

Celebrating Catechetical Sunday

The third Sunday of September in the United States is celebrated as Catechetical Sunday in order to acknowledge, appreciate and commission those who are catechists. In his encyclical letter *Redemptoris Missio* Pope John Paul II, says: “Among the laity who become evangelizers, catechists have a place of honor...Catechists are among those who have received Christ’s command to ‘go and teach all nations’” (*Guide for Catechists*, 33).

Among the catechetical tasks proper particularly to parish priests is the task to “foster a recognition and appreciation for catechists and their mission” (*General Directory for Catechesis*, 225). The celebration of Catechetical Sunday provides a means to do so.

HISTORY

The idea of establishing a catechetical day in each parish was presented by Pope Pius XI in his instruction entitled *On Better Care for Catechetical Teaching (Provido sane consilio)* published in 1935. In paragraph 25, he writes that the day should be a day in which

- a. The faithful should be called together in the parish, and having received the Holy Eucharist, they should pray to obtain greater fruit from catechesis (divine teaching)
- b. A special sermon should be preached to the people on the necessity of catechetical instruction. Parents are to be told about their duty to instruct their children in Catholic doctrine and to send them to parish catechism (religion) classes.
- c. Books, pamphlets, and other material suitable for the purpose should be distributed.
- d. A collection may be taken up for the promotion of catechetical works.

The first celebration of a national catechetical day in our country is recorded to be on October 30, 1935, in Rochester, N.Y. By 1944, the practice was in every part of the union and by 1955 most dioceses celebrated the day on the third Sunday in September.

CELEBRATION KIT

Currently, the USCCB Office for Education publishes a resource kit and several other resources for celebrating Catechetical Sunday. This resource contains a parish manual with:

1. A reproducible reflection on the year’s theme.
2003 - Sowers of God’s Peace, Sembradores de la Paz de Dios
2004 - Stewards of God’s Wealth, Embajadores de los bienes de Dios
2005 - Life Is Christ, La Vida en Cristo
2. Information on preparing for Catechetical Sunday including checklists, bulletin announcements, and a press release (for your local paper).
3. Information on the readings along with pastoral reflections.
4. A four-point outline incorporating the rite of blessing into the homily at Mass.
5. The Rite of blessing within the Eucharist and outside the Eucharist.
6. Prayer for catechists.
7. 10 other activities for celebrating Catechetical Sunday throughout the year.
8. Clip-art, certificates, prayer cards
9. Sample English/Spanish poster.

To order call 1-800-235-8722. To ensure having the materials by the September Catechetical Sunday observance, your order must be placed by August 30.

Book of Blessings, the First Sacramental

The Book of Blessings is an invaluable resource to catechetical leaders. This book contains blessings for a plethora of persons, activities, buildings, objects, feasts, seasons and food. Most deacons and priests have this resource. Following is a sample of some of the blessings:

- Blessing of Catechists
- Blessing for Catechetical or Prayer Meeting
- Blessing of Catechumens
- Blessing of Families in Their Home (Annual)
- Blessing of Sports Event
- Blessing of Christmas Tree
- Blessing of Parish Hall
- Blessing of a New Library
- Blessing of a Gymnasium
- Blessing of Animals
- Blessings of Religious Articles
- Blessing of Throats

Catechists may contact their priest or obtain their own copy through many bookstores.

How important are blessings?

“Among sacramentals blessings (of persons, meals, objects, and places) come first.”
(CCC 1671)

Where do blessings come from and what do they do?

Every blessing comes from God. “Every blessing praises God and prays for his gifts. In Christ, Christians are blessed by God the Father 'with every spiritual blessing.' [Eph 1:3 .] This is why the Church imparts blessings by invoking the name of Jesus, usually while making the holy sign of the cross of Christ.” (CCC 1671, 1678)

Who can bless?

“Sacramentals derive from the baptismal priesthood: every baptized person is called to be a 'blessing,' and to bless.[Cf. Gen 12:2 ; Lk 6:28 ; Rom 12:14 ; 1 Pet 3:9 .] Hence lay people may preside at certain blessings.” (CCC 1669)

Commonly, lay people bless themselves with the Sign of the Cross and bless their children. Lay people who are catechists, especially for RCIA, may be deputed to bless others. Of course, when deacons, priests or bishops are present, they are the one's who bless.

“The more a blessing concerns ecclesial and sacramental life, the more is its administration reserved to the ordained ministry (bishops, priests, or deacons).”[Cf. SC 79; CIC, can. 1168; De Ben 16, 18.](CCC 1669)

How important is the blessing of catechists?

"Certain blessings have a lasting importance because they consecrate persons to God, or reserve objects and places for liturgical use. Among those blessings which are intended for persons - not to be confused with sacramental ordination - are the blessing of the abbot or abbess of a monastery, the consecration of virgins, the rite of religious profession and the blessing of certain ministries of the Church (readers, acolytes, CATECHISTS, etc.). The dedication or blessing of a church or an altar, the blessing of holy oils, vessels, and vestments, bells, etc., can be mentioned as examples of blessings that concern objects. " (CCC 1672; emphasis added to “catechists”)

Blessing of Catechists Within Mass

B. ORDER OF BLESSING WITHIN MASS

504 If the rubrics permit, the Mass, “For Laity,” provided in the Roman Missal in Masses and Prayers for Various Needs and Occasions, may be used, as circumstances suggest, with the readings that are provided in the *Lectionary for Mass*.

505 The homily follows the gospel reading. In it the celebrant, basing himself on the sacred text, gives an explanation of the celebration pertinent to the particular place and the people involved.

GENERAL INTERCESSIONS

506 The general intercessions follow, either in the form usual at Mass or in the form given here. The celebrant concludes the general intercessions with the prayer of blessing, unless it is thought better to have the prayer of blessing at the end of Mass as a prayer over the people. From the following intentions those best suited to the occasion may be used or adapted, or other intentions that apply to the particular circumstances may be composed.

The celebrant says:

Since God wills the salvation of all, let us pray to him in these words:

R: Lord, draw all people to yourself.

Or:

R: Lord, hear our prayer.

