our Archdiocesan catechetical director here: [kogorek@archindy.org](mailto:kogorek@archindy.org).

Attachment

cc: Most Rev. Christopher J. Coyne SLD, Apostolic Administrator



# Addendum of 2011

## Rooted in Jesus Christ: Religion Curriculum Millennium Edition



ARCHDIOCESE OF INDIANAPOLIS

*The Church in Central and Southern Indiana*

**Office of Catholic Education**

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## **Introduction**

One of our baptismal rights is to hear the Catholic faith proclaimed in its entirety with no gaps and certainly with no error (cf. John Paul II, *On Catechesis in Our Time* #30). Since 2001 the Millennium Edition of our Archdiocesan religion curriculum guidelines has helped to fulfill this right.

Recently, catechetical leaders throughout the Archdiocese were asked to offer feedback regarding use of these curriculum guidelines. What if any substantial revisions are needed based on using the guidelines in parish religious education programs and Catholic schools throughout southern and central Indiana?

The overwhelming response is that rather than revising the guidelines at this time it would be more helpful to offer various clarifications—based on the experience of using these guidelines—in the form of a brief addendum. A later revision may prove beneficial as we always seek to enhance how we communicate our Catholic sense of mission, vocation, stewardship etc.; for now, though, this addendum responds to the current expressed needs of catechetical leaders in southern and central Indiana. Note that the high school portion of these guidelines is undergoing a more substantial expansion; these revisions are addressed in a separate document. May this brief addendum regarding elementary catechesis, then, enhance your efforts to teach our Catholic faith to young people and their families for their good and the benefit of all our communities—local, national and global.

## **Role of Curriculum Guidelines in Overall Catechetical Strategy**

“What am I supposed to teach?” This most basic of questions is asked often and deserves a clear and compelling answer.

Our Archdiocesan Religion Curriculum Guidelines are meant to answer this question so that teachers of religion in parish catechetical programs as well as Catholic schools can focus on using approved resources well, assessing appropriately and working on their own catechetical formation, certification and renewal. The guidelines are part of this broad strategy for effective faith formation.



## Points of Clarification and Additional Information

### ✦ *The Cognitive and Affective Aspects of Catechesis*



Catechesis involves both the head and the heart, the cognitive and affective aspects of our being. Fifteen basic standards are repeated across all grade levels of our Archdiocesan religion curriculum guidelines; these are essential categories within religious education content and appear as oval bullet points on the PDF version of each grade level here

[www.archindy.org/oce/index.asp?action=curriculum\\_list](http://www.archindy.org/oce/index.asp?action=curriculum_list).

The square bullet points on these PDF versions are the objectives for each grade level. These objectives are the building blocks of lesson plans for an entire year of teaching. No visual difference between cognitive and affective objectives is immediately evident (i.e. they appear in the same font, size and style). Cognitive objectives often use words like **define** and **list** while affective ones tend to use phrases like *acknowledge the value of* or *express an appreciation for*.

By paying attention to distinctions between these types of objectives, catechists can use teaching methods proper to each thereby reaching the student's heart and head by God's grace. When students know what our Church teaches, why she teaches it and they acknowledge the beauty of these saving truths that God reveals out of love, we've gone a long way toward fulfilling our responsibility as Catholic educators.

### ✦ *Secular Subjects and Our Catholic Faith*

Our culture tends to compartmentalize religion, as if it were a very small part of life with no relation to the rest of how we spend our time. As Catholics we know that this is very inaccurate. The Archdiocesan curricula in secular subject areas include references to our Catholic faith.

Similarly when we teach religion we should seek points of connection to complementary areas of knowledge. Catechists in parish religious education programs, in getting to know their students, should have some sense of what these young people are studying in school so that at least occasionally these sorts of connections can be made. Parish catechists and Catholic school teachers should assign activities that de-compartmentalize religion—linking it to various areas of learning.

When Catholic school teachers and parish catechists help young people see that all truth is from God and all knowledge is interrelated we help these children of God understand that religion—properly understood—is a way of life. Both knowledge and Wisdom will guide our decision making and discernment of God's call.

