

# *Introduction*

DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON  
OFFICE FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION  
**Curriculum Outcomes/Religious Education**

2007

# 1. Background

## Scriptural Background

Responding to Christ, the Church heeds the call in Matthew 28:19-20,

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.

Through the ages, the Church seeks to fulfill this mission, in part, through its ministry of catechesis.

## Contemporary Renewal of Catechesis

In our times, especially since the Second Vatican Council, the Church in reflection and renewal has focused on its ministry of catechesis. As a result, numerous Church documents have been published — some directly and others indirectly — shedding light on catechesis. Most recent and notable are (all publications listed below are available at United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, DC): *Evangelii Nuntiandi* On Evangelization in the Modern World Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Paul VI, December 8, 1975

*Catechesi Tradendae* (CT) *On Catechesis In Our time* Apostolic Exhortation of Pope John Paul II, October 16, 1979

*Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) Promulgated by Pope John Paul II, October 11, 1992

*General Directory For Catechesis* (GDC) Congregation for the Clergy, August 15, 1997

*Sharing Catholic Social Teaching and Leader's Guide* United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, June 1998

*Our Heart Were Burning Within Us* A Pastoral Plan for Adult Faith Formation in the United States, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, November 17, 1999

*National Directory for Catechesis* (NDC), United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, May 2005

*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, Pontifical Council For Justice and Peace, March 2005

*Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 2006

Bishop Michael Saltarelli's 2005 Pastoral Letter *Go and Teach: Facing the Challenges of Catechesis Today* [The Dialog, September 15, 2005 and Origins (Catholic News Service), October 27, 2005]

Bishop Saltarelli writes: “A passion for catechesis is at the heart of my ministry as a Bishop. As the chief catechist of the Diocese of Wilmington, I am responsible for the total catechetical mission of our local Church. My hope is that this teaching mission that we share becomes bolder and more effective now and in the years to come. St. Ephrem once said that when we eat and drink the Body and Blood of Christ, we eat and drink Fire and Spirit. May this Fire and this Spirit animate our efforts to reach the hearts, minds and souls of every generation in our Church today.” Bishop Saltarelli articulates a number of key catechetical themes that are incorporated in this curriculum:

- 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.
- 3) Systematic curriculum of material and the use of textbooks in conformity with the Catechism of the Catholic Church help to ensure that there is a structured presentation of Catholic teaching.
- 4) The Bishop emphasized a comprehensive approach to the formation of catechists and catechetical leaders.
- 5) A renewed emphasis on Scripture and Catholic apologetics as well as more efficient harnessing of internet resources will be crucial.
- 6) Vibrant parishes with vibrant liturgy provide rich soil for catechesis.
- 7) Effective means of evaluation and accountability are necessary to renew our catechetical efforts.

## 2. Response

Guided by the wisdom of the publications listed above, the Diocese of Wilmington and dioceses throughout the country have developed religious education curriculum for children and youth. The Diocese of Wilmington developed the curriculum outcomes presented here for Grades Kindergarten through Eight. This curriculum was developed by a committee of Catholic school and parish religious education leaders, staff of the Diocesan Office for Religious Education and the Office for Catholic Youth Ministry.

These “Curriculum Outcomes”:

1. are addressed to: priests, deacons, directors of religious education, Catholic school principals, parents, religion teachers, catechists; they are not designed to be read directly by children/youth
2. use categories based upon “the fundamental tasks of catechesis” taken from the *General Directory for Catechesis* 85-87, see also

NDC pp. 59-63:

- Knowledge of the Faith
  - Liturgical Education
  - Moral Formation
  - Teaching to Pray
  - Education for Community Life
  - Missionary Initiation
3. are directives for elementary and middle grade levels in Catholic Schools, homes, and parish programs
  4. do not replace the textbook
  5. require the properly trained and formed adult to translate the outcomes for presentation using a variety of methods e.g., faith-based, educational, family-oriented, and/or community-based methods
  6. require the responsible adult to have an understanding of what is to be presented at the present grade level, what was presented in the previous grade level and what will be presented in the next grade level; a particular grade level is not an isolated entity.

## 3. Assessment

### **Necessity of Assessment**

In order to improve the teaching of catechesis and facilitate student growth, it is necessary to measure results and plan accordingly. To determine the degree of progress, the content of catechesis necessitates the progressive development of skills, opportunities for practical application, and regular assessment.

What is Measured? The assessment measures faith knowledge, appropriation and skills; it also redirects the efforts and effectiveness of the religious educator and program.

Methods of Assessment. The assessment is accomplished through a variety of methods: quizzes, tests, rubrics, discussions, projects, research, portfolios, charitable service, social action, participation at Mass, retreat attendance and some limited and cost-effective participation in national testing programs.

### **Effective Catechesis Incorporates Learning by Heart**

“The principal formulations of faith, basic prayers, key biblical themes, personalities and expressions; and factual information regarding worship and Christian life should be learned by heart.”... “Receiving the formulations of the faith, professing and internalizing them, and in turn, sharing them with the community encourage the individual’s participation in the received truth.” (NDC, pp. 102-103)

# 4. Family

## Role of Parents

Formal catechesis in a religious education class is only one aspect of a child/youth's life-long journey of faith. This life is influenced by the faith-life, commitments and decisions of his or her parents. Pope Benedict XVI, addressing parents at Vespers in Munich, urged the parents to accompany their children on their journey of faith by attending Mass each Sunday and praying together at home. The Pope said:

“Prayer does not only bring us nearer to God but also nearer to one another. It is a powerful source of peace and joy. Family life becomes more joyful and expansive whenever God is there and his closeness is experienced in prayer.”