Assisting minister:

Father, grant that all people will come to know you, the one true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. (For this we pray:) R:

Assisting minister:

Send workers into your harvest, so that your name will be glorified among the nations. (For this we pray:) R:

Assisting minister:

You sent the disciples of Jesus to preach the Gospel; help us to spread the victory of his cross. (For this we pray:) R:

Assisting minister:

Make us docile to the teaching of the apostles and our lives consistent with the truths we believe. (For this we pray:) R:

Assisting minister:

As you call us to serve you in our brothers and sisters, make us the ministers of your truth. (For this we pray:) R:

Assisting minister:

Keep us as faithful ministers of your Church, so that, having taught others, we ourselves may be found faithful in your service. (For this we pray:) R:

Assisting minister:

May the grace of the Holy Spirit guide our hearts and our lips, so that we may remain constant in loving and praising you. (For this we pray:) R:

PRAYER OF BLESSING

507 With hands outstretched, the celebrant says the prayer of blessing.

With your fatherly blessing, Lord, strengthen these servants of yours in their resolve to dedicate themselves as catechists. Grant that they will strive to share with others what they themselves derive from pondering your word and studying the Church's teaching. And let them gladly join those they teach in honoring and serving your name. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Or:

Lord God, source of all wisdom and knowledge, you sent you Son, Jesus Christ, to live among us and proclaim his message of faith, hope, and love to all nations. In your goodness bless our brothers and sisters who have offered themselves as catechists for your Church. Strengthen them with your gifts that they may teach by word and example the truth which comes from you. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All reply: Amen.

508 But as an alternative, if this seems more opportune, the prayer of blessing may be used at the end of Mass after the following or some other invitation.

Bow your heads and pray for God's blessing.

After the prayer of blessing, the celebrant always adds:

And may the almighty God bless you, the Father, the Son, + and the Holy Spirit.

R: Amen.

SOURCE: Book of Blessings

Blessing of a Catechetical Session or Prayer Meeting

II. ORDER OF BLESSING FOR A CATECHETICAL SESSION OR PRAYER MEETING

INTRODUCTION

509 Whenever Christians or catechumens come together in the name of Christ, he himself, as he has said, is present in their midst. It is therefore entirely natural that those taking part in the meeting should wish to offer prayers in praise of Christ and in petition for which they have gathered. This is particularly the case in meetings held for the purpose for which they have gathered. This is particularly the case in meetings held for the purpose of catechesis or communal prayer, but it is also proper that other meetings be planned in such a way that a period of time is set aside so that the meeting begins with liturgical prayer.

This is the reason why the *General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours* encourages lay groups that gather for any reason (prayer, apostolic work, etc.) to fulfill the Church's duty by celebrating part of the liturgy of the hours. "The laity must learn above all how in the liturgy they are adoring God the Father in spirit and truth (see John 4:23); they should bear in mind that through public worship and prayer they reach all humanity and can contribute significantly to the salvation of the whole world."

But in some circumstances a celebration of the liturgy of the hours may not be possible. In this case the meeting should begin with an invocation of the Holy Spirit and of the divine blessing in the hymn *Veni, creator*, or the antiphon *Veni, Sancte Spiritus*, or some other suitable song; then there is a short, well-chosen reading from sacred Scripture, followed by an opening prayer from the Roman Missal: from the Proper of Seasons, "Pentecost"; from Votive Masses: "7. Holy Spirit"; from the Proper of Seasons, one of the Masses in the seventh week of the Easter season; or from Masses and Prayers for Various Needs and Occasions; "16. For Pastoral or Spiritual Meetings."

510 At the end of a meeting a blessing may be celebrated by the use of the prayer of blessing provided in no. 516.

511 This prayer of blessing is not to be used when celebration of the Eucharist immediately follows the meeting.

512 the present order may be used by a priest or deacon. It may also be used by a layperson, how follows the rites and prayers designated for a lay minister. While maintaining the structure and chief elements of the rite, the minister should adapt the celebration to the circumstances of the place and the people involved.

ORDER OF BLESSING

513 In the following or similar words, the minister prepares those present for the blessing.

Through this meeting Jesus himself has spoken to us. We should now, therefore, give thanks to him who has revealed to us the mysterious design that for ages was hidden in God. Since our task is to conform our lives to the word we have heard, before leaving let us raise our minds and hearts to God, praying that he may guide us through the Holy Spirit to a fuller possession of the truth and give us the power always to do what is pleasing to him.

INTERCESSIONS

514 As circumstances suggest, the prayer of blessing may be preceded by the intercessions. The minister introduces them and an assisting minister or one of those present announces the intentions. From the following intentions those best suited to the occasion may be used or adapted, or other intentions that apply to the particular circumstances may be composed. The intentions are followed immediately by the prayer of blessing, no. 516.

The minister says:

The words of the Lord are spirit and life. Let us pray then to him, who has the words of eternal life, that we may be not only hearers of the word of God but doers, and workers with him in bearing witness to the truth.

R: Speak, Lord, for you have the words of eternal life.

Or:

R: Lord, hear our prayer.

Assisting minister:

Christ, Son of God, you came into the world to proclaim the Gospel of the Father's love; increase our faith, so that we will receive your word as the sign of his love.

(For this we pray:) R:

Assisting minister:

Christ, Son of God, the Father's favor rested on you and he commanded us to listen to you; give us the gift of understanding, so that we may contemplate your word and experience its gentle power. (For this we pray:) R:

Assisting minister:

Christ, Son of God, you said: “Blest are they who hear the word of God and keep it”; grant that with Mary we may keep your word in our hearts and dwell upon it.

(For this we pray:) R:

Assisting minister:

Christ, Son of God, your word lights up the darkness of our minds and gives understanding to the lowly; help us to listen to your word with simplicity and to treasure the mysteries of your kingdom. (For this we pray:) R:

Assisting minister:

Christ, Son of God, you continually proclaim your word in the Church, so that the one faith may enlighten all who hear it and the one charity may bind them together; make us grow as lovers and doers of your word, so that as Christians we may all be of one mind and one heart. (For this we pray:) R:

Assisting minister:

Christ, Son of God, your word is a lamp to our feet, showing us the way through life; become our companion on the road, making our hearts burn within, so that we may run in the way of your commands. (For this we pray:) R:

Assisting minister:

Christ, Son of God, you gave us your word to hasten our salvation for your greater glory; fill our minds and hearts with that word to make us heralds and witnesses of the Gospel. (For this we pray:) R:

515 When there are no intercessions, the minister, before the prayer of blessing, invites those present to ask for God’s help in these or similar words.

My brothers and sisters, let us ask God, our all-powerful Father, to keep our steps always in the way of his commandments.

As circumstances suggest, all may then pray for a moment in silence before the prayer of blessing.

PRAYER OF BLESSING

516 A minister who is a priest or deacon says the prayer of blessing with hands outstretched; a lay minister says the prayer with hands joined.

