

Part III
Background for Catechists

Teaching with the Catechism

The Catechism of the Catholic Church is the document of our time for teaching a living doctrinal faith. It is written for the very purpose of catechesis and therefore has its own inbuilt methodology and means for its effective transmission. Its articles and methodology need to be known and used for transmitting living doctrine in a living way.

It is best to use the Catechism to feed your own understanding and in your own preparation. The following points will help you to do this to gain a comprehensive appreciation of our faith.

1. Relate the four parts to each other

As we have seen, the Catechism has four parts relating to the four dimensions of the Christian life. The sections make a unity and are therefore deliberately linked by side-notes so that, for example, aspects of the creed can be immediately and directly linked to consequences for life and relevant expressions in liturgical worship. All catechesis can learn from this method of linking these four aspects so that the organic and dynamic unity and integrity of the faith can be better grasped.

2. Teach the priority of grace and God's action (picture)

There is what has been called a Diptych structure to the catechism, not unlike the Wilton Diptych which one often sees on Christmas cards. A diptych is a painting on two boards joined like a book at the spine. On one side of the Wilton diptych, the heavenly side, Our Lady is there dressed in a rich heavenly blue surrounded by angels with exquisitely painted wings and intent faces. Mary holds the child Jesus, dressed in cloth of gold leaning far out of her arms towards the barren earthly board opposite where the patron of the painting kneels in supplication and adoration with his patron saints behind to support his prayers. The diptych structure of the catechism has the side of grace given, like the Christ child leaping forward to help us, and the side of grace received, like the man on the bare earth looking to Christ for his salvation.

3. Find the essentials

The text throughout is ordered under a series of headings and subheadings within sections. The headings do not just indicate a list of topics but form a comprehensive and integrated series of articles of faith within which each subheading plays its own part. Within each subdivision, you will then find words in italics to indicate the key subject or emphasis. This system provides an excellent resource for ensuring that your catechetical lesson or program includes what the Church considers is essential to include for a particular article of faith or main subject.

4. Give the reasons

Each section of the text, for example, 268-274 on “The Almighty”, is to be read as a whole with its own reasons. It contains not only what the Church believes, but also the reasons for her beliefs. It is good to look for the statement of faith and then look for the argument that follows. 'Because' words give the clue to the start of the argument, that is, to why the Church can say what she does. It is here that there are often side references to other sections. It is here too that

the coherence of the interrelationships of the sections can be found united and without contradictions,

5. Relate to the sources

In your work with the Catechism you will become more acquainted with revelation, the source of all faith. 'The sources' used as citations in the texts and found in the footnotes, are taken, as you can see from the list of citations at the back, from an awesome array. These sources are worth investigating in their own right and can be a springboard to a range of catechetical activities as well as for prayer.

6. Relate to life

The Catechism relates its articles of faith to life lived by the saints and thus reminds catechists to do the same. It encourages memorization so that during any moment in life essentials of the faith need not depend on books, on writing or reading but can soak into the mind and heart and illumine life from within. The Catechism links its articles of faith to worship, prayer and action, that is, to those moments of life that need nourishing and directing by the Word of God.

These six points enable a catechist to use the Catechism in such a way that the faith can be transmitted comprehensively and organically. The Catechism helps catechists to find the points, which the Church finds the most essential for people to know. In the United States of America, a committee has been set up to look at all catechetical resources and see what they include and what they leave out. The committee put together a list of the top ten deficiencies, that is, those areas of faith, which all catechesis ought to include, and which were most regularly missing. This list is very useful for catechists to see and reflect on for themselves. It has been included below in order for to begin reading this Religious Education Handbook in a very practical way. Think about your own position and use the 10 points as a way of evaluating your Catechesis.

CATECHETICAL LESSON PLAN ACCORDING TO THE ECCLESIAL METHOD

Topic of Catechesis: _____

Date: _____/_____/_____

I. Learning Objectives (the participant will ...) _____

- Objectives for deeper understanding _____

- Objectives for Inviting Learners to a change of heart _____

II. Materials/Resources Needed (textbooks, media/technology, supplies, handouts, etc.):

III. Catechetical Foundations:

A. CHRISTOCENTRICITY: What does this topic have to do with Jesus and the "love that never ends?"

B. SCRIPTURAL DRIVING FORCE: Which foundational scriptures will be used so the teaching relies on God's Word?

C. PRIMARY CATECHISM SECTIONS: Which texts from the Catechism of the Catholic Church are central to understanding this topic?

D. OTHER IMPORTANT RESOURCES: What other creative resources will be helpful in this catechesis? (Textbook pages, websites, other books, maps, movie clips, music, art, stories, newspaper articles, etc.)

III. Procedure:

A. **Preparation** (calculated disengagement/prayer)

B. **Proclamation** (short, poignant statement of heart/core truth of teaching)

C. **Explanation** (content and method of delivery)

D. **Application** (of doctrinal topic to personal life and to culture/real world)

E. **Celebration** (ending in a place of gratitude and praise) and assignment:

IV. **Evaluation**/Alterations for next time ...

Key points for the Catechist to remember concerning use of texts:

The text needs to be read very carefully, several times beforehand.

We can believe that the text has depth, is inspired if it is Scripture, and has many 'answers'.

The questions should not lead people to question the Church's interpretation, but to try and find out for themselves what the text says and suggests and why the Church has the interpretation she does.

There is a way of introducing people to reading carefully, searching, and listening to the Spirit. It helps to involve people with the text so that they want to go and read the commentaries, the Fathers and the Saints to find out more.

Questions should lead people to involvement with the text more than, and before than, with themselves/the group.

The welcome and environment

For any session an atmosphere of welcome needs to be created from the outset. People need to feel welcome - this means that the room should be ready, arranged, clean and inviting - use of posters, crucifix, focal points etc. There's nothing worse than attending a meeting and not knowing where to sit or what to do because the catechists are in the middle of discussing where to set up the chairs!!

