

Introduction

Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.

Matthew 28:19-20

Through the ages the Catholic Church seeks to fulfill this mission of evangelization given to Her by Christ in part through its ministry of catechesis. Since the Second Vatican Council (1962 – 1966), the Church has focused on the ministry of catechesis with renewed vigor. Numerous Church documents have been published to address this ministry in the universal and local Church settings. Some of these foundational resources are used in the preparation of these diocesan curriculum guidelines, including:

Apostolic Exhortation Catechesi Tradendae of His Holiness Pope John Paul II: To the Episcopate, the Clergy and the Faithful of the Entire Catholic Church on Catechesis in Our Time (Catechesi Tradendae). Ottawa: Canadian Conference of the Catholic Bishops, 1979. Print.

Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC). 2nd ed. Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2011. Print.

Colecchi, Stephen M. *Leader's Guide to Sharing Catholic Social Teaching*. Washington, D.C: United States Catholic Conference, 2000. Print.

Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2004. Print.

General Directory for Catechesis (GDC). Washington, D.C: United States Catholic Conference, 1998. Print.

National Directory for Catechesis (NDC). Washington, D.C: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005. Print.

Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes). Washington: National Catholic Welfare Conference, 1965. Print.

Key Catechetical Themes

As the chief catechist of the Diocese of Richmond, Bishop DiLorenzo is responsible for the total catechetical mission of the local church. By directing the preparation of a diocesan curriculum, Bishop DiLorenzo is confident that with this curriculum, parishes, pastors, parents and catechists may become more effective in reaching the minds, hearts and souls of every generation in our church today. Key catechetical themes incorporated in this curriculum include:

- 1) Parishes are called to have a strong, complete and systematic catechesis for all their members.
- 2) Sharing in the Eucharist is the heart of Sunday for every baptized Catholic and sustains all catechetical efforts. Weekly participation in our parish liturgy is of the utmost importance in passing on and living our faith.
- 3) Providing a systematic curriculum of material, along with the use of textbooks in conformity with the Catechism of the Catholic Church (<http://www.usccb.org/about/evangelization-and-catechesis/subcommittee-on-catechism/upload/Current-Conformity-List.pdf>.) helps to ensure that there is a structured presentation of Catholic teaching.
- 4) Emphasis on a comprehensive approach to the formation of catechists and catechetical leaders will strengthen the church's ability to proclaim the Gospel effectively and convert the hearts of young people to the teachings of Jesus Christ.
- 5) A renewed emphasis on Scripture and Catholic apologetics, as well as more efficient integration of technology, is critical in catechesis.
- 6) Warm, welcoming and hospitable parishes with vibrant liturgy provide rich soil for catechesis. Participation in the celebration of the liturgy is the role of all the faithful.
- 7) Effective means of evaluation and accountability are necessary to renew our catechetical efforts.

Intended Audience and Purpose

The curriculum was written as “learning outcomes,” statements of what is expected that a student will be able to DO as a result of a learning activity. This provides parishes with flexibility in choosing a particular textbook or series to fulfill this curriculum plan.

- 1) These “learning outcomes” statements are addressed to priests, deacons, catechetical leaders, parents and catechists; they are not designed to be read by children/youth.
- 2) These “learning outcomes” statements are organized in two ways: six fundamental tasks of catechesis (GDC 85-87, NDC 59-63) and the liturgical year. Either organizing system may be used by a parish.
- 3) This curriculum is intended for use by families in their home, in parish programs and sacramental formation programs.
- 4) This curriculum plan does not replace the use of a textbook or resource material. All diocesan parishes are to select curriculum suited for their parish from the “Conformity Listing of Catechetical Texts and Series” published by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops <http://www.usccb.org/about/evangelization-and-catechesis/subcommittee-on-catechism/upload/Current-Conformity-List.pdf>.
- 5) This curriculum plan requires that a trained and formed adult translate the outcomes for presentation using a variety of methods; e.g. whole community catechesis; age appropriate group settings; family-oriented formation.
- 6) The parish should provide access to 30 hours annually of systematic lifelong faith formation for youth, and children. These “30 hours” can be achieved through a combination of gathered and non-gathered activities spread throughout the year.

Family

Formal catechesis in a religious education program is only one aspect of a child/youth’s life-long journey of faith. This child/youth’s life is influenced by the faith-life, commitments and decisions of his or her parents. Pope Benedict in his exhortation, *Verbum Domini, The Word of the Lord* (November 2010), emphasized the sacred role of parents to bear witness to the meaning of life in Christ:

Part of authentic parenthood is to pass on and bear witness to the meaning of life in Christ: through their fidelity and the unity of family life, spouses are the first to proclaim God’s word to their children. The ecclesial community must support and assist them in fostering family prayer, attentive hearing of the word of God, and knowledge of the Bible.