We thank you and bless you, Lord our God. In times past you spoke in many varied ways through the prophets, but in this, the final age, you have spoken through your Son to reveal to all nations the riches of your grace. May we who have met to ponder the Scriptures be filled with the knowledge of your will in all wisdom and spiritual understandings, and, pleasing you as we should in all things, may we bear fruit in every good work. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

R: Amen.

CONCLUDING RITE

517 The minister concludes the rite by saying:

God, the Father of mercies, has sent his Son into the world. Through the Holy Spirit, who will teach us all truth, may he make us messengers of the Gospel and witnesses of his love to the world.

R: Amen

518 It is preferable to end the celebration with a suitable song.

Celebrating Your Parish Feast Day

Many parishes already celebrate their patron saint's feast day. All parishes are encouraged to celebrate their parish feast day. This is an opportunity for the parish to honor of their patron and to seek their continued intercession.

A list of all parish feast days from our diocese and other patrons of our diocesan institutions in our diocese has been provided in Appendix B.

Catechesis and Prayer

Prayer is essential to the Christian life, even more so to the life of a catechist. The CCC defines prayer in the fourth section. This teaching includes such beautiful explanations as:

“ In prayer, God tirelessly calls each person to this mysterious encounter with Himself”
(CCC 2591)

“Prayer is the living relationship of the children of God with their Father who is good beyond measure, with his Son Jesus Christ and with the Holy Spirit...the life of prayer is the habit of being in the presence of the thrice-holy God and in communion with Him.”
(CCC 2565)

“Prayer cannot be reduced to the spontaneous outpouring of interior impulse; in order to pray, one must have the will to pray. Nor is it enough to know what the Scriptures reveal about prayer; one must also learn how to pray.”
(CCC 2650)

At the parish level, in addition to Sunday and daily Mass, we need to provide as many opportunities as possible to learn how to pray both in our personal lives and as a community. Beginning every catechetical session and parish meeting with prayer allows for an opportunity to grow in our life of prayer.

Planning times of prayer does not need to be a time-consuming task. The Church has a liturgical calendar, daily readings and the Liturgy of the Hours already prepared, thus, it is easy to pray always within the heart of the Church, the Family of God.

The following pages provide:

1. Sample Liturgy of the Word
2. Worksheet for Planning the Liturgy of the Word (and a website reference)
3. Explanation of the Liturgy of the Hours (and a website reference)
4. Litany of Catechetical Saints
5. Explanation of *Lectio Divina* and sample format

Every catechetical session should begin with prayer. The Liturgy of the Hours or the Liturgy of the Word are two liturgical ways to begin. This is a sample of a Liturgy of the Word. A blank worksheet has been provided on the next two pages.

Sample - Liturgy of the Word

OPENING MUSIC: _____

FIRST READING (1 Jn 1:1-4)

A reading from the first letter of John.

What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we looked upon and touched with our hands concerns the Word of life-- for the life was made visible; we have seen it and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was made visible to us-- what we have seen and heard we proclaim now to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; for our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We are writing this so that our joy may be complete.

The Word of the Lord.

R. Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Psalm 128:1-5)

Happy are those who fear the Lord.

R. Happy are those who fear the Lord.

A song of ascents. I Happy are all who fear the LORD, who walk in the ways of God.

What your hands provide you will enjoy; you will be happy and prosper:

R. Happy are those who fear the Lord.

Like a fruitful vine your wife within your home, Like olive plants your children around your table.

Just so will they be blessed who fear the LORD.

R. Happy are those who fear the Lord.

May the LORD bless you from Zion, all the days of your life That you may share

Jerusalem's joy and live to see your children's children. Peace upon Israel!

R. Happy are those who fear the Lord.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia. Give thanks to God our Father through Jesus Christ our Lord.

GOSPEL (Lk 23:37-41)

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

R. Glory to you, Lord.

Now one of the criminals hanging there reviled Jesus, saying, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us." The other, however, rebuking him, said in reply, "Have you no fear of God, for you are subject to the same condemnation? And indeed, we have been condemned justly, for the sentence we received corresponds to our crimes, but this man has done nothing criminal." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." He replied to him, "Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

The Gospel of the Lord.

R. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

HOMILY (ordained) or REFLECTION (lay, only if ordained is not present)

CLOSING MUSIC: _____

Worksheet for Planning Liturgy of the Word

Look up the readings for the day. Use the lectionary or go online to the Catholic Calendar at <http://www.easterbrooks.com/personal/calendar/index.html>. Fill in the blanks and insert readings.

FEAST DAY: _____

OPENING MUSIC: _____

FIRST READING _____

A reading from _____

(insert reading here)

The Word of the Lord.

R. Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM _____

(insert psalm here)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia. Give thanks to God our Father through Jesus Christ our Lord, and may the fullness of His message live within you.

GOSPEL

A reading from the holy Gospel according to _____

R. Glory to you, Lord.

(insert Gospel here – always, read by deacon or priest if they are present)

The Gospel of the Lord.

R. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

HOMILY (ordained) or REFLECTION/CATECHESIS (lay, only if ordained is NOT present)

CLOSING MUSIC _____

Explanation of the Liturgy of the Hours

What is the Liturgy of the Hours?

The *Liturgy of the Hours* (also known as the *Divine Office* or the *Breviary*) is the richest single prayer resource of the Christian Church. It provides prayers, psalms and meditation seven times a day: Office of Readings, Morning Prayer, Mid-Morning, Daytime Prayer, Mid-day, Evening Prayer, Night Prayer. It has existed from the earliest times, to fulfill the Lord's command to pray without ceasing. How? All over the world, hundreds of thousands of priests and religious have vowed to pray the Liturgy of the Hours daily. Some have even promised to pray all seven times a day. All over the world, in every time zone, they do, in public and in private, in tin shacks and cathedrals, in palaces and in prison camps. Thus, the Liturgy of the Hours provides the means for the whole world, united, to pray together and sanctify every hour of every day of every year.

Why is the Liturgy of the Hours important?

The Liturgy of the Hours is “real liturgy.” So what - why should we care about that? In short, “liturgy” is nothing less than a way that we participate in the actual work of God. Liturgy is not created by human beings – a series of man-made rituals and traditions. Liturgy is created by God and given to us. In other words, in liturgy, we are able to experience heaven – life in the Family of God – now. The Liturgy of the Hours is like an extension of the Eucharistic celebration. It is one of the ways we can make a response of faith and love to all that God has given to us.