Seating, sights, sounds, smells, individual items may appear insignificant but their effect can make or mar an occasion. Make sure the lighting is sufficient for the activities planned - make sure everyone can see the screen/poster/board/ speaker. Can any distracting noises be shut out or persuaded to go elsewhere? Is the place properly aired and of a comfortable temperature? Have the toilets been checked and does everyone know where they are?

Can you see the need to remind ourselves of the variety of gifts and ministries which must be exercised? - All are so very important, each in their own ways? Let us start with two important ministries which do not get the credit they deserve, namely the ministry of transport and the ministry of hospitality. Not everyone can drive. Not everyone likes to go out (particularly after dark) on their own. Some care to these needs promotes a spirit of generosity and gratitude which warms any occasion: and people are meeting and talking on the way to and from the gathering - with important further opportunities for helping each other to learn.

Take care to welcome people - knowing their names and being able to introduce them to others is all basic Christianity in action and is very affirming. Even details like collecting fees can be done carefully - this is a good listening time, so collectors should be chosen with care. Plan the cup of tea or coffee to allow informal exchange within the group - this is not an extra to the learning opportunity, but very much part of it.

It is essential that we, as catechists, should create a welcoming atmosphere so that questions can be dealt with honestly and openly. Each person needs to feel that they are

loved and accepted, that their contribution is valuable and that without them the group would not be the same or complete. Hence, it is important that relationships between catechists and people in the group are worked on so that they become supportive. The people in the group whether adults or children, need to feel that they have achieved something and that their contribution has value. It does not matter how old one is, in a group situation where one might feel ill-at-ease, it is important that one is praised, loved and accepted. In this sense the catechist models what the Church strives for, namely, that the community of believers is nurtured, supported, and enabled to grow in faith.

Therefore for all groups it is important that boundaries are set, whether they are time limits, giving explicit and clear instructions that will be adhered to, or issues of confidentiality that should be dealt with sensitively and carefully. All participants need to know that the group will respect what happens within the group.

For your own notes-

Consider the space, decor, construction and environment of a) your parish church and b) any parish hall or room in which catechetical meetings take place.

Look at positioning of chairs, doorways, windows. What kind of pictures or statues are there? Is the layout utilitarian/ ornate? What about the lighting?

Write a few notes on your findings and reflect on their possible or real effect on people. Do you think environment can make a difference? Does the place/ room aid communion? Does it speak of holiness?

To conclude

To sum up it would be good to look at these questions after each session so that you can adapt and make changes for the next time.

Did my audience enjoy the session?

How were they involved?

Did I achieve what I hoped for?

Were there any reactions or questions that I didn't expect?

Did people understand what I was trying to do? Did I presume too much?

Were the activities understood? Did they achieve their purpose?

What was the prayer time like? Was everybody relaxed? Could everybody participate?

If I were to do this session again would I do anything differently? o Is there anything that I would develop further?

So,

- *Be prepared!*
- Set out your aims for your course.
- Set yourself measurable objectives for each of your sessions.
- Work out the tasks that will enable you to achieve your objectives.
- Decide how you will fit your activities into a manageable time span.
- Make sure that you have gathered your resources, and that you have made your room inviting.
- • Go over everything beforehand so that you know what you are doing. If the unexpected happens you will be in a better position to deal with it because you will not be floundering for ideas to get back on track.

A suggested format for your catechesis:

overall aim for the unit/ term
aims for each session
objectives for each lesson based on knowledge, skills, attitudes
Lesson Plan - means of achieving those objectives.
time -perhaps an allotted page in workbook for each task
introduction/ talk
activity/ and how it will be done,
additional activity
drawing conclusions
prayer
resources needed - including books, worksheets etc
responsibilities and roles for each catechist
brief evaluation

GUIDELINES REGARDING THE HUMAN SCIENCES AND CATECHETICS

(taken from the Diocese of Pittsburgh)

In 1990, the bishops of our nation published **Guidelines for Doctrinally Sound Catechetical**

Materials. In this document the bishops state that catechetical materials "must be based on accepted learning theory, established pedagogical principles, and practical learning strategies" (GDSCM #71). The materials must also "use language and images appropriate to the age level and developmental stages and special needs of those being catechized" (GDSCM #72).

This notion of the need for age and developmental appropriateness is further elucidated in the **Catechism of the Catholic Church**. "Whoever teaches must become all things to all men (1 Cor. 9:22), to win everyone to Christ... Above all, teachers must not imagine that a single kind of soul has been entrusted to them, and that consequently it is lawful to teach and form equally all the faithful in true piety with one and the same method! Let them realize that some are in Christ

as newborn babes, others as adolescents, and still others as adults in full command of their powers... Those who are called to the ministry of preaching must suit their words to the maturity and understanding of their hearers, as they hand on the teaching of the mysteries of faith and the rules of moral conduct" (CCC #24).

The above documents establish the necessity for catechists to work with the developmental needs of the children who come before them. In order to do this, they must know something about such developmental issues.

Pope John Paul II in **On Catechesis In Our Time** states: "Among the many prestigious sciences of man that are nowadays making immense advances, pedagogy is certainly one of the most important. The attainments of the other sciences - biology, psychology, sociology - are providing it with valuable elements" (CT #58). Our own National Catechetical Directory and the Documents of Vatican II both state: "The Church encourages the use of the biological, social, and psychological sciences in pastoral care" (NCD #175). Revelation itself admits of a specific divine pedagogy. "God communicates himself to man gradually. He prepares him to welcome by stages the supernatural Revelation that is to culminate in the person and mission of the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ" (CCC #53). It stands to reason that, as God dealt with our ancestors in the faith, he deals with us in the same way. He grants growth in the faith gradually as he prepares us to accept the truth.