✦ *Hours of Instruction in Schools and Religious Education Programs  
(in addition to Mass)*



Minimum annual hours of instruction in religion are as follows:

- In addition to Mass:
  - 60 hours (100 minutes weekly) in Catholic school pre-K to Grade 3 (i.e. 20 minutes per day)
  - 90 hours (150 minutes weekly) in Catholic school Grades 4 to 6 (i.e. 30 minutes per day)
  - 108 hours (180 minutes weekly) in Catholic school Grades 7 and 8 (i.e. 36 minutes per day)
  - 120 hours (200 minutes weekly) in Catholic school Grades 9 to 12 (i.e. 40 minutes per day; curriculum revision addressed in separate document)
  - 30 hours (weekly time varies) in parish catechetical programs pre-K to Grade 12

In parish catechetical programs the time afforded is enough to address each objective in our Archdiocesan religion curriculum guidelines (the square bullet points on the PDF documents found here [www.archindy.org/oce/index.asp?action=curriculum\\_list](http://www.archindy.org/oce/index.asp?action=curriculum_list)) at least briefly. Recall that because each objective (square bullet point) fleshes out a standard (oval bullet point), by addressing all curriculum objectives catechists in parish catechetical programs also address all the standards. Additional time in Catholic schools is spent enhancing coverage of each objective via projects, activities, multiple media forms etc.

Instructional time generally refers to structured learning experiences in classrooms or other areas designated for focused delivery of content using various activities and methodologies. Also, it is understood that students attending high schools other than Catholic secondary schools usually receive religious instruction in the context of a comprehensive parish youth ministry effort where evangelization and catechesis are interwoven with other components of this ministry. In parishes where catechesis of preadolescents occurs within a Middle School Ministry effort the hours spent addressing catechesis specifically should total thirty. Hours of instruction are quantified with these traits in mind. (Note: Instructional hours are in addition to time spent at Holy Mass.)

It is important that each objective be addressed regardless of what textbook series is used and that various methodologies are employed reflecting diversity in learning style. Whether an overview in a parish catechetical program or deeper treatment in one of our Catholic schools, when objectives are pursued mindful of these time requirements, students get the access to our Catholic faith that is their right.

## ✦ *The Liturgical Year: Our Church's Calendar*

Each year our Church in her seasons and feasts highlights the major events in the life of Jesus, affording us an opportunity to reflect on God's blessings and apply His saving Truth to our own life. Similarly using a three-year cycle of Sunday Mass readings from Sacred Scripture (and a two-year cycle of daily Mass readings) the Church in her lectionary helps us experience the Word of the Lord. (Links to the liturgical calendar and daily lectionary readings are found on the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' website: [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org).)

No overt reference to specific readings, feasts or seasons appears on our list of religion objectives as this list is flexible in its sequence. Many of these objectives, though, lend themselves well to being addressed at specific points on the Church calendar. Overt reference to the liturgical year by catechists is an essential part of teaching and witnessing to our Catholic faith.



By being mindful of the current season, feast and readings catechists allow the liturgical year itself to serve as a resource in covering Archdiocesan religion objectives. This in turn helps students relate classroom experiences to the life of their parish and that of the broader Church.

## ✦ *Sacred Scripture*

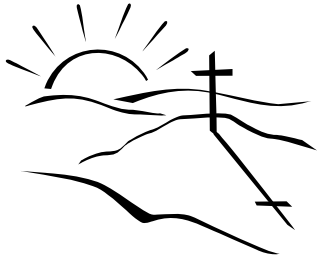
God reveals truth to us both in Sacred Scripture and in Sacred Tradition. Our *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* notes that “Both the living Tradition and the written Scriptures have their common source in the revelation of God in Jesus Christ.” (USCCA p.25) The objectives of our Archdiocesan religion curriculum guidelines represent a developmentally-appropriate overview of Sacred Tradition.

Sacred Scripture, though, is a key component of effective religious education. Incorporating Bible passages in lesson plans helps students encounter our Lord in a unique and powerful way. Sacred Scripture, then, refers to God's Word as revealed via the Holy Bible; it complements the teaching of our Church throughout history—Sacred Tradition—comprising the one Word of God and leading us to the incarnate Word, our Lord Jesus.

In addition to the lectionary, religion textbooks often suggest specific Scripture passages to help students understand and appreciate various truths of our Catholic faith. Regardless of how catechists decide what verses of Sacred Scripture to connect to their lessons, the symphony of Scripture and Tradition is heard best when both are included in learning experiences.

## ✦ *Key Figures of Salvation History*

Closely linked to the topic of Sacred Scripture is that of salvation history. Salvation from sin and death by the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus is integral to the Good News. God has interacted with His people throughout history—all focused ultimately on bringing each woman and man to salvation from sin and death.



Although each key figure in this history isn't named in our curriculum objectives, in pursuing the objectives these key people should be introduced to students. Interacting with heroes of Faith helps students clarify their own call to happiness, health and holiness.

As Sacred Scripture helps students appreciate God's covenant and its fulfillment in Jesus, key figures of salvation history (e.g. Eve, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Moses) serve as companions on this journey of discovery and faith. By highlighting specific people while pursuing various objectives, catechists can make clearer God's plan and His call to all people, everywhere.

