

PARENTS' GUIDE TO THE JUNIOR HIGH CATECHETICAL CURRICULUM GUIDELINES

Theme: To promote knowledge of the meaning of the Liturgy and the Sacraments through a study of Confirmation.

As Parents you are the first to nurture a love of God in your child. You introduce and model your faith for your child. We invite you to more fully understand what this year will bring to your child as they grow in their faith through the instruction they receive. In the Confirmation Preparation component of the Junior High curriculum we hope to strengthen each young person's understanding of the Sacraments, particularly the Sacrament of Confirmation.

The Junior High curriculum guidelines have been organized to present a systematic, organic and comprehensive catechesis. At the backbone of the curriculum are the Six Tasks of Catechesis which are presented in the *National Directory for Catechesis*, the U.S. Catholic Bishops' directives for passing on the Faith. In the Junior High Curriculum the Six Tasks of Catechesis are presented in six units. Each unit focuses on one of the Tasks. Included in this pamphlet is a brief outline of the Confirmation Preparation component which your child should be exposed to during this year. To find the complete curriculum guidelines for Junior High, including references to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Scripture, as well as vocabulary resources, visit <http://www.diocesesfwsb.org> and look under the Office of Catechesis.

While Christ was on earth He formed His disciples by instructing them, praying with them, showing them how to live, and by passing down His mission to them. The *National Directory for Catechesis* has outlined Six Tasks that can best shape us in our Catholic Faith. All Six Tasks are covered at the Junior High Level. Each grade level focuses on three of the Six Tasks. Below is a summary of information introduced in the Confirmation Preparation component of the Junior High Curriculum:

THE SACRAMENTS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

- God is the source of all life. Each person participates in God's life of grace through the Sacraments.
- A sacrament is an outward sign of God's grace. The sacraments were instituted by Christ and are received through the life of the Church. Through the action of the Holy Spirit each sacrament brings a special divine grace into our lives.
- There are seven sacraments that come to us through the Church. They are:
 - Baptism
 - Eucharist
 - Confirmation
 - Reconciliation
 - Matrimony
 - Holy Orders
 - Anointing of the Sick
- The Sacraments of Initiation are Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. By receiving these three Sacraments a person becomes fully a member of the Christian Community, the Body of Christ.
- Through Baptism a person becomes united to Christ through grace and becomes a temple of the Holy Spirit and a member of the Church. Baptism is received only once.
- Confirmation is the sacrament that completes the grace of Baptism. The person receives an increase of the gift of the Holy Spirit that “seals” and strengthens the baptized person to take on the full responsibilities of the Church, in particular the apostolic life.
- Eucharist is the sacrament in which the Lord Jesus Himself, under the appearance of bread and wine, is present, offered and received.
- Sacramentals are an extension of the sacraments. Sacramentals are sacred signs (objects, actions and blessings) which specially prepare a person to receive the graces of the sacraments. Sacramentals do not impart grace. Sacraments impart grace while sacramentals prepare a soul to receive the graces that are proper to the Sacraments.

Morality Review

- One way for a person to live as a follower of Christ is to follow the precepts of the Church. The precepts are:
 - To attend Mass on Sundays and on Holy Days of Obligation.
 - To confess sins at least once a year. (Anyone conscious of a mortal sin should seek reconciliation

immediately.)

- To receive Holy Communion at least once a year during the Easter season.
- To observe the proscribed days of fasting and abstinence.
- To help provide for the needs of the Church.
- Faith is an act of giving our entire self to God. Our hearts give our love to God and our intellect believes the revelation in Scripture and in Tradition.
- Faith is a relationship – a loving yes to God who has first loved us. Faith is our response to God’s love.
- Faith is meant to be exercised in a community. We need other people to teach and pass on God’s Revelation. We also need others to support us in our belief. This is why God gave us the Catholic Church to support and guide us in our life of faith.
- Human beings have free will. God created us with the ability to choose good or evil; to choose to believe in Him or not to believe in Him.
- God created human persons in His own image and likeness. God created men and women as equals. God intends that men and women complement each other and be for each other.
- Men and women have been given free will. True freedom comes from living in God’s image and likeness.
- It is very important for each person to form their conscience in order to make good judgments that lead to a moral life. The formation of the conscience is a life long process which takes time and effort.
- God gave all people the gift of the Church to guide them in the formation of their conscience. Through the sacraments, God gives graces to help strengthen the people of God to make the right decision to be a loving person.
- Each person should take time to think and learn to listen to his or her conscience before they act.
- The Ten Commandments help each person to live a moral life. They are:
 - *The First Commandment* – “I am the Lord, your God: you shall not have strange gods before me.”
 - *The Second Commandment* – “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.”
 - *The Third Commandment* – “Remember the Sabbath day.”
 - *The Fourth Commandment* – “Honor thy father and mother.”
 - *The Fifth Commandment* – “You shall not kill.”
 - *The Sixth Commandment & the Ninth Commandment* – “You shall not commit adultery.” & “You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife.”
 - *The Seventh Commandment* – “You shall not steal.”
 - *The Eighth Commandment* – “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.”
 - *The Tenth Commandment* – “You shall not covet your neighbor’s goods.”
- In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave us the Beatitudes. They are at the heart of the teachings of Christ.
- Virtues strengthen the moral life. A virtue is a good habit that helps us to do what is right. The Cardinal Virtues are: prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. The Theological Virtues are: faith, hope, and love (charity).

THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

- As human beings we are not perfect and living a moral life is not an easy task. We do not need to despair, however, because God has given us a great gift.
- God gave the Church the beautiful gift of the Sacrament of Reconciliation so that each person might confess their sins, be absolved of their sin, and receive sanctifying grace.
- Reconciliation is the sacrament by which each person receives God's merciful forgiveness for personal sins.
- Before receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation each person must perform an examination of conscience.
- Sin is a deliberate choice to disobey God. A person cannot sin by accident. Mortal sin destroys the very life of God within us. Venial sin strains our relationship with God.
- In order to receive the Sacrament, a person must confess all mortal and venial sins he or she can remember.
- Monthly confession, even in the absence of mortal sin, is advised because it strengthens our relationship with God.

THE SACRAMENT OF THE EUCHARIST

- The Eucharist is the "source and summit of the Christian life, because it contains the Church's entire Christian treasure that is Christ Himself."
- In the Sacrament of the Eucharist, Christ is truly present through His Body and Blood under the appearances of bread and wine. He becomes present through transubstantiation which means that the bread and wine are transformed into the very Body and Blood of Christ.
- To receive Christ in the Eucharist, one must be in the state of grace. This means to be free from any serious sins.
- The effects of receiving the Eucharist:
 - It strengthens our union with Christ and each other.
 - Forgives venial sin and "preserves us from mortal sin."
 - It impels us to serve the poor as we recognize Christ in them.

THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

- Through Confirmation, Jesus Christ marks a Christian with the seal of His Spirit and clothes that person with divine power to be His witness. This is the "character" of Confirmation – the perfection of the common priesthood of the faithful received in Baptism and the power to profess faith in Christ publicly.
- Confirmation brings an increase and deepening of baptismal grace:
 - it unites us more firmly to Christ
 - it increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit in us
 - it renders our bond with the Church more perfect
 - It gives us a special strength of the Holy Spirit to spread and defend the faith by word and action as true witnesses of Christ, to confess the name of Christ boldly, and never to be ashamed of the Cross

- The Sacrament of Confirmation is conferred through the anointing with Chrism (special blessed oil) on the forehead, by the laying on of the hands, and the words “Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.”
- “Candidates for Confirmation, as for Baptism, fittingly seek the spiritual help of a sponsor. To emphasize the unity of the two sacraments, it is appropriate that this be one of the baptismal godparents” (cf. OC Introduction 5; 6; CIC, can. 893 1-2)
- The Gifts of the Holy Spirit are dispositions of the intellect and will towards others and God. These gifts help Christians live a moral life and follow the promptings of the Holy Spirit. The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord
- The Fruits of the Holy Spirit are formed in us by the Holy Spirit. These perfections are the first rewards of eternal glory that we are given as gifts on earth. The fruits develop through a moral Christian life. They are the fruits of living in communion with the Holy Spirit. The twelve fruits of the Holy Spirit are: charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self control, and chastity.
- Each person is called to love and care for people in both body and spirit. We imitate Christ by practicing the works of mercy.
- The Works of Mercy are ways that we can serve our neighbor by aiding them in their spiritual and bodily needs.
- The Spiritual Works of Mercy are:
 - Admonish the sinner.
 - Instruct the ignorant.
 - Counsel the doubtful.
 - Comfort the sorrowful.
 - Bear wrongs patiently.
 - Forgive all injuries.
 - Pray for the living and the dead.
- The Corporal Works of Mercy are:
 - Feed the hungry.
 - Give drink to the thirsty.
 - Clothe the naked.
 - Visit those in prison.
 - Shelter the homeless.
 - Visit the sick.
 - Bury the dead.

