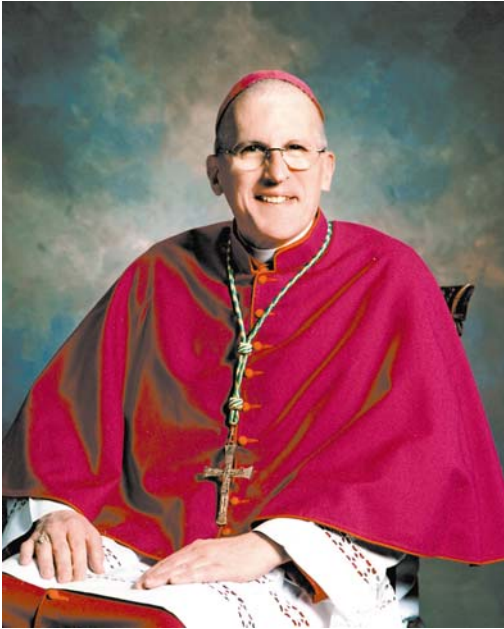


June 2005



Dear Friends in Christ,

I am pleased to give my approval to the new Guidelines for the Teaching of Religion in Catholic High Schools in the Diocese of Scranton. These Guidelines are clear and specific. They are rooted in Scripture and in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. They provide the basis for what is taught in all the disciplines in a Catholic high school.

I have also mandated *The Didache High School Textbook Series*, published by Midwest Theological Forum, Chicago, Illinois, for use in our diocesan high schools. This new series presents the teaching which Christ gave to the Apostles, as authenticated by the Magisterium of the Church, in a way that is appropriate for modern high school students. I warmly recommend it to you and know that you and your students will find the books substantial, clear, concise and faithful to the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Curriculum and textbooks comprise only one aspect of Christian formation. They must be augmented by reverent celebration of the sacraments and sincere Christian witness. Students should have frequent opportunities to attend Mass, to receive the sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Reconciliation, to spend time in Eucharistic adoration, and to celebrate feasts and liturgical seasons. The Curriculum includes an Appendix of Prayers and a liturgical calendar to assist with spiritual formation. Christ's teachings should be apparent in the behavior of all, including faculty, administrators, counselors, librarians, coaches, aides and support staffs.

The *Catechism* sums up the foundation of our devotion to Jesus Christ:

*Jesus knew and loved us each and all during his life,
his agony and his Passion, and gave himself up for each
one of us: 'The Son of God . . . loved me and gave himself*

for me' [Gal 2:20] (CCC 478).

Pope Benedict XVI, then Cardinal Ratzinger, reflected on the meaning of this passage for catechesis in the following way:

In all truth, Christ walked his path for me. This certainty is a grace given to accompany me in all the stages of my life, in my successes and failures, in my hopes and my suffering. He did all that he did for me and for every man who crosses my path in life: Jesus loved him, too, and gave himself up for him just as he loved and loves me still. When we have learned to believe this again, when we are able to announce it to others as the message of truth, evangelization takes place. Then we know that the kingdom of God is near. And this knowledge gives us strength to live and act out of this nearness.

Please know how grateful I am to you for the work that you do. May God bless all of your efforts and may your good example serve to inspire students to resist the temptations so prevalent in our culture in favor of friendship with Jesus Christ, Our Lord.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Joseph F. Martino, D.D., Hist.E.D.
Bishop of Scranton