

INTRODUCTION

In his Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae* (On Catechesis in Our Time), Pope John Paul II states:

“...in catechesis it is Christ, the Incarnate Word and Son of God, who is taught - everything else is taught with reference to Him - and it is Christ alone who teaches - anyone else teaches to the extent that he is Christ’s spokesman enabling Christ to teach with his lips.” (Para 6)

The Catechetical mission of the Diocese of Rockford is infused with the teachings of Jesus Christ as expressed in Catholic faith and tradition. Through a variety of methods, students are encouraged to recognize and grow in their relationship with God within the Church. Catechetical programs and experiences offer students opportunities to encounter Jesus Christ within the Catholic community, provide them with instruction in Catholic doctrine, and challenge them to develop a Catholic lifestyle which serves God, Church, and world.

The General Directory for Catechesis lists the “Fundamental tasks of catechesis: helping to know, to celebrate, and to contemplate the mystery of Christ

- Promoting knowledge of the faith
- Liturgical education
- Moral formation
- Teaching to pray
- Education for community life
- Missionary initiation” (Para 85, 86)

Catechesis, a duty and right

John Paul II further states in *Catechesi Tradendae*

“...it is clear that the Church has always looked on catechesis as a sacred duty and an inalienable right...from the theological point of view every baptized person, precisely by reason of being baptized, has the right to receive from the Church instruction and education enabling him (her) to enter on a truly Christian life....” (Para.14)

The Diocese of Rockford takes seriously the sacred duty of catechesis and the inalienable right of students to receive the whole of Catholic teachings

from those who teach in the name of Jesus Christ.

Curriculum grounded in the *Catechism*

The Rockford Diocese Religion curriculum guide for grades PreK-8 is grounded in the basic truths of the Catholic faith presented in *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Knowledge of this document and of this curriculum guide is essential for all those teaching Religion in the name of the Bishop, the Chief Catechist of the Diocese of Rockford.

These guidelines have been developed independently of any specific textbook or course of study. Rather than endorse the offerings of any textbook publishing companies, the Diocese of Rockford provides guidelines developed by a team of experienced educators at the elementary school level.

Implementation of this guide in Catholic schools and religious education programs

Each parish school and religious education program has the responsibility to plan programs, choose textbooks and other catechetical materials, and train catechists in accordance with these diocesan guidelines. (*A catechist is defined as one who teaches Religion in a Catholic school or parish religious education program.*) The following recommendations for implementation are to be considered.

1. Principals and Directors of Religious Education should provide catechists with adequate training so that catechists are familiar with the entire scope of these guidelines, including the appropriate grade level guidelines. Use of these guidelines for instruction should precede use of any textbook guidelines. This religious education curriculum is directed by *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* and then supported by religious education textbooks that appropriately integrate *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* and other sound catechetical resources needed for instruction.
2. Directors of Religious Education and Principals must provide instructional support. Sound teaching strategies, appropriate for the age and abilities of the students, are crucial to successful religious education. Again, we find wise words from the Holy Father’s Apostolic Exhortation.

“The age and intellectual development of Christians, their degree

of ecclesial and spiritual maturity, and many other personal circumstances demand that catechesis should adopt widely differing methods or the attainment of its specific aim: education in the faith.” (Para. 51)

3. “Catechists are to comply with the most current Catechist Certification Program established by the Diocesan Office of Religious Education, under the supervision of the Diocesan Director of Faith Formation” (Policy # 4220, Handbook of Policies and Procedures, Catholic Education Office, Diocese of Rockford, Illinois)

4. While parish religious education programs are expected to adhere as closely as possible to these guidelines, it is understood that minimal adaptations may have to be made by the Pastor/Principal/DRE in order to accommodate such circumstances as limited weekly religious education class times during the school year.

5. Families should be familiarized with the diocesan guidelines and subsequently encouraged to support the religious education guidelines at home. Parents should be made aware of their important role in catechesis through religious education handbooks, parent meetings, regular communication between classroom and home, progress reports, and parent/catechist conferences.

6. The Chastity/Safe Environment Program is a part of the Religion Guidelines, not an add-on. If possible, it should be coordinated between the school and religious education program. October, Respect Life Month, is an ideal time, but not the mandatory month. The complete Chastity/Safe Environment Program is available at www.rockforddiocese.org/education

7. The Religion Curriculum Guidelines are formatted per grade level using the Standards set by the Report Card Committee. The Standards are **bold/underlined in purple**. The Chastity and Safe

Environment Lessons are in a different font. The **Chastity Lessons are in red** and The **Safe Environment Lessons are in blue**

8. There is a Teacher Check-off list available for each grade

9. In 2007, Pope Benedict XVI encouraged us to experience some Latin Prayers, and so we have included the following: **Angus Dei, Sanctus, and Kyrie elision** in the Prayer section.