"Because the life of faith is related to human development, it passes through stages or levels; furthermore, different people possess aspects of faith to different degrees. This is true, for example, of the comprehensiveness and intensity with which they accept God's word, of their ability to explain it, and of their ability to apply it to life. Catechesis is meant to help at each stage of human development and lead ultimately to full identification with Jesus" (NCD #174).

The way in which the findings of these sciences are utilized is important. It is essential to point out that the sciences, of themselves, do not cause faith nor growth in faith and neither, for that matter, does the catechist. Faith is a gift from God. Nonetheless, the human sciences "help us understand how people grow in their capacity for responding to God's grace" (NCD #175).

Child development is an extremely complex subject. Different children develop at different rates and in phases which often overlap. The National Catechetical Directory corroborates this notion by stating that no one explanation of the stages of human development and its implications for growth is either exclusive or exhaustive (NCD #175).

The behavioral sciences do not supply doctrinal or moral content nor were they intended to do so (see above reference to growth in capacity to respond in faith) (NCD #175). They need to be monitored and evaluated according to new findings and developments (NCD #175). While the sciences do provide general references to typical age ranges, children continue to be viewed as individuals and individual differences need to be taken in account.

Catechists who are parents or those who work with children in other capacities will recognize specific characteristics from the children they encounter. The broad developmental

characteristics contained herein are meant to aid catechists in developing an assessment of the capabilities and needs of the children as well as appraising their own expectations for student comprehension and participation.

The information in this section **Background for Catechists** was drawn from the following sources:

The National Catechetical Directory

Human Sexuality: A Catholic Perspective for Education and Lifelong Learning, United States Catholic Conference, Washington DC, 1990

Curriculum from other Dioceses (see lists in Introductory section)

Major Catechetical Publishers

PRINCIPLES OF FAITH DEVELOPMENT

PRESCHOOL THROUGH KINDERGARTEN

Children

- need parents and family life as a ground for their faith
- view size, power, and position as reasons for responding to God, parents, and rules
- need to share in common language and rituals of faith
- can begin to develop a personal relationship with God, especially through prayer
- form dispositions toward the world and attitudes toward worship that will last a lifetime
- need continuity and routine to provide order to their world
- focus on images rather than reality
- need help to distinguish imagination from reality
- need assurance that scary wishes do not make bad things come true
- view events in isolation

PRIMARY – GRADES ONE THROUGH THREE

Children

- grow in their relationship with God particularly through prayer based on life experience
- vest great authority in parents and other trusted adults
- desire to join in the ritual of the parish community as seen in the desire to participate in Penance and Eucharist
- need help in formation of conscience
- begin to sort out reality from imagination based on practical experience
- need concrete experiences to understand concepts and religious truths
- use classes and categories to order actions around them
- can begin to project themselves imaginatively into the position/situation of others
- begin to order the religious world
- view rules as inflexible
- understand reality best in story form
- identify with heroes and heroines of the Bible
- identify with the stories of the Church (lives of saints for example)
- desire to learn about people and their differences
- accept attitudes of parents, teachers, the Church, and other social institutions toward differences in people

FAITH DEVELOPMENT

INTERMEDIATE – GRADES FOUR THROUGH SIX

Children

- continue to grow in their relationship with God through prayer
- view all events in their lives as part of faith
- understand symbols, stories, and religious images of God in a way that can be somewhat literal
- need help to develop their own unique God given gifts
- can take greater roles of responsibility in prayer and worship
- catch the tradition of the past through stories (scripture, Jesus, stories of the Church)
- can identify outstanding role models of the present
- begin to glimpse themselves in the future through observing the virtues and character of heroes and heroines and mature adults
- respond to lived faith witness by willingness to participate in: more systematic presentation of the faith, liturgy, and religious practices
- need help to see the reasons behind Church rules, privileges, and responsibilities
- need help to understand that God desires the good and happiness of everyone
- vest greater importance in their expanding world of school, community, people, and events
- around the world (the latter brought closer through media)
- can be introduced to care for the aged, persons with disabilities, the poor in the neighborhood and the world, through their expanded involvement with others outside the home
- gain a sense of responsibility and develop care for others by being involved in charitable collections, community clean ups, and other organized events
- begin to have a genuine sense of fairness and equality
- can take others' views into account in bargaining to meet their own needs
- grow in the ability to understand abstract qualities in the future such as justice and injustice
- by participating now in activities with sharp contrasts between good and evil

FAITH DEVELOPMENT

JUNIOR HIGH – GRADES SEVEN AND EIGHT

Youth

- have increased conscience formation
- seek freedom, but still need structure
- challenge and question beliefs and norms of community
- are able to be more reflective of themselves and their experiences
- place importance on faith tradition as an anchor and support when everything else is in flux
- need their questions welcomed and need to be encouraged in their self-expression
- need assurance that the traditions and beliefs of the Church can be an anchor in a world that is otherwise changing at a frightening rate of speed
- have the capacity for critical reflection on their experiences and how they can find God in their lives
- desire active involvement and are open to service opportunities
- are willing to explore a personal relationship with God as they begin to define their own image of God
- look to the Church for the content and expression of faith
- resolve moral dilemmas based on expectations outside of themselves. i.e. peers, law, parents
- pray alone and with others
- may appear apathetic toward religion
- demand dynamic worship experiences, engaging preaching and profound spiritual experiences
- relate to Jesus Christ as friend, brother, Savior, Lord
- are concerned about social justice
- explore the skills and gifts God has given to them
- need opportunities to participate with adults to fulfill ministerial roles such as greeters or choir members
- find retreats attractive
- can offer time, talent and treasure to the parish

SENIOR HIGH – GRADES NINE THROUGH TWELVE

Youth

- are developing a capacity for spiritual depth
- question values
- can be demanding in search for absolutes
- exhibit a sense of immortality
- develop a compassion for others
- are morally committed to fulfill their responsibilities to society
- can be susceptible to cults and disaffected groups
- cast a keen eye on what is preached and what is lived
- seek ways to contribute to Church or societal needs
- recognize and are moved to action by local plight and world issues.

