

COMPONENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE CATECHETICAL LESSON

THE REVISED CATECHETICAL CURRICULUM GUIDELINES

The Catechetical Curriculum Guidelines embrace the Catechetical Directives of the United States Catholic Bishops and of Bishop D'Arcy. The Curriculum Guidelines are the primary guide for what content the students should receive at each grade level. They also provide formation for the catechist.

THE TEXTBOOK

When chosen from among the texts approved by the United States Catholic Bishops and recommended by our diocese, the textbook is an important tool for teaching the Catechetical Curriculum Guidelines

LESSON PLANS

Using both the Catechetical Curriculum Guidelines and the textbook, the catechist arranges the material into a lesson plan that meets the specific needs of the students and the creative teaching style of the catechist.

INTERACTIVE ACTIVITIES

Interactive activities reinforce the material from the Catechetical Curriculum Guidelines and the textbook, making the content come alive for the students.

THE HIERARCHY OF CATECHETICAL COMPONENTS

Each component should flow from the components that precede it.

- I. REVISED CATECHETICAL
CURRICULUM GUIDELINES**
- II. TEXTBOOK**
- III. LESSON PLAN**
- IV. INTERACTIVE ACTIVITIES**

COMPONENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE CATECHETICAL LESSON

In Greater Detail

I. REVISED CATECHETICAL CURRICULUM GUIDELINES

- ◆ The Catechetical Curriculum Guidelines flow from the directives given by the United States Catholic Bishops in the *National Directory for Catechesis*. As the primary catechist and shepherd of Catechesis in our diocese, the Catechetical Curriculum Guidelines are Bishop D'Arcy's initiative to provide the young people of our diocese with catechesis that is systematic, comprehensive and age appropriate.
- ◆ The Catechetical Curriculum Guidelines have a two pronged purpose: 1) to give directives for what the students should be taught and 2) to form the catechist.
- ◆ The Preschool/Kindergarten through grade 6 Catechetical Curriculum Guidelines are currently available at www.diocesefwsb.org/OC/guidelines.htm. The experimental use of these grade levels in the catechetical classroom is currently encouraged. Bishop D'Arcy expects their full implementation during the 2010-2011 school year.
- ◆ The Junior High Catechetical Curriculum Guidelines are in process. Some components are currently available at the online address above. Others will be available in Autumn 2009. During the 2009-2010 school year, Catechetical Directors will have the opportunity to review and give feedback on the Junior High Curriculum Guidelines and prepare for implementation. During the 2010-2011 school year Bishop D'Arcy expects the Curriculum Guidelines to be fully implemented.

II. TEXTBOOK

- ◆ **The Curriculum Guidelines precede the use of the textbook. The Curriculum Guidelines are a guide for what is to be taught, the textbook is a tool for teaching what is in the Curriculum Guidelines.**
- ◆ Both the Catechetical Curriculum Guidelines and a recommended textbook are necessary for effective teaching because they serve different purposes. The Curriculum Guidelines give a succinct, straightforward guide for what the children should learn and provide a formation tool so the catechists understand what they are teaching. They are the specific directives of Bishop D’Arcy, the shepherd and head catechist of our diocese.
- ◆ The textbooks put the content of the faith into a format which is understandable for the children and easy to use in a classroom. They also provide activity ideas to make the content of the faith come alive. However, the Curriculum Guidelines are still necessary to provide the catechist with direction for what content should be highlighted, drawn out, or added to the text.
- ◆ Bishop D’Arcy desires that each child have his or her own textbook. In the case of budget constraints, textbooks may be kept in the classroom and used from year-to-year. Parishes may apply for Legacy of Faith monies to help fund the purchase of class-copies of textbooks. Small parishes may combine their needs and write a grant request together.
- ◆ All textbooks recommended by our diocese have been reviewed and approved by the USCCB Subcommittee on the Catechism. The Curriculum Guidelines flow from the *National Directory for Catechesis*, written and promulgated by the USCCB. Therefore, there is a harmony between the Curriculum Guidelines and the recommended textbooks. The difference lies in that the textbooks are reviewed solely for their conformity with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The Curriculum Guidelines flow both from the *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the *National Directory for Catechesis*, and are the specific directives of our Bishop for our diocese. The Curriculum Guidelines incorporate each of the six tasks of Catechesis put forth in the *National Directory for Catechesis*.
- ◆ The Curriculum Guidelines follow a scope and sequence format, emphasizing specific aspects of the faith at specific grade levels. The textbook series’ recommended by our diocese follow this same scope and sequence, so there is a natural correspondence between the Curriculum Guidelines and the textbook.
- ◆ To be in conformity with the directives of Bishop D’Arcy, the following textbook series must be used for grades one through six:
 - We Believe** – Wm. Sadlier: 2004
 - Blest Are We** – Silver Burdett & Ginn: 2008
 - Christ our Life** – Loyola: 2007
 - Christ Jesus, the Way** – RCL Benziger: 2003
 - Call to Faith** – Harcourt: 2005, 2009
 - Finding God** – Loyola: 2005