For a deeper understanding of “liturgy” read paragraphs 1066-1075 in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC).

For a deeper understanding of the Liturgy of the Hours read paragraphs 1174-1178 in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC).

Could the Liturgy of the Hours be used in evangelization and catechesis?

Yes! For those working in evangelization, the Liturgy of the Hours introduces Scripture and prayer to those inquiring about Christianity. For those working in catechesis, the Liturgy of the Hours, provides a “ready-made-always-new” prayer to start catechetical sessions.

Where do I get a copy of the Liturgy of the Hours?

Most bookstores carry both a one volume and four volume set which is much easier to use. There are also two websites that have most of the hours online without copyright. Thus it is quite easy to make copies for your particular catechetical sessions or meetings.

Online: <http://www.universalis.com/>

or <http://www.liturgyhours.org/>

LITANY OF CATECHIST SAINTS

Lord, have mercy

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, hear us

Christ, hear us.

Christ, graciously hear us.

Christ, graciously hear us.

God the Father of Heaven, *have mercy on us.*

God the Son, Redeemer of the world, *have mercy on us.*

God, the Holy Spirit, *have mercy on us.*

Holy Trinity, One God, *have mercy on us.*

Mary, Queen of Peace, patroness of the Diocese of Fargo,
pray for us.

Mary, Our Lady of Guadalupe, patroness of America, *etc.*

Mary, Star of the New Evangelization,

St. Joseph, Husband of Mary, adoptive Father of Jesus, and
patron of families,

St. John Bosco, patron of Young Disciples Teams,

St. Paul the Apostle, patron of evangelists,

Blessed Meinard, model evangelist,

Blessed Alanus de Solminihac, evangelizing prelate,

St. Gregory the Great, patron of catechists and students, .

St. Charles Borromeo, doctor and patron of catechists,

St. Robert Bellarmine, doctor and patron of catechists,

St. Francis de Sales, gentleman saint, doctor and patron of
catechists,

St. Viatur, patron of catechists,

St. John Baptist de la Salle, patron of catechists,

St. Catherine of Alexandria, patroness of catechists and
students,

St. Ursula, patroness of catechists and students,

Blessed Kasper Stangassinger, patron of catechists,

Blessed Maria Antonia Bandres y Elosegui, catechist,

Blessed Annunciata Cocchetti, educator of youth,

St. Thomas Aquinas, doctor and patron of youth,

St. Jerome, doctor and patron of youth,

St. Albert the Great, doctor and patron of youth,

St. Ambrose of Milan, doctor and patron of youth,

St. Benedict, monastic father and patron of youth,

St. Nicholas of Myra, "Santa Claus," patron of youth,

St. Valentine, patron of youth,

St. Aloysius Gonzaga, patron of youth,

St. John Berchmans, patron of youth,

St. Maria Goretti, patroness of youth,

St. Stanislaus Kostka, patron of youth,

St. Teresa of Andes, patroness of youth,

St. Gerard Majella, patron of youth,

St. Joseph Calasanz, patron of youth,

St. Lawrence, patron of youth,

St. Bathild, patroness of youth,

St. Gabriel Gowdel, patron of youth,

St. Raymond Nonnatus, patron of youth,

St. Pancras, patron of youth,

Blessed Angela Maria Truszkowska, patroness of youth,

Blessed Pier George Frassati, role model for youth,

Blessed Arnold Reche, guide for the young,

St. Francis of Assisi, patron of families,

St. Maximillian Kolbe, patron of families,

St. Dymphna, patroness of families,

St. Ksenya Blazhennaya, patroness of families,

St. Eugene de Mazenad, patron of families,

Blessed Josephine Gabriella Bonino, patroness of families,

St. Therese of Lisieux, doctor and patroness of missions,

St. Francis Xavier, patron of parish missions,

St. Leonard of Port Maurice, patron of parish missions,

St. Isaac Jogues & companions, patrons of America,

St. Mary Ann de Paredes, patroness of America,

St. Rose of Lima, patroness of America,

All you saints of God,

Infant Jesus of Prague, *have mercy on us.*

Lord, be merciful, *Lord, save us.*

From all harm, *Lord, save us.*

From every sin, *etc.*

From all temptations,

From everlasting death,

By Your coming among us,

By Your death and rising to new life,

By Your gift of the Holy Spirit,

Be merciful to us sinners, *Lord, hear our prayer.*

Guide and protect Your Holy Church, *Lord, hear our prayer.*

Keep our Pope and all the clergy in faithful service to Your
Church, *etc.*

Bring all people together in trust and peace,

Strengthen us in Your service,

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world,
spare us, O Lord.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world,
graciously hear us, O Lord.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us, O Lord.

Help us, all ye catechetical saints,

*that we like they may draw others to know, love
and serve Jesus Christ.*

Let us pray. Lord, continue to help us grow as your children. Help us to surrender to You. Help us to learn more and more within the Church to think like You, to judge like you, to act in conformity with Your commandments, and to hope as You invite us to. Help us to be your witnesses like those brothers and sisters before us who so faithfully endeavored to proclaim Your Good News. Amen.

Lectio Divina in the Catechism

The fourth part of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) is dedicated to prayer. It should not be surprising that the *lectio divina* is discussed in these pages since the "*lectio*" is a prayerful reading of the Scriptures. It is a conviction dating back to the Fathers that "when you read the Scriptures, God speaks to you; when you pray, you speak to God" (cf. 2653). Five paragraphs will serve as our basis for the discussion that follows, namely: pars. 2653, 2654, 2705, 2706 and 2708. The first two paragraphs (2653 and 2654) set forth the connection between prayer and the reading of Scriptures; the last three (2705, 2706 and 2708) deal with Scriptures as a source book for meditation.

Scriptures as a Source of Prayer.

The first two paragraphs under consideration appear under the title "At the Wellsprings of Prayer." The context, therefore, strongly suggests that we are here considering Scriptures as a source of prayer. Par. 2653 is a direct quotation of Dei Verbum 25, which contains two directives:

- (a) to learn "the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ (Phil. 3:8)" by the frequent reading of Scriptures; and
- (b) that the faithful accompany such reading with prayer.

Contact with the Word of God par excellence (Jesus Christ) through the frequent reading of Scriptures must therefore be accompanied by prayer "so that a dialogue may take place between God and man." The "dialogue" is described in terms immortalized by St. Ambrose (*De officiis ministrorum* 1,20,88: PL 16,20; cf. also in St. Augustine) as a speaking-listening in an exchange already described in DV 21 as that of a father and child.