- recognize and enjoy diversity in the world
- recognize the need to respond in a more humane way.
- need to engage in worship on an adult level
- need good role models and lived faith in the family
- grow spiritually when families catechize informally by the witness of their lives, their participation in liturgy, their involvement in Church life, and their moral values
- need opportunities that allow for youth to talk about their experience of God
- watch other members of the faith community

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR PRESCHOOL CATECHISTS

- change activities frequently to accommodate short attention spans. Repeat short and simple songs, poems, and stories often for and with the children. Do not present abstract religious concepts since these are beyond the mental capabilities of the preschool child.
- be sensitive to children who cannot accomplish tasks requiring coordination. Praise attempts at the “process” rather than the “product.”
- provide for individual attention to be given to each child. Have a small pupil teacher ratio.
- promote trust and helpfulness, spontaneity and caring, mutual respect and a sense of wonder through your attitude. Help children develop an appreciation for the simple ordinary things in life; nurture a sense of reverence through informal prayers of praise and thanksgiving.
- employ a basic routine and use clear directions. Ensure a feeling of security within each child by keeping basically the same order of activities. Create an atmosphere where routine and acceptance are taken for granted – no matter how the children differ.
- allow children to experience your love and care for them as a way to know a loving God – religion is more “caught” than “taught.” Help children to discover positive attributes of God through parents and a caring environment of Church.
- provide climate and experiences allowing children’s self-worth to be raised: affirmation, acceptance, respect, freedom, activities allowing for success. Show sensitivity to children’s feelings.
- allow opportunities for making choices as a basis for moral development; children need to make decisions. Provide the stable environment children need for emotional security by providing freedom within limits. Show patience toward children who do not want to participate in group activities. With patience and encouragement, children will eventually join in.
- encourage natural curiosity by providing many sensory experiences. Foster growth in appreciation of use of the senses in addition to the magnificence of all creation.
- help children discover their powers and capabilities as a way to appreciate themselves as unique and special.
- listen patiently to children’s attempts to question and verbalize – do not rush through talking sessions.
- help children learn to experience, and thus cope, with many small group situations. Encourage but do not force sharing. Affirm children’s friendliness and kindness as good. Encourage them to be thoughtful of others.

PROFILE OF THE CHILDREN DEVELOPMENT PRESCHOOL - AGE 3

PHYSICAL

- gain control of large motor skills
- gain control of SOME fine motor skills, and over body processes (competency important to self image)
- need to stretch and move frequently
- increase use of hand skills for self care, eating, dressing, building and use of toys, simple household tasks
- alternate steps in climbing; begin to learn to jump

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL

- need a strong parental influence
- need to be valued for who the individual is
- need freedom to achieve a measure of independence; ("I can do it myself")
- are sensitive to others' actions and feelings; are easily hurt themselves
- are just beginning to learn to share, but prefer solitary activities and "parallel" play with others
- like one-on-one interaction with adults, want to please and need recognition
- enjoy routines which bring feelings of stability and security
- like to pretend; will use puppets to initiate conversation
- can identify with things that make them feel happy, sad, angry, or frightened

COGNITIVE

- show marked growth in language
- make and understand pertinent comments
- speak in short sentences
- practice conversational skills, although conversations are often one-sided
- have limited attention spans (4-6 minutes)
- enjoy simple stories, want them to be retold with the same sequence and inflections
- may have difficulty in understanding directions and require one brief direction at a time
- need to see, hear, and touch lesson related objects and pictures
- learn by experiencing and imitating
- delight in discovering self and world
- develop imaginations
- love to pretend
- believe all inanimate objects have human traits

PROFILE OF THE CHILDREN PRESCHOOL - AGE 4

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Children

- are refining motor skills; large skills are developed and in balance; are developing their small muscle control
- change activities frequently; are incapable of sitting still for any length of time unless highly motivated, attention span is limited
- are full of energy and action
- are improving their physical coordination
- have interest in manipulative materials
- are developing good sense of rhythm

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL

- need strong parental influence
- are curious about surroundings-are eager to use senses to explore
- may begin to share with a friend; undergo a period of testing "my" world against peers/siblings
- are nearly self-dependent in a routine; however, vacillate between dependence and independence
- appreciate having individuality recognized
- need to feel welcomed and wanted by family and friends
- like making choices; may begin to see wisdom of rules
- crave companionship of peers
- need to know "what comes next"
- like group work and planned experiences, especially parties and celebrations

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

- have a strong sense of wonder and awe about life
- have a strong desire to learn
- are eager for intellectual manipulation
- are becoming more acute in perceptual ability
- are imaginative and creative
- delight in long words
- delight in playful activity such as rhyming
- perceive analogies
- speak in sentences, but have limited linguistic expression of experience
- have fluent expression through play
- are able to tell name, address, and phone number
- are not always able to judge adequately for their own safety
- are animistic (all objects have feelings)
- are anthropomorphic (attribute human characteristics to inanimate objects and to God)
- are in symbolic stage of drawing
- understand and can explain pictures with special characteristics which are

exaggerated - even if the results are not often recognized by adults

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR KINDERGARTEN CATECHISTS

- provide activities involving the whole child (note: in both gross and small motor skills, be sensitive to children who are developing more slowly, avoid frustration for the children). Balance your activities with quiet times and the opportunity for movement.
- give individual attention to children by using their names in a special way. Celebrate birthdays, baptism, and anniversaries. Give praise for accomplishments. Plan social activities and celebrations which revolve around the changing seasons, and the liturgical seasons and feasts in the Church year, which may be inclusive of other family members.
- build on childrens' desire to please others as a first step in deepening a sense of selflessness and concern for others.
- assist children in developing a sense of responsibility and service to others by rotating simple chores. Role play different jobs both in the home and in the community.
- allow the children to make decisions as a basis for developing a social conscience.
- use symbols to enhance learning such as bread, water, light, heart.
- provide brief periods of silence to allow children to focus and internalize what has been learned.
- review and repeat as necessary. Present the same theme in different ways, using different materials or activities - retelling of stories, especially those from the Bible, is a good example.