## ✦ *Chastity Education*

Our Archdiocese has clearly-established chastity education guidelines. Rather than adding to the content of our curriculum objectives, these guidelines direct you to cover chastity-related objectives as follows:

- Specific, approved resources are to be used;
- An Archdiocesan chastity-education in-service is required of all who teach chastity-related lessons; and
- Parents are to be communicated with in specific ways under the direction of principals and parish administrators of religious education.

Separate from yet related to sexuality catechesis is safe environment information that is developmentally appropriate. Prudent inclusion of information from Protecting God's Children will help our children to be safe from those who would misuse God's gift of sexuality by sexually abusing children.

With good parental communication, specialized teacher training and approved resources in place for chastity education, our children can listen for the good news about God's beautiful gifts of love and sexuality. Guidelines regarding this area of catechesis are available at <http://www.archindy.org/oce//index.asp?action=ioi&catid=90>.



## ✦ *Our Blessed Mother*

Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary—a key figure of salvation history to say the least!—has ebbed and flowed throughout the history of our Church. Many Catholics are rediscovering the importance of understanding, appreciating and having a devoted relationship with Mary the Mother of God and Mother of the Church.

While Mary is mentioned in several curriculum objectives, opportunities to share her glorious story will arise often in ways that guideline documents can't entirely anticipate. Thus, although the Mother of our Lord relates to nearly each objective in our curriculum guidelines, she is not named in each to provide flexibility and discretion regarding when prime teachable moments about her arise from one year to the next. When a connection to our Blessed Mother is made by a holy day, a student's question or in any other way, it will benefit students and their families greatly to make as clear as possible Mary's pivotal role in salvation history and her motherly care for each of us.



Thus we not only teach about Mary, but also see her as model for all friends of Jesus. When our Blessed Mother is prominent in our efforts to teach the Faith, the efforts are more likely to bear fruit by God's grace.

## ✦ *Religion in Preschool Programs*

Preschool efforts are growing both in parish catechetical programs and in schools. Please note that our Archdiocesan religion curriculum guidelines contain objectives starting at the preschool level.

The religious potential of preschool-age children should not be underestimated. While methodology must always be developmentally appropriate, these preschool children have tremendous capacity for prayer, inquisitiveness, grasp of symbolism etc.

As is true at all grade levels, the building blocks of curriculum objectives, approved materials and resources (including catechist guides), suitable assessment and well-formed catechists form the basis of religion in preschool programs. Any specialized approach (e.g. Catechesis of the Good Shepherd) is to be adapted for use in our Archdiocese with direction from the Office of Catholic Education. Regardless of specific approaches and methodologies, parents as primary educators of their children can be greatly helped via our efforts at teaching the Faith to children of preschool age.



## ‡ *Suggestions for 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Grade*

Currently our religion curriculum guidelines do not distinguish between content for 7<sup>th</sup> grade and content for 8<sup>th</sup> grade. This is meant to provide some flexibility as preadolescent catechesis often takes the form of modules focusing on specific themes such as Jesus, His Church, His Sacraments etc. (Note: Various grade levels constitute middle school and/or junior high from school to school. This section clarifies curriculum-related matters without addressing these distinctions.)

Of extreme importance is coordination of efforts between 7<sup>th</sup> grade teachers and 8<sup>th</sup> grade teachers such that no objectives are missed and no undue repetition of objectives occurs. Without such collaboration gaps may appear in junior high catechesis and repetition—rather than serving to reinforce and deepen—may be perceived by students and parents as lack of organization.



By the end of 6<sup>th</sup> grade our students receive the developmentally appropriate overview of Catholic faith that is their right (cf. John Paul II, *On Catechesis in Our Time* #30). In 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade we revisit and deepen thus establishing a pattern that will last a lifetime. Thus when junior high students say “We know this already” we commend them then challenge each to reflect on Church teaching in light of her or his rapidly building life experience—asking questions like “How do these truths affect me and my decisions?” When junior high catechists coordinate their efforts—including an emphasis on the value of revisiting and reflecting on all our basic doctrinal and moral teachings—we model and set the stage for a lifetime of growth in faith, hope and love.

## **Conclusion**

Catechesis isn't about a What. It's about a Who: Jesus (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* #426). The Who, though (Jesus), cares a lot about the What. Jesus took great pains to proclaim His message clearly and instructed His friends to go everywhere—teaching everything He had commanded them (Matthew 28:19-20). May your ongoing use of these curriculum guidelines help you fulfill this great commission for your good and the good of all God's people.



## Reviewers and Evaluators

The Office of Catholic Education thanks these catechetical leaders who in turn collaborated with various parish catechists, school teachers and others in contributing to this addendum. While many educators contributed suggestions for clarification, enhancement etc., those listed below reviewed drafts of this document—evaluating it and offering much-appreciated editorial help.

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