Par. 2654 adds a nuance here by characterizing the attitude of the reader of Scriptures as that of a "seeker." It does this by introducing the lapidary phrase of Guy the Carthusian's *Scala Claustralium*, the classic work on the *lectio divina* [*Scala Claustralium* 2,2: PL 184, 276]:

Quaerite legendo	Seek in reading
et inuenietis meditando	and you will find in meditation
Pulsate orando	Knock in prayer
et aperietur vobis contemplando.	and it shall be opened to you in contemplation.

It is clear from these two paragraphs that any reading of Scriptures must be transformed into a dialogue with the One who is revealed in the sacred page. The "dialogue" is prayer that seeks, knocks and finds (cf. Mt. 7:7) through Scriptures.

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Meditation and Scriptures.

"Christian prayer," states CCC, par. 2708, "tries above all to meditate on the mysteries of Christ as in *lectio divina*..." Meditation, which is described as a "quest" (2705) that requires the "mobilization of faculties" engaging "thought, imagination, emotion and desire" (2708) must be sustained in its activity. The Catechism gives a priority of place to "the Sacred Scriptures, particularly the Gospels" as aids to meditation (2706)."

To meditate on what we read helps us to make it our own by confronting it with ourselves. Here another book is opened: the book of life. We pass from thoughts to reality..." (2706). In this phrase the Catechism draws from the Patristic tradition that regards Scriptures as a mirror of life. According to this view, the Scriptures aid us in discerning the meaning of the events in our lives. They are similar to a code that allows us to decipher the "riddle" of our existence. Hence the Catechism adds:

To the extent that we are humble and faithful, we discover in meditation the movements that stir the heart and we are able to discern them. It is a question of acting truthfully in order to come into the light: "Lord what do you want me to do?" (2706)

Thus, by meditating with the aid of the Scriptures, the one who prays passes on "to the knowledge of the love of the Lord Jesus, to union with him." (2708)

To summarize... We have just gone through five paragraphs in the Catechism dealing with Scriptures and prayer. It should now be clear.

- (a) that one's reading of Scriptures must become a prayerful dialogue;
- (b) that a prayerful reading of the Scriptures must lead to "the surpassing knowledge of Christ," and
- (c) that a meditative reading of the Scriptures must lead the reader to a better grasp of one's reality before God, man, and the world

SOURCE: http://www.suite101.com/article.cfm/scriptural_studies/32920, article by Alberto Esmeraldo,. Copying for non-commercial use permitted.

What is Lectio Divina?

Lectio Divina is not about the interpretation of the Scriptures - it is about reading the Scriptures. The goal is a personal encounter with Jesus Christ, the Word, who is echoed in the many human words found in the sacred text. *Lectio Divina* is a kind of reading the Scriptures which has four characteristics: (a) Prayerful; (b) Intelligent; (c) Continuous; and (d) Ecclesial.

Lectio Divina is a **prayerful reading**, and therefore must be distinguished from a reading which has "information" for its goal. One does not engage in "*lectio divina*" to satisfy curiosity. Rather, one reads in order **to dialogue** with the God who reveals Himself and His Plan.

Lectio Divina is an **intelligent reading**. To enter into dialogue with God requires the use of ones rational faculties, most especially when one "uses" as a medium the sacred page. The Scriptures has a human dimension that can only be entered into using ones God-given intellectual faculties. This human dimension is like a door that can only be opened for listening to the voice of God and loving God back.

Lectio Divina is a **continuous reading**. *One does not read the Scriptures piece-meal*. Part of its human dimension is that the literary materials it contains must be read from beginning to end just like any human work. Words and phrases must be understood within the context of the whole of which they are a part - specifically in the context of all of Revelation, Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition as delivered by the Magisterium and inspired on the human heart. These should all be "in sync" because these are all from God.

Lectio Divina is an **ecclesial reading**. That is, it is a reading that leads one to a deeper sense of belongingness to the Church (the Family of God) by, within and for which the Scriptures were written.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

Although the not inspired like the Scriptures, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) may also be used in *Lectio Divina*. The CCC is the sure norm for teaching thus also for knowing what has been revealed.

Imaginative Prayer and Journal Writing

Some may benefit even more so from *Lectio Divina* by including Imaginative Prayer and Journal Writing. **Imaginative Prayer** understood in the Ignatian sense is a way by which I make my own a biblical event through the creative use of the imagination. **Journal Writing** is a means whereby I fix my insights (and even notes) on a piece of paper so that I can later on use it as a material for further reflection and prayer.

BASED ON SOURCE: Accepting the Embrace of God, The Ancient Art of Lectio Divina by Fr. Luke Dysinger, O.S.B., online at: <http://www.valyermo.com/ld-art.html>. This article may be downloaded, reproduced and distributed without special permission from the author. It was first published in the Spring, 1990 (vol.1, no.1) edition of Valyermo Benedictine. It was reprinted as "Appendix 2" in The Art and Vocation of Caring for People in Pain by Karl A. Schultz (Paulist Press, 1993), pp. 98-110.

Lectio Divina in Personal Prayer

Lectio Divina is not the interpretation of Scripture. *Lectio Divina* is the taking of Scripture and allowing the slow and repeated consideration of the text to lead to communion with God – “intimacy with Him and His Family, the Church.” It is rooted in the belief that the Scripture speaks to the human heart as the words of God who loves us AND can also articulate the thoughts of our heart in response to God. *Lectio Divina* must take place within an atmosphere and reality of prayer- pray to the Holy Spirit that the Lord might speak through the text – both to you and from you – so that your heart may “burn with love” within you. Both the Bible and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* may be used in *Lectio Divina*.

Following is one method to use in your personal prayer.

First reading: Read the passage slowly, simply to become familiar with it.

Second reading: Read the passage again. (If it is a familiar passage, ask the Lord to let you read it as if it’s the first time, you’ve ever heard it. What word or phrase reflects what God is saying to you today? What would you tell another person about the passage if they asked you to explain it to them?)

Third reading: Read passage again. Pick one person from the passage. Imagine that you are in this person’s shoes or words are said directly to you. Have a heart to heart talk with Jesus sharing your honest feelings about anything that has come to mind in reference to your reflecting on this passage...it might be something that is weighing heavily on your heart...or something that moves you to a deep sense of gratitude and joyful praise. Choose one word from this passage that has a special meaning for you. _____

Reading four: Read the passage again. Spend time in silence, waiting and quietly listening for whatever the Lord might whisper in your heart. Write down what you have heard in a notebook.