PROFILE OF THE CHILDREN KINDERGARTEN - AGE 5

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Children

- are physically active, but have less energy than three and four year olds
- are more mature in motor control; hop, skip, are more balanced and poised
- participate in boisterous play
- build with blocks, have continued interest in puzzles
- have greater small muscle control in hands, enabling them to draw, cut
- usually have defined hand preference
- have increased competence in self-care
- are capable of sitting still for longer periods of time (10-15 minutes)

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL KINDERGARTEN - AGE 5

- are strongly influenced by adults and identify with them
- are moving into a larger circle beyond family
- need continuing signs of affection, belonging, encouragement and praise
- like to do what others do; however, dislike being compared to other children, and may

be damaged by this

- finish self-initiated tasks and take pride in work; are self motivated and self-sufficient
- are friendly and outgoing; have a good sense of humor, like jokes and tricks
- learn to play in small groups, but still may have difficulty sharing
- need freedom in choosing friends; are expanding their social contact to those outside of family
- develop a social relationship between self and teacher; like to role-play adult situations

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

- are curious and eager to learn
- learn best through active involvement
- explore world symbols through the sensory mode
- begin to distinguish reality from fantasy
- can symbolize thoughts through drawings
- may enter the "representative" stage of art - expressing their experiences more realistically.
- have longer attention spans (10-15 minutes)
- can remember and carry out two or three instructions with gradual development of listening skills
- talk without infantile articulation
- can narrate a long tale
- are eager to listen to stories and then retell them in own words
- may talk incessantly
- enjoy activities that allow an exchange of ideas among children
- can focus on detail and begin also to see things as a whole
- do not consider all the evidence in making judgements but will focus on one aspect

GUIDING PRINCIPLES PRIMARY FOR CATECHISTS (GRADES 1-3)

- emphasize uniqueness and the people God has given to us who love and care for us.
- concretize experiences by the use of stories, music, spontaneous prayer, and the use of imagination in class reflections.
- be an example for your children. Teach the children that God loves them, by showing them by attitude and action that they are loved.
- praise, reward, and appreciate the children. Enhance the childrens' self-image by your attitude toward each child.
- stimulate thought by including a variety of methods and activities. Distribute responsibility throughout the group which will enable the children to develop self control.

FIRST GRADE

- help children begin to acquire basic spiritual attitudes through the expression of gestures, since children relate readily to the language of symbols and gestures. Provide frequent opportunities for them to engage in ritual: i.e. processions, offerings, praising, and thanking God in prayer and song.
- help the children move from a moral stage known as self-interest. Endeavor to awaken in them an awareness of the needs and feelings of others. Invite them to reach out to others in love and concern.
- help children acquire an image of God through the stories you read and tell. Images later become more mature concepts and feelings about God. Emphasize the love and providence of God and God's faithfulness by using scripture stories.
- provide example since the children tend to imitate people - one who is conscious of God's presence in the world, in her or his life, one who is joyful, one who is ever striving to follow Christ more closely.

PROFILE OF THE CHILDREN GRADE 1

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

- tire easily physically (and intellectually)
- have short attention spans
- are very active
- prefer play over work

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL

- are centered on "self"; need help in developing relationships; seek to identify self as unique individuals in family, school, and world
- use "me" a great deal, want desires fulfilled in a short time; only beginning to understand the concept of "our".
- need boundaries of respect and responsibility set, need to be encouraged to share
- grow by identifying with adults who must "model" for child
- exhibit curiosity and enthusiasm

- open and eager to tell about family; need sensitivity to family situations
- may have developed social skills because of preschool environment
- may give "windows to what is within them" through their drawings
- boys and girls may prefer to sit, work, play in separate groups

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

- can usually think logically about concrete, real objects or personal experience
- learn best by doing, showing, and experiencing
- exhibit difficulty in reversing their thought processes in order to give the reasons that may have led up to a conclusion
- have an excellent facility for memorizing, especially musical or rhyming refrains

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR CATECHISTS GRADE 2

- need to bear in mind children's tendency to confuse past and present experiences because they are still limited in their sense of history and time. Clarify the differences - clarification is especially significant when introducing them to the examination of conscience. Need to assist children in sorting out what is real and relevant to the current examination of conscience, because they generally live in the present.
- show children love in action and attitude, consistently building them up with praise, recognition, and appreciation for the children to understand their personal value.
- help children form their consciences. Need to be careful to react consistently to an action, incident, or situation. (The children will realize that there are differences between what is dangerous, what is improper, what is annoying, what is accidental, and what is sinful).
- help to prepare the children to understand the forgiveness of God. Concentrate on the reality of God's love and mercy as a tremendous gift which God gives to us. Begin to develop a sense of sin and wrong doing.
- set an example for the formation of the children's values through their personal relationship with God, desire for union with God in prayer, and appreciation of the sacraments manifested through frequent reception.

