

# What To Teach and When to Teach It

## (A Brief but Important Introduction)

### **Consider this as we begin:**

We Have But One Teacher, Jesus Christ (Catechesi Tradendae)

### **Therefore:**

A great way to read Bible stories, for all ages, is to pray before hand asking the Holy Spirit to open up a meaningful message for you as you read. A powerful kind of question to ask your child after reading is, “What meaningful message did the Holy Spirit reveal to you in this story/scripture?”

### The End Game

Imagine that your child is leaving for college or jumping into the work force tomorrow. Wow! What a humbling encounter it is. When you drop your child off at college, your head and heart throb a bit. Are they ready? Are you ready? At this point of separation, we pray that each parent feels like they are not leaving their child alone to fend for themselves. We pray that your Child and their best friend, Jesus Christ, are there together working through daily choices, big and small. Jesus desires that deep connection with each one of us, but that relationship, like all relationships, takes time to build. At birth, baptisms, first communion, and confirmation, consider what you want in your child’s tool chest for life and develop those tools now. Old dogs can learn new tricks, but if we cooperate with God’s grace from the early years of the life of a child, we can give them a powerful head start.

### Core Things

Parents should teach their kids some core things, like how to be polite, how to balance income and expenses (checkbook), to cook and clean, and Catholic parents take very sacred promises, at our kid’s baptisms, to pass on the faith. Parents are called to be the first and best teachers in these baptismal promises. <http://www.catholicliturgy.com/index.cfm/fuseaction/textcontents/index/4/subindex/67/textindex/7> All of us are whole persons body and soul. As parents we are called to nurture and form both. We must prepare young children to be ready for kindergarten. We are asked to make sure that kids can do certain external functions, like write their name, tie their shoes and behave in class. These external functions are building boxes for future success in school and eventually work. God asks parents to make sure that our young kids develop certain interior functions, like being prayerful, being aware of God’s love for them and being in awe of God through nature and relationships. These interior functions are building boxes for

future success in school, relationships and eventually eternal life. God asks parents to make sure that our kids are prepared both body and soul as they grow up.

### Knowing God: A Living Person

Our relationship with our loving God and creator is designed to be a consistent, life-long aid, comfort and catalyst to us and our children. Catholic parents make sacred promises to form, cultivate and be in awe of the connection between Christ and their kids. Sending our kids into the world without developing the interior life is more tragic than sending them into the world without basic external skills.

Knowing things about Jesus Christ does not predict one's commitment to being a lifelong Christian, but knowing Jesus Christ does. We are to facilitate the development of our children's interior lives in a Catholic worldview. The development of a conversation and running dialogue with Jesus is at the core of a Catholic worldview. Jesus is a person, a living person. He seeks us out moment by moment. He loves us first and always.

We, and our children, have free will and God gives each of us the right to accept or reject him. It is a parent's job to foster a home and faith life that is attractive, meaningful, loving and properly challenging so that as our children move into the driver's seat of making decisions for themselves, they will choose faith in Christ because it is both wonderful and what they know well. It is the youth office's desire and your parish's job to assist and support you in this task.

### Mimicking and Modeling

Before School age, kids are voracious learners. A massive body of research says that pre-school kids are especially receptive to bonding and learning. At this age parents should read Bible stories to their children and pray with them many times a week. A great way to read Bible stories, for all ages, is to pray before hand asking the Holy Spirit to open up a meaningful message for you as you read. A powerful kind of question to ask your child after reading is, "What meaningful message did the Holy Spirit reveal to you in this story/scripture?"

Meals and bed times are a great start, but if we also pray at points of transition, thankfulness and stress, we will model what pray in adulthood should be. They should see you reading your Bible, going to Mass and praying. Kids learn by mimicking and modeling.

### Prayer: Talking and Listening

Jesus meets our kids where they are at. Teach your child to talk and listen to God from the very beginning. Use a combination of memorized prayers and those prayers spoken from the heart. There is great grace and wisdom in our memorized prayers. God also loves when we come to him genuinely using our own words. Mother Theresa gave us this insight to meaningful prayer:

“Prayer is not asking. Prayer is putting oneself in the hands of God, at His disposition, and listening to His voice in the depth of our hearts.”  
-- Bl. Mother Teresa of Calcutta

Only asking for things, and not listening creates an unhealthy pattern for prayer moving forward. We have observed that when a period of silence, to listen to God, is inserted during prayer and the reading scripture, that God is more easily understood and powerfully experienced by young people. Additionally, brief times of Adoration can be a great way to model “listening” prayer. Also, Frequently framing the Mass as a sacred time to listen to God can make a deep imprint on kid’s hearts.

