

Becoming Disciples

Curriculum Tips

Volume 3

Office of Religious Education, Catholic Diocese of Wilmington

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A Continuous Learning Cycle

Now that the formal catechetical year is nearing completion, it's time for catechists to evaluate the progress their children and youth have made in reaching the religious education outcomes of *Becoming Disciples*.

At the End of the Year

1. Take a pen and check off the outcomes under the six tasks of catechesis that you believe were accomplished or presented at your grade level. (Copies of grade level outcomes can be downloaded from cdow.org.)
2. Pass the above information on to the catechist at the next level.

When Next Year Begins

1. Teach unaddressed concepts from the previous year that still need attention.
2. Remember that some children may be arriving in your class from other religious education programs and will need some grounding in previous desired outcomes.
3. Review—as an important foundation for new learning.



Sacred Art and Music

“In sacred art human hands express the infinite beauty of God and prompt praise and thanks.” (NDC, p. 148)

“Because sacred music gives glory and praise to God, it has been an integral part of the life of the Church from the beginning...The neglect of sacred art and music in the religious formation of children/youth will result in a catechesis that is incomplete. Full participation in the liturgy requires some understanding of the liturgical environment and the sacred hymns of the Church.”

Curriculum Introduction #10

- Explore the richness of the church environment during Holy Week and Easter
- Pray with Lenten and Easter symbols
- Sing and discuss seasonal hymns



Focus on Families: The Sign of the Cross

The Sign of the Cross is for many of us a familiar gesture. Often we do it out of force of habit or routine, but it is an ancient prayer that the Church urges us to use as we begin all our prayers.

It is a sign that we are followers of Christ. It also calls us to remember that we are in the presence of God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

It is not “Let us hurry and make this sign of the cross so we can get to our real prayer,” whether it is grace before meals or night prayers.

In many homes the Sign of the Cross is falling into disuse as we simply bow our heads and begin to pray.

The Mass itself begins with the Sign of the Cross. And before the proclaiming of the Gospel, we make the sign of the cross on our forehead, lips and heart that God’s Word will sink deeply into us as we listen and that it will transform us into the image of Christ.

The Baptismal rite seals the one to be baptized with the Sign of the Cross and parents are urged to frequently sign their children with the Sign of the Cross on the forehead as a remembrance of their Baptism.

The Sign of the Cross is also used as a young person is anointed with chrism at Confirmation, a sign of willingness to carry one’s cross in sacrifice and witness for the sake of the Gospel.

The Bishops of the United States in their Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers (c. 1988 USCCB) urge parents to bless their children with the Sign of the Cross daily, (before bedtime, before school, etc.) using one of the following prayers:

May God bless you.

My God keep you safe.

God be with you.

God be in your heart.

May God bless and protect you.



“This sign is a powerful protection...A benefit from God, the standard of the faithful.”

St. Cyril of Jerusalem (ca. 317-386)

Appendix I—Prayers

THE YEAR OF ST. PAUL

JUNE 28, 2008—JUNE 29, 2009

Pope Benedict XVI has proclaimed the Year of St. Paul, beginning this June. It would be good to plan ahead as to how you might incorporate this into the curriculum early next school year. Those who have Vacation Bible School might make a special effort to include information on St. Paul.

All grades under Key Concept: Liturgical Education ask catechists to point out the Feast of Sts. Peter and Paul on June 29. The Eastern Shore parishes might make a pilgrimage to the beautiful new SS Peter and Paul Church in Easton.

The Curriculum Appendix under “Tenets of our Faith” has a list of the Epistles. Children could mark the ones that Paul wrote. Older children may learn some biblical geography in conjunction with a study of Paul’s journeys.

Children in grades 5-8 could write a letter (epistle) to their church, pointing out the good things about the church, as Paul did: faith in Jesus Christ, practices of charity etc. as well as ways their church could improve.



PAULINE CHALLENGES FOR SEVENTH AND EIGHTH GRADERS

Key Concept: Knowledge of the Faith

The *seventh grade curriculum* lists the following outcomes that refer to St. Paul. Eighth graders will also benefit from a study of this information. Refer specifically to outcomes ee, ff, gg, hh, ii, and jj on page 11.

St. Paul’s conversion (Acts 9:1-19) and his major missions (Acts 15:36-20:38) are described in Acts of the Apostles. Biblical maps would be a big help here.

In the Diocese

Bishop Saltarelli published a pastoral letter on the Year of Saint Paul in the Jan. 24, 2008 issue of the Dialog, in honor of the Jan. 25 Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul. DRE’s and Principals may want to use this letter as inservice material for teachers/catechists. The letter is also on the Diocesan web site, cdow.org. Focus, toward the end of the letter, on the “Ten Ways to Celebrate the Year of St. Paul” outlined by the Bishop.

Bishop Saltarelli has identified certain speakers to give presentations on St. Paul. Perhaps your parish will invite one of these speakers as an adult education opportunity for all.

Key Concept 6: Missionary Initiation

Disciples of Christ bear witness to their faith in society. A missionary spirit of evangelization can be cultivated at every age. Use the exciting stories of St. Paul, Missionary to the Gentiles, found in Acts of the Apostles to inspire!