PROFILE OF THE CHILDREN GRADE 2

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

- begin to master "things"
- develop "control" of language
- develop body skills
- become orderly

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL

- begin to develop real social awareness, but are still somewhat centered on "self"
- begin to develop sense of "community"; accept responsibility to do their part in classroom and home tasks, if assigned according to ability; realize that each person's task

is important to the group

- can experience adults outside of family as important "bridges" to move into the world
- find it difficult to accept decisions of group when different from one's own
- can begin to dialogue in small group discussions as opposed to just responding one-on-one to teacher directed questions
- are upset by negative comments, especially from someone in authority
- exhibit curiosity and enthusiasm for life
- boys and girls may prefer to sit/work in separate groups

COGNITIVE

- able to think logically about concrete, real objects or experiences they have known for the most part
- learn best by doing, showing, and experiencing
- are not ready for interpersonal dialogue
- have difficulty seeing things through another person's point of view
- tend to have their perceptions dominated by their own viewpoints
- begin to generalize
- set standards which are often too high for themselves (which lead to disappointment if the activity proves too difficult)

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR CATECHIST GRADE 3

- model Christian behavior for children to emulate because third-graders are in the "hero-worshipping" stage. Utilize stories from scripture and from the lives of the saints which include both heroes and heroines.
- help children develop socially and become more aware of the effect they have on a group. Help the children to choose the good that God wills, reject the wrong, and begin to accept greater responsibility for their actions.
- help children to become aware of social ills and human needs resulting from injustice, greed, lack of mercy, violence, and war. Teach them as Christians to use their God-given gifts to respond to the needs of others.
- assume responsibility for involving the children in prayer and in Christian service. Provide example as well as instruction that will encourage the children in a life of prayer and service.

PROFILE OF THE CHILDREN GRADE 3

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

- have greater control of large motor activities and increased mastery of fine motor skills
- enjoy group activities because of improved body coordination

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL

- are in an age of "I" and "you"

- have increased awareness of social sense; may begin to feel pre-adolescent pressure to wear the right clothes, etc.
- are more ready to share than at an earlier age, sometimes even caring for younger children
- begin to place great emphasis on friendships (best friends begin to develop); best friends may be good dialogue partners in group discussions
- can cooperate in group experiences (with about 4 or 5 others); boys and girls may work best in separate groups; do not want to be criticized or embarrassed in front of the group
- grow into making observations about the world around them, and exercise curiosity for life
- can begin to take responsibility for planning - ex. prayer service

COGNITIVE

- can do more logical thinking with concrete objects and events in the present
- begin to be able to see things from another's point of view, though not consistently
- are rapidly developing communication skills
- have speaking vocabularies which exceed reading vocabularies
- have an increasing ability to talk with others and not simply to them
- are enthusiastic
- are developing the self-confidence needed to work on projects
- are at peak creativity
- are interested in learning games
- begin to be "data" collectors
- display curiosity about life, nature, and people, but are able to learn more readily from their observations
- are mastering the ability to read and enjoy using this skill

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR CATECHISTS INTERMEDIATE GRADES

Catechist

- provide reasonable explanations and increased group activities because the children have developed a longer attention span. Augment the docility and the unquestioning acceptance of adult explanations by capitalizing on the children's interest in sharing in small group discussions.
- foster opportunities to replace interest in fantasy and fairy tale by interest in true-to-life stories that originate in the life of the Church, in their own communities and cultures, as well as in other areas.
- provide group projects in which all the children can be involved because children learn most effectively when engaged in the learning process.
- encourage students to analyze facts and to explore the lived faith of believers, past and present, whose lives they can emulate.
- continue to offer opportunities for meaningful memorization, particularly of certain essential doctrinal statements.
- use daily situations and discussions to help students develop skills in moral decision making. Challenge the students to correlate what they say they believe with their actions.
- include the element of social awareness in prayer experiences and reconciliation services. Move away from a simplified following of the rules and help the children to progress toward a faithful response to a call from the Lord.
- present Jesus as a model and friend. Identify biblical personalities, saints, and people in our own day who are living as Jesus did and who also serve as role models.
- explore more fully doctrines of the creed, commandments, and sacraments. Emphasize the meaning behind law and ritual. Provide explanations that represent the effectiveness of Christ at work in the world today.
- provide guidance and direction.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOURTH GRADE

Catechists

- stimulate the children's creativity through music, art, drama, and related activities. Provide an opportunity for them to express and appreciate religious concepts.
- encourage children to do what is right because it is right, whether it pleases the group or not. Stress the reasons and the values underlying the rules, as well as the importance of right motives.
- make children aware of social ills and human need by helping them to become involved in social justice activities in various ways - e.g. recycling bottles and aluminum, learning not to waste natural resources. Teach that all are called to give of their time, talents, and earthly goods.
- provide opportunities for fourth graders to seek and enjoy short periods of time when they can be alone. Support and nurture this desire and lead the children to prayer by teaching them how to pray and by praying with them: i.e. communal prayer, rote prayers, silent or centering prayer, spontaneous prayer and petitions, meditative prayer, paraliturgies, and prayer services.

PROFILE OF THE CHILDREN GRADE 4

PHYSICAL

- show an improvement in athletic skills; have greater control
- experience a plateau of sorts in physical development
- begin to notice differences between boys and girls

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL

- become group age "joiners," enjoy team effort
- are full of enthusiasm; have a great sense of humor
- place more importance on conformity rather than individuality; need to belong to the "right" crowd; begin to be influenced by the teen culture
- may experience an increased status with peers and a decrease in dependence on adults (grow beyond the influence of family and friends; however, still need adults for "direction" and approval)
- work cooperatively and evaluate selves in relationship to peers; desire to choose their own play/work partners; like to work on group projects; are self-confident
- begin to be aware of the opposite sex (display giggling over uncertainty of how to handle these feelings)
- **boys** join groups of boys and do not expect or experience difficulties
- **girls** are much more tentative with other girls; exercise a definite ritual of assimilation into the group (catechists need to pay attention to those who do not fit in and encourage acceptance)
- are conscious of the world around them