Conclude With Prayer.

Approach to Group Lectio Divina

Listening for the Gentle Touch of Christ the Word

(The Literal Sense and the Allegorical Sense) (CCC 115-119)

1. One person reads the passage of scripture aloud. Read the passage slowly, simply to become familiar with it
2. The same person reads the same passage aloud a second time. as others are attentive to some segment that is especially meaningful to them. (If it is a familiar passage, ask the Lord to let you read/hear it as if it's the first time you've ever heard it.)

The same person then asks these questions.

- In a word, what does this passage reveal about God?
- What phrase from the passage is particularly revealing to you?

3. **Silence** for 1-2 minutes for entire group. Think about questions.
4. Sharing aloud: [A word or phrase that has attracted each person from the passage]. A simple statement of one or a few words. **No elaboration.**

How Christ the Word speaks to ME (*The Moral Sense*)

5. Third reading of same passage by another person. BEFORE reading the passage a third time, instruct group to pick one person from the passage. Imagine that you are in this person's shoes or words are said directly to you. Read the passage a third time.

The same person then asks these questions.

- What word or phrase reflects what God is saying to you today?
- What would you tell another person about the passage if they asked you to explain it to them?

6. **Silence** for 2-3 minutes. Reflect on questions.
7. Sharing aloud: **Briefly..... Briefly..... Briefly.....**

(continued on the next page)

(continued from the previous page)

What Christ the Word Invites me to DO (*The Anagogical Sense*)

8. Fourth reading by still another person.
9. **Silence** for 2-3 minutes. Reflect on "I believe that Jesus wants me to follow Him more closely by today/this week so to have intimacy with Him, eternal life."
10. Sharing aloud: at somewhat greater length the results of each one's reflection. [Be especially aware of what is shared by the person to your right.]
11. After full sharing, pray for the person to your right.

Note: Anyone may "pass" at any time. If instead of sharing with the group you prefer to pray silently, simply state this aloud and conclude your silent prayer with *Amen*.

Note: This is not about "teaching" – this is about sharing what Jesus and His Family, the Church is doing in your life.

Scheduling Time for Catechesis

Scheduling time for catechesis for both adults and children is often one of the more difficult tasks that parish programs must deal with. The combination of the lack of priority given to the life of faith and the demands of the secular world creates nothing less than a battle for our time. Of course, pastors and catechetical leaders should consider the other necessary tasks that people have in their lives and attempt to schedule liturgies (e.g., daily Mass, Reconciliation, Vespers) and catechetical sessions that fit these needs. For families who do not even have time to eat together, even a couple hours a week dedicated to church seems quite demanding. Yet, a couple hours a week is not very much time dedicated towards growing in intimacy with Jesus and His Family, the Church.

This prioritizing of time is also difficult for children. For example:

Parishes will often find that although, many public schools do not plan co-curricular activities on Wednesday night, they do plan activities until 6pm, leaving very little time for students to eat, rest, spend time with their family, do their homework and arrive at church.

Public schools might also plan so-called “optional” activities on Wednesday evening and even on the weekends, including Sundays. They are “optional” only if the child wants to “play last” or “be behind” in comparison to other students. Implied is that students who go to religious education or church have their priorities mixed up.

Another problem is that many other organizations outside of the public schools do plan activities on Wednesday evenings.

What can be done?

1. Adults need to prioritize their time.
2. Parents need to act on behalf of their children. Parents should help their children plan the activities they will be involved with especially assisting them in not over-extending themselves and setting priorities for those things which are more important. Parents should be involved with both the school and the parish, who are both to be assisting parents in educating their children.
3. Parents could insist that the school, parish, and/or any other organization do not put excessive demands on their children. For example, does a child need to practice every day after school or is it possible to have a break one day a week? Children need parents to intercede on their behalf, how can they stand up to even the implied consequences of the coach or instructor?
4. Parents could work together. For example, if all the Catholic students refused to go to practice on Wednesdays, what would happen? Or, would if all the churches said “no” to practice on Wednesday?

Sample Opening Letter

**Address of Church
City, State Zip Code
Telephone Number and email
Date**

**Name of Recipient
Address of Recipient
City, State Zip Code**

Dear Parents,

Welcome to the new catechetical year. Our hope is for every member of the parish to take advantage of the many opportunities provided to learn about the Faith. This handbook is being provided to give a general overview of the catechetical programs at our parish for children, grades Pre-K through Twelve.

The catechetical staff wants to assist parents in developing the Catholic Faith of their families. It is primarily the responsibility of parents to pass on the Faith. In particular, parents are responsible for ensuring an active sacramental life and daily Gospel living. We also rely on you as parents to assist your children in the memorization of prayers and catechetical formulas and the telling of Scripture stories and lives of the saints.

An active sacramental life includes at least Sunday Eucharist and regular Reconciliation. The Celebration of the Eucharist is central to our Faith. As individuals and as a parish we need to be committed to participating at Mass every Sunday and Holy Days of Obligation. The opportunity for classes to participate in Mass and other liturgies will be announced throughout the year.