II. LESSON PLAN

- ◆ A lesson plan is an outline of *what* content will be taught and *how* that content will be taught within the specific time frame of a catechetical lesson.
- ◆ A lesson plan may be brief or detailed, but should pinpoint what material is to be taught. This part of the lesson plan is often called the “learning objectives”.
- ◆ After becoming familiar with what should be taught from the Catechetical Curriculum Guidelines and deciding what parts of the textbook are most useful for teaching that material, each catechist should create a lesson plan for each lesson taught.
- ◆ In planning a lesson, the catechist may seek guidance from the textbook, the Catechetical Director, or materials provided by the diocese. However, the lesson plan should ultimately incorporate the specific needs of the students and the creative teaching style of the catechist.

IV. INTERACTIVE ACTIVITIES

- ◆ After determining from the Curriculum Guidelines what content will be taught during a catechetical lesson and developing learning objectives, the catechist should choose interactive activities that will reinforce the content and make the content come alive. Because activities can incorporate the needs of different learning styles, activities are very important in helping the students understand and remember the content of the lesson.
- ◆ Interactive activities should not be chosen arbitrarily or simply because they look like fun (although they should be fun!). The activities should serve the purpose of teaching the material in the lesson. This is why determining the content of the lesson (based on the Curriculum Guidelines) should precede the choosing of activities.
- ◆ In choosing activities, the catechist may seek guidance from the “Living the Christian Faith” section of the Curriculum Guidelines, the textbook, or the Catechetical Director

SCOPE AND SEQUENCE

The Catechetical Curriculum Guidelines use a “scope and sequence” format, focusing on a specific topic at each grade level, one through six. However, a “spiral” element is also present. This means that important elements of our faith are revisited in greater depth at each grade level of the Catechetical Curriculum Guidelines. The scope and sequence topics at each grade level correspond to those used by most textbook companies, including all of the textbook series recommended by our diocese. This allows for a natural correspondence between the Catechetical Curriculum Guidelines and the textbook series.

SCOPE AND SEQUENCE TOPICS

Grade One: To develop an awareness of God who gives us life and grace, the wonders of creation and the promise of eternal life.

Grade Two: To present Jesus as the model for Christian living.

Grade Three: To deepen the child's understanding of the Church and to help the child experience the Church as a Christian Community.

Grade Four: To help the children form their consciences according to the teachings of the Catholic Church, and to learn the basis of Christian morality taught in the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes.

Grade Five: To help the child to become a conscious and active member of the Church through an appreciation and celebration of its sacramental life, and to experience and understand the rites of the Sacraments.

Grade Six: To understand the Old Testament as the revelation of God in the history of a people, a revelation fulfilled in the New Testament.