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

- enjoy intellectual challenges and are beginning to be able to think abstractly
- have a longer attention span and are capable of hard work
- are developing a sense of time
- see the concrete, real world as more important than the imaginative world
- are curious and thirst for knowledge and stimulation
- like to collect and classify things and exercise ability to question and experiment
- grow in reasoning ability and are more able to make moral decisions

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR CATECHIST GRADE 5

Catechists

- accept pre-adolescent restlessness, boredom, and awkwardness as a way to help students experience God's love for them as individuals. Repeat the message of selfworth again and again.
- understand that as peer pressure is a reality and pre-adolescents fear peer rejection, liturgical/sacramental experience rooted in the group is appealing and that community is an inviting concept. Encourage students to participate fully as a group in preparing materials and place for celebrations, playing musical instruments, reading the scripture, dramatizing the Gospel story, carrying the presentation gifts, making decorations, and presenting commentaries.
- encourage the understanding of God as a partner, someone to whom they can talk, someone who affects them personally, someone with whom they can enjoy periods of silence and reflection. Establish a positive attitude toward prayer and its purposes. Offer a variety of prayer experiences: rote prayers, silent or centering prayers, spontaneous prayers and petitions, meditative prayer, paraliturgies, and prayer services.
- educate students in attitudes and behaviors in the cause of peace and justice. Focus on three current areas of concern: world peace, world hunger, and the rights of the oppressed.

PROFILE OF THE CHILDREN GRADE 5

PHYSICAL

- are unpredictable; are a cause of irritation to themselves and others; worry about body development
- see body as an embarrassing object because of the vast differences in rate of change among this age group

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL

- are strongly influenced by the group; need to be like peers
- are in a transition time between adolescence and the peaceful years of middle childhood; are unpredictable, having both spurts of high and low energy at the same time
- may act/dress older than their age; need help to cultivate virtues like modesty and consideration for others
- are developing close friendships
- need help to identify feelings and how to act upon them in a positive manner - (giggling covers up emotions regarding the opposite sex)
- like quiet time (ex. reading) and time with peers (ex. playing complex games)
- do not want to risk being laughed at; may avoid answering orally in a large group; enjoy small group discussions better; prefer recording and reporting back to the large group
- are influenced by media and advertisements; are attracted to and value whatever

- enables them to experience physical/mental control over their environment
- are idealistic; are beginning to ask questions about themselves and their lives; are aware of problems in their families and world
- have feelings close to the surface; worry about looks, self, family, almost all think they are different; experience self-consciousness and sensitivity to criticism

COGNITIVE

- think on a factual/concrete level
- are able gradually to form abstract ideas/concepts based on experience
- manifest intense curiosity, a thirst for new experiences and a desire to collect, organize, and correlate factual material
- enjoy making collections of all kinds
- tend to see details more clearly than the main idea
- are able to observe people, situations and form conclusions about them
- search for explanations and are beginning to work with universals
- can memorize details but should always have this coupled with understanding
- have attention spans that usually exceed 20 minutes
- like to read, can participate in activities with complicated rules, can think chronologically, enjoy being silly, and delight in playing with the double meaning in language

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR CATECHISTS

GRADE 6

Catechists

- realize the fact that sixth graders are more aware of social problems, that they indeed have a strong sense of social justice, which results in their willingness to help others, even at some risk or actual cost to themselves. Lead students in the study of the scriptural history of God's identity with the oppressed and his action to deliver the Israelites from slavery in Egypt.
- provide a safe and secure setting for exploring questions and doubts. Provide a forum for students to explore their feelings, as they try to integrate the reality of their life experience with their religious beliefs.
- teach young people to pray, keeping in mind that learning to pray is more important than learning prayers. Provide opportunities so that the boys and girls unite themselves to God with spontaneity and joy. Encourage silent prayer, for example, after the narration of a Gospel passage or at unforeseen moments created by nature or by the interaction of the children.

Note: (some school districts now include sixth grade in middle school).

PROFILE OF THE CHILDREN

GRADE 6

PHYSICAL

- are in a transitional stage of physical maturation
- experience unevenness in every level; e.g., have propensity to be energetic and active at one time, extremely fatigued shortly afterwards
- vacillate between high and low moods (physical and/or emotional)
- can experience the onslaught of puberty

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL

- regard the influence of parent/teacher as weaker than that of peers
- continue to be in transition between adolescence and middle childhood, often feel like they do not belong (between elementary and middle or junior high)
- need to accept themselves as male or female and to deal with others on those terms; have a growing interest in clothes, although not necessarily how to care for them!
- can experience negative conditioning and ignorance as primary problems in psychological development
- continue to develop close friendships
- are developing self-image; allow self-worth to be prominently influenced by peer groups
- need significant adults for guidance/support to enable them to make wise decisions about real issues; begin to develop ideas about life's work
- dislike being embarrassed or criticized in front of friends, especially by parents; need caring groups (family, friends) for belonging
- experience confusion, curiosity, uncertainty, and experimentation in behavior which tends to accompany their search for personal identity

- enjoy examining their roots and stories of their families and groups to which they belong as they search for their identity

COGNITIVE

- can use their minds to a greater degree
- tend to be very intellectual; are preoccupied with facts, reasons, and discovery through experimentation
- can work effectively with universal and deductive reasoning in arriving at conclusions
- may still need grounding in concrete objects and situations when dealing with abstract ideas
- continue to see details more clearly than main ideas
- prefer working with the concrete rather than the abstract