Study modern day missionaries and hold out the possibility of a vocation to missionary life in the Church, as a priest, religious or lay missionary.



Learning with and through the R.C.I.A. Community

“Post-baptismal catechesis...does well to draw inspiration from (the RCIA), this preparatory school for the Christian life, and to allow itself to be enriched by those principal elements which characterize the catechumenate.” (Curriculum Introduction p. 6)

Keep the cross (the Paschal Mystery) at the center of learning

Deepen the spiritual life through praying the Scripture, sacramental participation, and service

Respect the gradual nature of the journey of faith.

Curriculum Introduction, p. 6



Make Connections

-Invite members of the RCIA community, both adults and children/youth, to visit the class to exchange stories of faith journeys.

-Help RCIA members learning Catholic prayers by making them artistic copies of special Catholic prayers the class is learning..

-Offer regular prayers in class for those becoming Catholic. Give each student a particular person to pray for in the RCIA group.

-Send cards or write letters of encouragement to those who are preparing.

-Attend one of the Sunday RCIA rites that occur during Mass. Role play this in class.

-For those children/youth receiving sacraments of initiation, invite the RCIA to play a role on their day of reception. Reciprocate, if possible.

-Interview an RCIA member or one who came in to the Church last year about their experience of the Triduum.

Pope Benedict XVI Visits the United States

The Pope's visit to the U.S. in April is an ideal time for catechesis on the papacy. The Archdiocese of Washington, in collaboration with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, has created resource guides to support the work of teachers and catechists. These materials offer direction and referenced suggestions for the development of two to five hours of grade appropriate lessons focused on the papacy and the papal visit. Each level includes materials on:

Who Was Peter?

Who Is Pope Benedict XVI?

What Is the Mission of the Pope?

Why Is This Visit Important?

**Go directly to the website at
www.uspapalvisit.org**

Sample Suggestions from the Website:

Grades K-2 (and up)

- Cut out fish and glue different colored tissue paper squares on them to symbolize that Jesus' fish (which are His people) are made up of different cultures and nationalities.
- Create a picture timeline of Pope Benedict's life events.
- Discuss the papal ring, which has an image of St. Peter fishing in a boat and the name of the pope. Using hardening clay, have each student design a ring with a round face. Use a toothpick to draw the Christian symbol of a fish on the face of the ring.

- Discuss the Pectoral cross that is worn around the pope's neck and over his heart. All bishops wear pectoral crosses and the Pope is the Bishop of Rome. Have students cover a cardboard cross with aluminum foil. String it and have students wear it over their hearts.
- Build a Popemobile, using 10 Q-tips, 4 marshmallows and 4 bulls-eye caramel candies. Use a picture of the Popemobile as a reference.
- Discuss the papal coat of arms. Every pope has his own. It traditionally features a gold and silver key, symbolizing the power to bind and to loose on earth (silver) and in heaven (gold). Use the papal visit website to discover what other symbols are on Pope Benedict's coat of arms. Have students create their own coats of arms, with symbols representing themselves.
- To demonstrate papal succession, fold a piece of paper in half. At the top of each side, write St. Peter and Pope Benedict XVI. Have students draw examples of actions of both men, showing similarities (i.e. leading prayer, preaching, serving those in need etc.)
- All bishops wear a hat called a miter. It has two points, representing the Old and the New Testaments. Students can make a miter by using two pieces of construction paper, cut into spade shapes, and then stapling them together to fit their heads.
- There are links to pictures of St. Peter and appropriate songs for children on the website





Grade 3-5 (and up)

- Make St. Peter trading cards. On one side draw a picture of Peter or symbols representing him. On the other, list major “stats” of Peter’s life.
- Create a commemorative (paper) plate in honor of the Holy Father. Paste a picture of Pope Benedict in the center. Add radiating lines, each highlighting a fact about him.
- Design a travel brochure entitled “A Visit to Vatican City” after researching the history and geography of the papal city.
- Choose a service project to be completed in honor of the Pope’s visit.
- Map the journey of St. Peter in Acts of the Apostles. Have students keep a travel journal as if they were Peter.
- The Pope will be in the U.S. for his birthday—April 16. Make him a birthday card.

Grades 6-8

- Research St. Benedict and identify why Cardinal Ratzinger would want to honor him. Research Benedict XV for the same reason.
- Write a short story or play imagining a meeting between St. Peter and Pope Benedict XVI.
- Research Pope Benedict’s travels and what his messages were to those countries.

Sample Curriculum Outcomes

that these activities may address:

Grade One: Missionary Initiation (6e) “Recognize that there are leaders that care for the Church: the Pope, bishops, priests, and learn the name of the Pope, the Bishop of our dioceses and the name of the parish priest(s).”

Grade Three: Knowledge of the Faith (1n) “Identify the Pope, the successor of St. Peter, and realize that he is the visible head of the whole Church.”

Grade Four: Missionary Initiation (6b) “Know something of the missionary work and zeal of St. Peter.”