We love the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd; CGS! Check this link out: <http://www.archkck.org/ministries--offices/ecat-youth/catechesis-of-the-good-shepherd>. CGS is a powerful approach to knowing Jesus deeply starting as a preschooler. GCS is remarkably effective at teaching all ages of people how to listen to God. If your parish or a neighboring parish offers GCS it is definitely worth checking out.

#### Textbooks and Intimate Conversation with God

The Catholic faith involves a relationship with Jesus Christ and his Church. The Catholic faith has a worldview that seeks each of its members to have an intimate relationship with Jesus. Our parish schools of religious education and our Catholic Schools follow basically similar curriculums that are often dictated by the textbook series that they use. The links below make clear the basic scope and sequence for learning the facts about our religion. For school age children, use these links as a guide:

<http://www.archkck.org/schools/2015/schools7-religion>  
<http://www.archkck.org/schools/2015/schools7-curriculum-by-subject>

These are tools that parents can use to evaluate and create an individual formation plan for each of your kids. Each kid is unique, and therefore you will need to customize how you form him or her. All of us need Christ Jesus. He comes personally and uniquely to every person. Respecting the key passage, “We Have But One Teacher, Jesus Christ” from (Catechesi Tradendae). Jesus teaches through scripture, prayer, sacraments, and the beauty of the world he created all day long, if we look and listen. Jesus seeks his children and desires to instruct them individually.

#### The Teen Years

The teen years are tricky. Teens seek “identity, autonomy and affinity,” according to Youth Ministry 3.0 by Oestreicher. We highly recommend this book and a deep understanding of these competing needs. Teens need their parents to stay engaged through their teen years, but teens need to be parented knowing that soon they will be an adult who will choose many things, including whether or not to engage in their faith. We offer extensive support through this website, <http://www.archkck.org/EcatParenting>, for parent of teens and extensive

programming for teens through the youth office, <http://www.archkck.org/youthministry>, because of the turbulence and struggle that most teens experience intermittently throughout adolescence. Incidentally, Chap Clark, in his insightful book Hurt 2.0, proposes that adolescents frequently lasts until the mid twenties.

### Confirmation Resources

Confirmation is generally offered in or around the 8<sup>th</sup> grade year in the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas. This is a very important time to build on and cement a child's faith. We find great merit in parishes using these Confirmation approaches: <http://www.archkck.org/ministries--offices/ecat-youth/confirmation-resources>. Additionally, Archbishop Naumann created a tool called "Fifty Things Every Catholic Teen Should Know": [http://www.archkck.org/file/schools\\_doc\\_file/curriculum/religion/religion-updated-8/3/15/Fifty\\_Truths\\_Every\\_Catholic\\_Teen\\_Should\\_Know\\_snack.pdf](http://www.archkck.org/file/schools_doc_file/curriculum/religion/religion-updated-8/3/15/Fifty_Truths_Every_Catholic_Teen_Should_Know_snack.pdf).

### Confirmation Conversions

We encourage parents and confirmation sponsors to respectfully ask teens about their prayer life and their interior life in general. Teens need God's wisdom in their interior/private struggles. As their parents, ask them to pray about the things that trouble them. Ask them to also pray for you and for your struggles. Remind them that you are praying about your exterior and interior struggles, and that you are asking God to help you develop your interior life.

### Dating Relationships and Sexuality

When do we teach our kids about sexuality? Now, is the answer. When is too early to start? Never is the answer. A powerful and definitive approach to understanding sexuality through a Catholic worldview is through Pope John Paul II's Theology of the Body. It is a comprehensive and enormous resource that can be intimidating. We are big fans of Ascension Press's Theology of the Body for Teens series, <http://thetheologyofthebody.com/information/teens>. Sexuality from a Catholic perspective is the study of love, respect and human dignity. Additional thoughts on teaching the Theology of the Body to your kids are available from the Family Life Office at <https://www.archkck.org/mfl-resources-sexuality-education>.

Look through the pages of this website. Check out our robust Pinterest page <https://www.pinterest.com/archkck/>. Check out these helpful links:

[Fun Ways to Pass on the Faith](#)

[Family Glue](#)

[Telling and Writing Your Family Story](#)

Email or call us with your questions and insights. We are praying for you and your kids.

### Additional Links to Cited Resources or other key resources

Catechesi Tradendae:

[http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_16101979\\_catechesi-tradendae.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_16101979_catechesi-tradendae.html)

Hurt 2.0

<http://www.amazon.com/Hurt-2-0-Inside-Teenagers-Culture/dp/080103941X>

Youth Ministry 3.0

<http://www.amazon.com/Youth-Ministry-3-0-Manifesto-Where/dp/0310668662>

FAQ of Theology of the Body by Dr. Mary Shivanandan (uses deeply theological terms)

<http://www.christendom-awake.org/pages/mshivana/faq-tob.htm>