

*Diocese of Scranton*



*Elementary Guidelines for Religious Education  
in Parishes and Schools*

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## *Purpose:*

The purpose of the Guidelines for Elementary Religious Education is to provide a basic framework in accordance with the content contained in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994) and the principles set forth in the *General Directory for Catechesis* (1998).

These guidelines were revised and approved by the Most Reverend Joseph C. Bambera, D.D., J.C.L., Bishop of Scranton, in August 2010. They propose the minimum requirements to be taught at each grade level and will ensure consistency of instruction within each catechetical program and throughout the diocese. The content for each grade level is to be expanded upon by using the textbooks which are currently approved by the United States Council of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Committee on the Catechism. The following is a link to the USCCB Conformity Listing:

[USCCB Conformity Listing](#)

Each catechist should be given a copy of his or her **Grade Level**, the **Appendix of Prayers**, the **Prayer Chart**, and **Words to be Taught**. Contact the Office for Parish Life if you wish to have copies of the Elementary Tests available for Grades One through Eight.

## *Additional Teaching Materials:*

Since the previous revision of the elementary guidelines in 2004, the following has been added:

### *Safe Environment Children's Program*

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The Safe Environment Children's Program was introduced in the Catholic Schools in the spring of 2003. There program consists of three lessons which are taught over a period of three years and then repeated.

The program was introduced in the parish Religious Education programs in the fall of 2008. Each parish is required to present one lesson to the children (grades K – 10) in the parish program each year. It is preferable that the lesson be taught in the fall of the catechetical/school year.

Following the lesson, a record of training must be sent to Kathleen Bolinski, Safe Environment Coordinator, 300 Wyoming Avenue, Scranton, PA 18503.

All materials needed for teaching the lessons in the *Safe Environment Children's Program* in the parish and school are found in the *Safe Environment Children's Program* binder in the parish/school office.

## *Catechesis:*

“The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch, but also in communion and intimacy with Jesus Christ.” (CT 5)

“The tasks of catechesis consequently constitute a totality... the maturation of the Christian life requires that it be cultivated in all its dimensions: knowledge of the faith (Word), liturgical life (Worship), moral formation, prayer and belonging (Community), missionary spirit (Service). When catechesis omits one of these elements, the Christian faith does not attain full development.” (GDC #87) Although all these tasks of catechesis are important, they can only be addressed minimally within the classroom setting. It is therefore the role of the parish coordinator/DRE to assure that all these tasks are accomplished in the overall objectives of the catechetical program.

“A catechesis which inspires not only intellectual assimilation of the faith, but also touches the heart and transforms conduct is correct.” (GDC #205) Therefore the transmission of the faith is more than just the passing on of information. It is in the understanding of the information and its connection to real life that the information and spiritual formation lend itself to personal transformation.

## *Content:*

The basic guidelines for each grade level should also be integrated with various themes that complete a well-balanced presentation of the catechetical message. Such issues as: the **missionary needs of the global Church, discernment of God’s call in a personal vocation, celebration of the Sunday Liturgy** and the **major feasts of the liturgical year**, as well as, **respect life issues** should be integrated into these basic guidelines.

In the **Words to be Taught**, an indication is given when certain vocabulary and topics are to be introduced. The suggested time-frame from Introduction to Mastery is a guide for the catechist. Memorization of these terms will be most helpful to the student in acquiring knowledge of the faith and confidence in using its language. “Use of memory, therefore, forms a constitutive aspect of the pedagogy of the faith since the beginning of Christianity. In particular, as object of memorization, due consideration must be given to the principal formulae of the faith.” (GDC #154)

## *Prayer:*

“The memorization of basic prayers offers an essential support to the life of prayer, but it is important to help learners savor their meaning.” (CCC #2688)  
Therefore, some basic prayers have been introduced at each grade level, practiced throughout other grades and mastered at a higher level. Section Four of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) is devoted entirely to “Christian Prayer.” It identifies various reasons for praying – blessing/adoration, petition, intercession, thanksgiving and praise. The Catechism also identifies various forms of pray as vocal, meditation and contemplative. Children should be exposed to each of these forms of prayer. The chart serves as a guide.

## *Parents:*

“The Christian family is the first place of education in prayer. For young children in particular, daily family prayer is the first witness of the Church’s living memory as awakened patiently by the Holy Spirit.” (CCC #2685)

Prayer lists inserted in the index are intended for home use and can be reproduced according to various age levels – primary, intermediate, junior high school, etc.

“Parents receive in the sacrament of matrimony ‘the grace and the ministry of the Christian education of their children,’ to whom they transmit and bear witness to human and religious values. ...It is for this reason that the Christian community must give very special attention to parents. By means of personal contact, meetings, courses, and also adult catechesis directed toward parents, the Christian community must help them assume their responsibility – which is particularly delicate today – of educating their children in the faith.” (GDC #227)

## *Students:*

Each section of each grade level introduces information about the student to be catechized. Please note the general characteristics of their development and their faith needs.

It is also the duty of catechists “to speak a language suited to today’s children and young people in general.” (GDC #208)

It is also important to make adjustments for the particular needs of each student. Catechists must be aware of particular learning needs and the learning style that would be most advantageous to the faith development of the student.

“Every Christian community considers those who suffer handicaps, physical or mental as well as other forms of disability – especially children – as persons particularly beloved of the Lord. A growth in social and ecclesial consciousness, together with undeniable progress in specialized pedagogy, makes it possible for the family and other formative centers to provide adequate catechesis for these people, who, as baptized, have this right and, if not baptized, because they are called to salvation.” (GDC #189)  
Assistance with the inclusion of these children in the regular catechetical program can be sought through the Office for Parish Life.

### *Catechists:*

“The catechist is essentially the mediator. He/She facilitates communication between the people and the mystery of God, between subjects amongst themselves, as well as with the community.” (GDC #156)

“It is necessary for catechists to have a deep faith, a clear Christian and ecclesial identity, as well as great social sensitivity... Catechists must be teachers, educators and witnesses of the faith.” (GDC #238)

Therefore, catechists must be confident in teaching the faith and exercising competent skills in communicating with children. Information on Catechist Formation (*Formation for Servant Leadership: Growing in Faith Together*) can be obtained by calling the Office for Parish Life at 570-207-2213.