To this end, the Synod urged that *every household have its Bible*, to be kept in a worthy place and used for reading and prayer. Whatever help is needed in this regard can be provided by priests, deacons and a well-prepared laity. Spouses should also remember that “the Word of God is a precious support amid the difficulties which arise in marriage and in family life”.

This curriculum plan, based on scripture and the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, is to support families in their mission as “primary educators in the faith” (GDC 255). “Family catechesis therefore precedes, accompanies and enriches all other forms of catechesis” (*Catechesi Tradendae* 68). The Parent Pages are a resource that assists families in raising their children in the faith. They should be made available to each parish family with children from the age of 3 years succeeding through 8th grade. The pages are available online at <http://www2.richmonddiocese.org/ocf/curriculum/index.php> and can be printed and distributed at parent meetings.

Parent Pages

Parents are first to nurture a love of God in their child.

Parents have the unique responsibility for the education of their children; they are the first educators or catechists. They teach by their witness of the faith, through their values and attitudes, by their Christian example of love for Christ and his church. When children are baptized, parents accept the responsibility to raise their children in the practice of the faith (NDC 234-235).

This curriculum is designed for parents. In it, parents can see articulated both what the parish will do to foster the faith development of their child(ren) and what their responsibilities are for being the first and best teachers of their children in the ways of faith. Through this curriculum guide, parish catechetical ministers and parents can cooperate in the sacred mission of handing on the faith to young people. The curriculum should be used in conjunction with parent partnership agreements to create this fruitful collaboration. It is within this partnership agreement that parish catechetical programs and processes fulfill their obligation to support families in their mission as “primary educators in the faith” (GDC 255).

Culture

Through the ages, the Church has always fostered a relationship between the Gospel and culture. In his missionary visits throughout the world, his devotion to the youth of every nation, and in

his writings and talks, Pope John Paul II tirelessly acknowledged culture as a field of the Gospel. In Her wisdom, the Church also cautions:

The Christian community must discern, on the one hand, which riches to take up (from the culture) as compatible with the faith; on the other, it must seek to purify and transform those criteria, modes of thought and lifestyles which are contrary to the Kingdom of God (GDC 109).

In relation to their faith, children/youth need an understanding of the rich ethnic and cultural diversity and universality of the Catholic Church. They need to understand their own culture as well as the cultures of the many people who make up the population of our country. This mutual cultural knowledge and understanding enriches their practice of the Catholic faith and intensifies their practice of charity in welcoming the stranger with a magnanimous Catholic spirit. This curriculum plan contains many foundational principles and faith statements relative to culture and inculturation.

Catholic Social Teaching

Pope Benedict XVI in his Encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est* (God is Love) reminds us of the core of the Church's plea for justice and peace: "The Church's social teaching argues on the basis of reason and not law, namely, on the basis of what is in accord with the nature of every human being." The beginnings of an understanding of the social doctrine of the Church are part of the Catholic heritage of children/youth brought up in Christian homes and instructed in Catholic schools and religious education programs. There are many outcomes in this curriculum that support an early appreciation of Catholic Social Teaching principles. These teachings become imbedded in the learner and mature as they grow in faith. Catholic Social Teaching principles are a vital element of catechesis for all ages.

Acknowledgements

The task of catechesis in our diocese is something for which the whole diocesan community has responsibility. The primary responsibility for catechesis lies, of course, with our Bishop. He is very supportive and insistent that the priests, leaders and catechists receive as much assistance as possible in the work of catechesis required by the Church. These guidelines have been prepared to assist priests, deacons, parents, parish leaders and catechists in our parishes and anyone engaged in passing on the faith to the next generation.

Catechesi Tradendae gives us the vision for all our catechetical and pastoral work: “The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch, but in communion and intimacy, with Jesus Christ” (5).

The National Directory for Catechesis further explains that catechesis realizes this objective through six main tasks, namely: promoting knowledge of the faith, providing liturgical education, moral formation, prayer, community life and initiation into the mission of the Church (59-63).

The work of developing this curriculum is the work of great love and commitment to the mission of the Catholic Church of Richmond to witness and teach the Good News of Jesus Christ as articulated in the Scriptures and in the teachings of the Church.

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The Curriculum Committee of the Diocese of Richmond met during 2010 to 2011 and used the Church’s documents on catechesis to develop the key concepts (faith themes) for grades Pre-K through 8 and the parent and catechist pages for grades Pre-k through 8, to include special needs children. The document was then translated into Spanish.

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+ Charlie Leisure -We remember in gratitude his contribution to our pilot. May he now rest in the embrace of God.