GUIDING PRICIPLES FOR JUNIOR HIGH CATECHISTS GRADE 7 - 8

- need to help the children see themselves as unique
- must allow the child to ask questions that may make the catechist feel a little uncomfortable
- permit the child to challenge authority because they need to assert their own ideas and try them out
- should be available to the child when a trusted adult is needed to talk to or consult
- give the child opportunities to talk about their friendships and themselves
- encourage children to feel important and that their ideas matter
- allow the children to have time with their peers
- respond to children in a positive and affirming manner
- minimize lecture-mode of instruction
- vary types of student products (de-emphasize written reports)
- give opportunities to participate in setting policy
- give clear expectations about truancy, substance use, and violent behavior
- give opportunities for setting group norms
- develop involvement in community projects
- accept modified rules
- provide opportunity to enjoy novelty over repetition
- provide “hands-on” learning
- look for opportunities to groom leadership skills
- provide a welcoming community atmosphere
- provide varied prayer forms
- lead children to plan liturgies and prayer services
- participate in Sunday Eucharist
- provide family involvement activities

PROFILE OF THE YOUTH GRADE 7 - 8

PHYSICAL

- are entering or about to enter puberty
- have varying rates of physical growth—can seem to happen overnight
- develop secondary sex characteristics
- become strong physically
- experiment with their appearance
- are fidgety, very busy

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL

- are sensitive to physical changes and body image, which greatly influences self-image
- sense peer influence as very strong
- appear to be defiant
- become too busy socially—need to set priorities
- retain respect for parents and other adults
- begin to distance themselves from family influences and identify more closely with peers
- seek limited independence

- have relationships with adults that continue to be important in the lives of young teens— especially when they are fearful, troubled, or unsure of situations in which they find themselves
- choose friends thoughtfully but aware of group norms, popular trends
- develop peer leadership skills
- deal with conflict among friends
- recognize and accept alternatives to aggression and violence
- recognize belonging as very important
- are self-aware and self-critical
- value friendship based on trust and loyalty

COGNITIVE

- can reason based on possibilities and not just experience
- can be self-conscious and critical
- use a more complex decision making process
- have more developed abstract reasoning
- develop capacity for critical reflection
- are able to think critically
- have increased attention span
- have a diversity of ability in this age group as new skills develop
- initiate own activities
- are aware of sexual factors, recognizing and accepting body changes, recognizing and resisting inappropriate sexual behaviors
- begin to understand key concepts: democracy, pioneering, importance of the environment, perfection and imperfection, prejudice, freedom, citizenship, liberty, home, industriousness, continuity, competence
- establish norms for health
- are able to set realistic short-term goals
- see both sides of issues, disputes, and arguments
- compare abilities to others, self, or normative standards
- abilities considered in light of others' reactions
- acknowledge the importance of self-statements and self-rewards

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR SENIOR HIGH CATECHIST GRADES 9-12

- seek to assist youth to understand and appreciate themselves
- provide opportunities for youth to exercise leadership
- facilitate experiences in social ministry, social justice education and social outreach
- provide opportunities for youth to act to preserve the environment
- allow opportunities for youth to evangelize through personal witness
- provide opportunities to explore, critique, evaluate, apply and interact with Catholic beliefs
- share faith stories
- provide opportunities to exchange with persons of different ethnic backgrounds
- provide peer gathering opportunities: dances, athletic events, bowling parties, youth outings, and diocesan-sponsored events
- provide opportunities to examine different life styles including single life, married life, priesthood, religious life, diaconate, and social ministries
- provide opportunities to participate in hunger walks, peer tutoring, serving at soup kitchens, and Habitat for Humanity
- provide opportunities to realize their potential to effect change among their peers
- provide opportunity to develop Christian living skills
- affirm youth and invite them to faith
- demonstrate that faith motivates their actions and choices by performing actions that evidence values contained in Scripture and in the Catholic faith tradition
- provide immersion experiences for youth
- ensure that youth have opportunities to contribute time, talent and treasure to the Church community
- involve youth leaders in planning
- use group discussions, debates, panels, interviews, simulation games with debriefing follow-up, videos, with breaks for discussion
- use role-play with typical situations
- discuss the media
- lead youth in guided meditation and reflection
- provide retreat experiences

PROFILE OF THE YOUTH GRADE 9 -12

PHYSICAL

- grow into adulthood
- notice changes and physical development have leveled out—development of glands and hormones have stopped
- have lots of energy and strength
- have lots of stamina
- have good coordination
- who are male may continue to mature and grow physically

- tend to require more sleep and tend to sleep later
- have increased appetites
- may begin to face adult health problems such as obesity, headaches, and stress related illnesses
- may be prone to physical problems related to accidents: cars, sports, try more daring activities such as skiing, skydiving, rock climbing etc.
- are sensitive to skin care issues
- take care of self; recognize consequences of risky behavior

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL

- need opportunity to plan for the future
- can role model for younger students
- continue to enjoy community and social service work
- understand elements of employment
- have an intolerance for imperfection
- transition from high school to college
- transition from home to independent living
- deal with classmates with problems: drug abuse, delinquency, divorce, pregnancy, and suicide
- are persistent to achieve goals in spite of setbacks
- become skilled at teamwork and interpersonal skills
- become independent
- talk with parents about daily activities, learning self-disclosure skills
- prepare for parenting, family responsibilities
- use request and refusal skills
- initiate and maintain cross-gender friends and romantic relationships
- deal with drinking and driving
- begin to focus on the future
- explore the meaning of one's life
- harmonize own and others' feelings
- are adaptable
- have creative thinking and problem solving skills especially in response to barriers/obstacles
- earn and budget money
- take pride in work accomplished
- plan for a career
- find technology important to them for communication
- know the type of people they enjoy
- are idealistic: justice is important, want to make a difference, want to change the world

COGNITIVE

- understand government issues
- become involved in community issues such as environmental projects
- make realistic academic plans
- recognize one's own strengths and weaknesses

- possess listening and oral communication skills
- have competence in reading, writing, and computation
- learn to learn skills