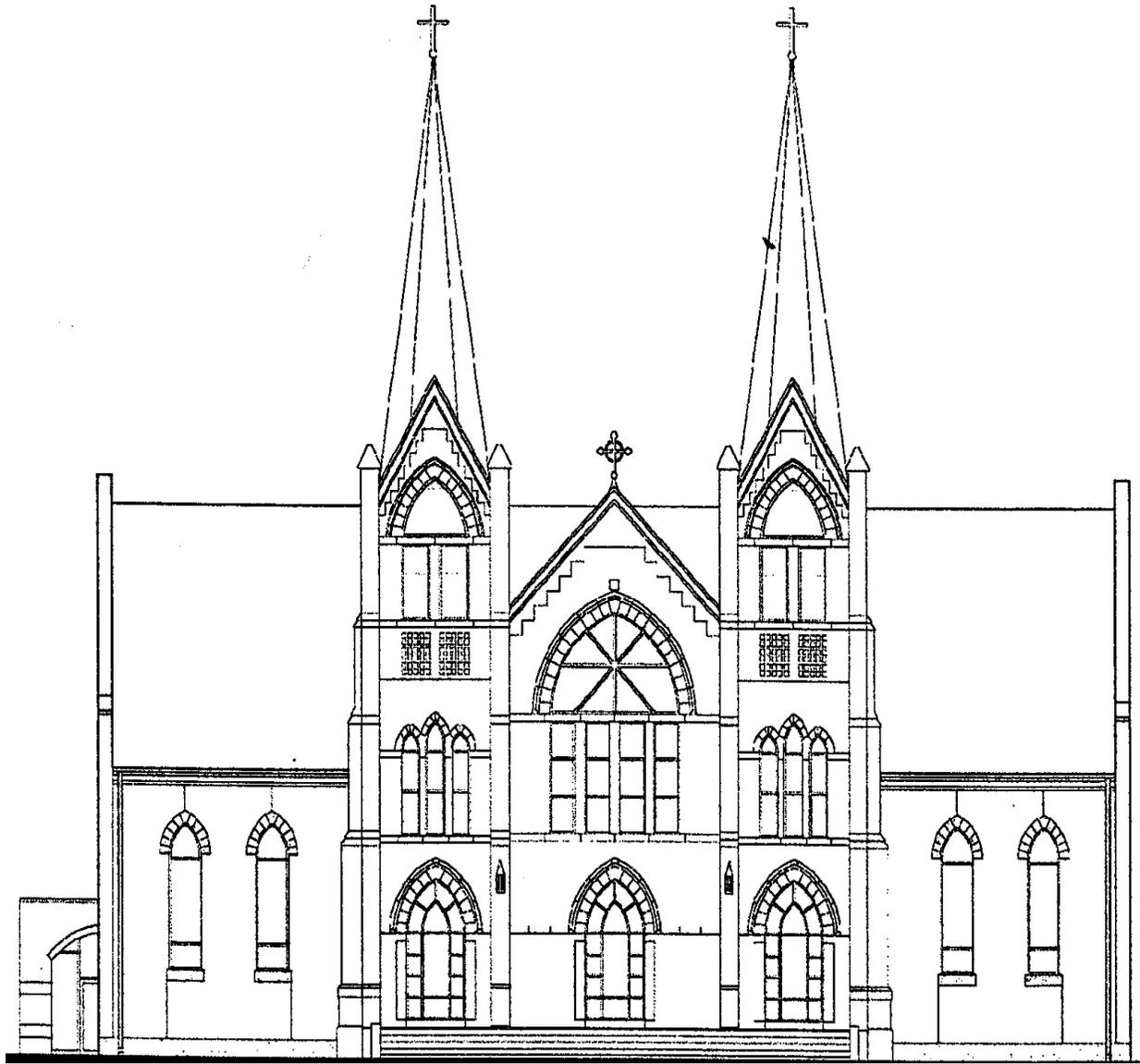
The Celebration of First Reconciliation is usually in the Second Grade. If you have special circumstances, please contact the coordinator or the Pastor. Of course, this does not mean this is one's only Reconciliation. Our bishop has expressed that all those who are concerned with their spiritual lives should receive the sacrament of Reconciliation regularly, that is, every two to three weeks, a month at the longest.

Preparation for Confirmation and First Eucharist is usually in the Third Grade. If you have special circumstances, please contact the coordinator or the Pastor.

Enclosed is a copy of the curriculum as it pertains to your child(ren). The curriculum is a general listing of what your child(ren) should learn throughout the year, including the prayers to be memorized, the saints and the Scripture passages.

God bless you and your family, in Christ's love,

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
Pastor Associate Pastor Director, PreK-8 Director, 9-12



**Sample
2003-2004
Handbook and Calendar**

Sample of Content for Parent Handbook

General Information

Mission Statement

We are committed to provide all members of the Parish with catechetical opportunities aimed at developing understanding of Jesus Christ so that the Christian thus sets himself to follow Jesus and learn more and more within the Church to think like Him, to judge like Him, to act in conformity with His commandments, and to hope as He invites us to. Our hope is to put people not only in touch with Jesus, but in communion, in intimacy with Him

Catechetical Staff:

Pastor: _____
Associate: _____
DOC/DRE: _____
Adult Catechesis: _____
Sacramental Prep Coordinator: _____
Evangelization/RCIA: _____
Youth Coordinator: _____

Catechetical Board Members:

The Catechetical Board serves in an advisory capacity to the pastoral council, the pastor and the DOC/DRE. Any member of the parish is eligible for board membership.

Board Members are:

Schedule of Sessions

Adults	Sundays, Parish Center	8:15am – 9:15am
Adults	Sundays, Parish Center	following the 9:30 Mass
Adults	Mondays, Whiteys	Noon – 1pm (lunch included)
Mother's	Mondays, Parish Center	10:30am – Noon (child care provided)
Father's	Mondays, Whitey's	6:45am – 7:30am (breakfast included)
Preschool	Sundays, Parish Center	following the 9:30 Mass
Grades 7-12	Tuesdays, Parish Center	6:30pm – 8:30pm (this is a prayer mtg/Bible study)
Grades 1-6	Wednesdays, SJA	6:30pm - 7:45pm
Grades 7-8	Wednesdays, SJA	8:00pm -- 9:00pm
Adults/RCIA	Thursday, SJA	7:00pm – 8:30pm
Grades 9-12	Sundays, Parish Center	7:00pm - 8:45pm

*more complete schedule after enrolled

List of Catechists

<u>Section</u>	<u>Catechists</u>	
Adults	Fr. Dale Prayer Sheila Arel - 111-1111	Kay King - 111-1111 Bethany Tesky – 111-1111
Mother’s Group	Michelle Herding - 111-1111	Diane Johnson - 111-1111
Father’s Group	Deacon Sam	John Paul – 111-1111
Seniors Group	Irene Luda – 111-1111	William Mattechi – 111-1111
High School	Sadie Lech - 111-1111	Parent Team
Tenth Grade	Greg Thompson - 111-1111 Vicki Kielb - 111-1111	Bill Sprung -111-1111 Jennifer Beyer - 111-1111
Ninth Grade	Denise Herding - 111-1111 Debbi Berg - 111-1111	Sue Rempfer - 111-1111 Terry Schneider - 111-1111
Eighth Grade	Nancy Muehlberg - 111-1111 Joyce Holkup - 111-1111	Joan Brunkhorst - 111-1111 vacant
Seventh Grade	Jim Horn - 111-1111 Christina Oberlan - 111-1111	Angie Riffel - 111-11114 Mary Vetter - 111-1111
Sixth Grade	Megan McCann - 111-1111	Tina Fettig - 111-1111
Fifth Grade	Angie Riffel - 111-1111	Lori Matejcek - 111-1111
Fourth Grade	Melissa Herding - 111-1111	John Simon - 111-1111
Third Grade	Mary Gregoire - 111-1111	Sandy DeVillers - 111-1111
Second Grade	Garnet Mayo - 111-1111	Joyce Holkup - 111-1111
First Grade	Kari Muehler - 111-1111	Amber O’Meara - 111-1111
PreK-K	Jennifer Spiny – 111-1111	Mark Pauley – 111-1111

Attendance and Absentee

Students are required to attend classes regularly. Parents should contact the office if a student will be absent or tardy. Office staff will contact parents if enrolled student is absent.