AN EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

God gives each person the free will to choose what is morally good or to choose what is morally wrong. Everyone fails to choose what is morally good at some time during their life. When we do this we commit sin. Sin not only hurts the person who sins but also hurts the entire Church. Happy for us we have a loving and forgiving God who is quick to forget our offenses. In the Sacrament of Reconciliation we have an opportunity to confess our sins, express sorrow for our sins, receive absolution (God's forgiveness) and do an act of penance given to us by the priest. Before going to the Sacrament of Reconciliation each person should take some time and carefully examine their conscience. Below is one example of an examination of conscience. Find a quiet place and slowly read through these questions.

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT ~ "I AM THE LORD, YOUR GOD: YOU SHALL NOT HAVE STRANGE GODS BEFORE ME."

Has my love of something been placed before my love for God?

Have I spent more time and effort on myself or material things than my relationship with God?

Have I practiced worship of any other god?

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT ~ "YOU SHALL NOT TAKE THE NAME OF THE LORD YOUR GOD IN VAIN."

Have I used the name of God in a disrespectful and inappropriate manner?

Have I blasphemed by speaking with contempt about God, the Church, or the saints?

Have I lied under an oath or promise that I spoke the truth?

Have I used vulgar language directed towards God?

THE THIRD COMMANDMENT ~ "REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY."

Have I freely chosen to miss Sunday Mass because I did not want to go?

Have I missed Mass on a Holy Day of Obligation?

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT ~ "HONOR THY FATHER AND MOTHER."

Have I obeyed my parents?

Have I spoken or thought disrespectfully to my parents?

Have I shown disrespect to my teachers, civil authorities, and elder family members in my thoughts or actions?

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT ~ "YOU SHALL NOT KILL."

Have I acted out of uncontrolled anger?

Have I used food or exercise in a way that is unhealthy for my body?

Have I used drugs or alcohol?

Have I respected life through my thoughts, words, and actions?

Have I acted in a way or with the intent to lead another to sin?

Have I intentionally harmed myself or another physically or verbally?

THE SIXTH AND NINTH COMMANDMENT ~ “YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY.” & “YOU SHALL NOT COVERT YOUR NEIGHBOR’S WIFE.”

Have I dressed immodestly?

Have I acted with the intent to draw inappropriate attention to my body and sexuality?

Have I used vulgar language that disrespects the body and sexuality?

Have I lived chastely in my thoughts, words, and actions?

Have I treated others with the respect they deserve as a creature of God?

THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT ~ “YOU SHALL NOT STEAL.”

Have I taken something that is not my own without permission or paying or returning it?

Have I intentionally harmed another one of God’s creatures?

Have I littered or intentionally disregarded care for the earth?

THE EIGHT COMMANDMENT ~ “YOU SHALL NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS AGAINST YOUR NEIGHBOR.”

Have I lied to anyone?

Have I continued to tell a story that I do not know is true?

Have I shared private information about someone to another?

THE TENTH COMMANDMENT ~ “YOU SHALL NOT COVET YOUR NEIGHBOR’S GOODS.”

Have I focused too much on gaining and retaining earthly goods?

Have I failed to share my money, time, or talent with someone in need despite the opportunity?

Have I felt sad at the good fortune of another?

Have I been happy when something bad happens to another?

THE 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.

VOCABULARY

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|---------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Absolution | Anointing of the Sick | Apostolic |
| Baptism | Bishop | Blasphemy |
| Body of Christ | Cardinal Virtues | Charity |
| Chastity | Chrism | Christian |
| Christian Initiation | Concupiscence | Confession |
| Confirmation | Conscience | Contrition |
| Corporal Works of Mercy | Counsel | Dignity of the Human Person |
| Eucharist | Eucharistic Prayer | Evangelists |
| Faith | Fasting | Fear of the Lord |
| Forgiveness | Fortitude | Free Will |
| Fruits of the Holy Spirit | Gifts of the Holy Spirit | Grace |
| Holy Orders | Hope | Idolatry |
| Image of God | Justice | Knowledge |
| Longing for God | Love | Magisterium |
| Marriage | Mass | Matrimony |
| Modest/Modesty | Morality | Natural Moral Law |
| Ordained Priest | Original Sin | Paschal Mystery |
| Penance | Perjury | Personal Sin |
| Piety | Priest | Prudence |
| Real Presence | Reconciliation | Reparation |
| Respect | Rites | Sacraments |
| Sacraments of Initiation | Sanctifying Grace | Scandal |
| Sin | Spiritual Works of Mercy | Temperance |
| Theological Virtues | Transubstantiation | True Presence |
| Understanding | Water | Wisdom |