Cancellation of Classes

In the event of inclement weather, the parish will follow the decision of the school administration regarding school closure. Class cancellations will be announced on the radio station.

Report Cards

Report cards are issued two times a year to students in Grades K through 12 to allow parents to know how their child is progressing in their knowledge of the Faith.

Safety

Cars ENTERING the parking lot will enter through the SOUTH gate. Cars exiting the parking lot will EXIT through the NORTH gate. Students in the elementary grades should arrive no earlier than 10 minutes before class is to begin. Students should not enter the classroom unless the teacher is present. The following is a list of procedures for picking up your children:

Adults will be positioned at these doors for the safety of the children. The older children in the family should walk to the youngest child's exit door. Children not picked up immediately after class will call parents and wait in the office.

Personal Conduct

- Students are expected to conduct themselves in a courteous and Christian manner.
- Students are expected to treat pastors, teachers, other adults and students with respect.
- Caps, hats, or other head gear are not to be worn in the building.
- Shirts containing reference to sex, alcohol, drugs, or profanity are not acceptable attire.
- Jackets are not to be worn in the class. The student should bring a sweater to class if they feel they will be cold.
- During rain and snow conditions the students will be asked to remove their boots and outdoor shoes at the entrances. It is our suggestion your student bring extra shoes to wear inside the classroom. We appreciate your cooperation in keeping our facility clean.
- When students are scheduled to attend Mass, it is requested that they dress appropriately. Torn or worn jeans, T-shirts, tank tops or short shorts are not appropriate attire.
- Students are not allowed in the property of daytime student's desks. All supplies needed are furnished by the Catechetical Office. This is a firm and important rule.

Discipline Policy

After the teacher has warned the student two times to correct his/her behavior the student will be sent to the Office. The FIRST time a student is asked to leave the room, he/she is accompanied to the office by the teacher. An explanation is given for the student's removal. The student is given a project to complete while waiting to be dismissed. Parents will be notified regarding the disruption.

The SECOND time the student is asked to leave the class, he/she may not return until a written apology is given to the teacher and the class. Parents, if possible both the father and the mother, will be required to come in for a meeting to discuss the disruption.

The THIRD time the student is asked to leave the class, he/she is suspended from the class for two weeks. The parent/guardian will be called and asked to pick up their student and once again discuss the disruption. The teacher and the parents will assign work to be completed by the end of the suspension.

Damages

Parents will be responsible for any willful damage done to property by their children. Parents will be notified and billed accordingly.

Field Trips

Occasionally teachers will plan a field trip for their class. In the event a field trip is planned, the teacher will notify the Office and the parents and have the appropriate forms signed.

Food

NO FOOD OR DRINK may be consumed in the classroom, this includes pop, candy and gum. Special arrangements may be made to use the cafeteria. It is the class’s responsibility to clean up the cafeteria at the end of the event.

Registration

Registration is held during the spring of the year. Notice of this registration will be placed in the church bulletin. Notification will also be sent home with the students. Parents of prospective 1st grade students will be mailed notification of this registration. Parents of SJA 6th grade students will also be mailed notification.

Only registered parishioners and its missions can register for our program. Parish registration forms are office for your convenience. We welcome any new families.

Tuition

To operate the program effectively, parents are asked to pay tuition. A schedule of tuition is set yearly by the Catechetical Board. Payment options are available. Statements are mailed monthly. In the event that a family is in a position that tuition is a financial burden, please call the office for an appointment to make arrangements. (maximum tuition: \$_____/family)

Parents that offer to teach a Faith Formation class, tuition is waived.

Curriculum

The curriculum is set by the diocese. The parish chooses the textbooks that fit both the curriculum and the parish needs. We use

- 1. the _____ series by _____ for grades _____
- 2. the _____ series by _____ for grades _____
- 3. the _____ series by _____ for grades _____
- 4. the _____ series by _____ for grades _____

Parents will be provided a copy of the curriculum for each grade that their children are in.

If you have any questions about the program, please call _____ or email _____.

Attendance Register

Class _____

Catechist _____

Room # _____

<p>CATECHIST: Use the letter A to show when students are absent. Insert the date of class in the space indicated and write in the weekly assignment (page # and any homework) in the space above the date.</p>	
<p>Student's Names</p>	<p>D A T E</p>

Sample Letter on Mass Attendance

**Address of Church
City, State Zip Code
Telephone Number and email
Date**

**Name of Recipient
Address of Recipient
City, State Zip Code**

Dear _____:

Thank you for your commitment to your Catholic faith, and to the Catholic education of your children. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches, “Through the grace of the sacrament of marriage, parents receive the responsibility and privilege of evangelizing their children. Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children.” (CCC 2223, 2225) It also states, “Parents have a grave responsibility to give good example to their children.” (CCC 2223)

One of the most important ways we share the Faith with our children is through our values. If I value prayer, I will make time for it and my children will see this. If I value weekly participation at Sunday Mass, I will make it a priority and I will see to it that we worship together as a family. If I value my relationship with Jesus, I will talk about Him with my children and help them to know Him.

It has come to our attention, through comments of children and catechists, that some of the children in our catechetical program do not attend Sunday Mass weekly. Pope John Paul II was quoted saying, “The Eucharist is the **heart** of Sunday.” Are you making the Eucharist the heart of Sunday for your family? Teach your children the importance of worshipping as a family every Sunday by coming to Mass and receiving Him in the Eucharist.

Now that we are in the season of Lent, a time of renewal and change, we invite you to take this opportunity to recommit yourselves and your families to Jesus and our Catholic faith. For those of you who are already making our faith a priority in your families, thank you. You are a wonderful example of faith-filled living for your children.

Let us keep each other in prayer as we all strive to become people of integrity, living what we believe. May Jesus Christ be our strength and our stronghold as we live out our Catholic Faith.

In Christ’s love,

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
Pastor Associate Pastor Director, PreK-8 Director, 9-12