As followers of Jesus Christ, parents are called to be living examples of faith. In this regard, the *GDC* tells us:

Children thus perceive and joyously live the closeness of God and of Jesus made manifest by their parents in such a way that this first Christian experience frequently leaves decisive traces which last throughout life. (GDC 226)

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*For additional information, refer to the indices of the CCC, GDC and NDC for references under families, parents, children and youth.*

## Support of Families

These curriculum outcomes are based on Scripture and Apostolic Tradition, as expounded in current catechetical documents. Their purpose 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.” (CT 68)

# 5. Evangelization

## Necessity of Evangelization

Evangelization bears witness among nations to a new way of Christian living. It preaches the Gospel by primary proclamation, calls to conversion and is integral to catechesis.

## Influence of Evangelization on Catechesis

In *The Fundamental Importance of Catechesis* (Origins, Dec. 17, 1998 Vol.2: No. 27), Cardinal Castrillon Hoyos, Vatican Secretary of Education, emphasizes the influence of evangelization on catechesis:

“*The General Directory for Catechesis* presents evangelization as a great frame enclosing all of the Church's pastoral action and in which all of her evangelizing actions are present and highlighted... (evangelization) introduces to the faith and to Christian life those who have converted to Jesus Christ or those who have returned to following him, by catechesis and by the sacraments of initiation.”

## Influence of Catechesis on Evangelization

In *On Catechesis In Our Time*, Pope John Paul II said of evangelization:

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For additional information, refer to the indices of the CCC, GDC and NDC for references under evangelization

“It is a rich, complex and dynamic reality, made up of elements, or one could say moments, that are essential and different from each other, and that must all be kept in view simultaneously. Catechesis is one of those moments — a very remarkable one — in the whole process of evangelization.” (CT 18)

# 6. The Catechumenate as Inspiration for All Catechesis

## Significance of the Catechumenate to Catechesis

The GDC (90) reminds us that the baptismal catechumenate is the “model” for catechizing. It adds that we should take note of “those elements of the catechumenate which must inspire contemporary catechesis.”

## Structure of the Catechumenate

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults reminds us that the Catechumenate has four stages:

**Pre-catechumenate:** The time of welcoming a new candidate allows the person to realize how God has already been active in his/her life.

**Catechumenate:** The individual learns what it means to be a Catholic Christian and is offered opportunities to participate in the parish community through prayer, service, and study. He/she commits daily to living as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

**Purification and Illumination:** With the prayer, sacrifice and support of the parish community and the entire Church, a catechumen intensifies the spiritual preparation for the reception of the sacraments.

**Mystagogy:** After baptism, the newly baptized intensifies their commitment to the parish community and the universal Church and continues to engage in ongoing formation with the understanding that this is a lifetime process.

## Purpose of these Four Stages

These stages point to the gradual and ongoing nature of catechesis and personal conversion and emphasize a deep response to the individual’s baptismal call to holiness. GDC 91 recognizes: “Post-baptismal catechesis, without slavishly imitating the structure of the baptismal catechumenate, and recognizing in those to be catechized the reality of their Baptism, does well, however, to draw inspiration from this ‘preparatory school for the Christian life,’ and to allow itself to be enriched by those principal elements which characterize the catechumenate.”

## Qualities to be Sought in Catechesis

GDC 91 points out elements of the catechumenate that should be present in all catechesis. These are presented in the form of a question to assist in evaluating the use of the catechumenal model:

Does our catechesis give special emphasis to the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist)?

Does our catechesis emphasize the spiritual maternity of the Church expressing that catechesis, as well as the catechumenate, should be the care of the entire Christian community?

Does our catechesis emphasize the mystery of Christ's Passover revealing clearly its paschal nature and highlighting the Easter Vigil as a pinnacle of Christian liturgy with its spirituality of Baptism?

Does our catechesis stress, as does the catechumenate, that it is a process of formation and a true school of faith emphasizing gradual stages, comprehensiveness and integrity of formation, connection to meaningful rites, symbols, biblical and liturgical signs, constant attention to the Christian community and regular participation in the sacramental life of the Church?

Following the example of Christ, Catechesis, inspired by the characteristics of the catechumenate, reflects how Jesus Christ Himself formed His disciples.

- He made known to them the mysteries of the Kingdom of God
- He taught them to pray
- He impressed on them to live a moral life
- He prepared them for mission.

Through this model, we hope to present a comprehensive formation which promotes an authentic following of Christ. (GDC 67).

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For additional information on this topic, refer to NDC (pp.115-118) and The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, Washington, DC USCCB, 1988.

## 7. Culture

### The Church and Culture

Through the ages, the Church has always fostered a relationship between the Gospel and culture. In Acts 17:22-32, Paul recognizes that the Athenians' shrine to an unknown god actually expresses their deep desire to know God - a desire that can only be filled by the Risen Christ. Paul finds a seed of God's presence in their culture and then preaches Christ to them within the context of their cultural experience.

**Pope John Paul II and Culture.** In his missionary visits throughout the World, his devotion to the youth of every nation visible in World Youth Day events, and in his writings and talks, Pope John Paul II tirelessly acknowledged culture as a field for the Gospel. At the institution of the Pontifical Council on Culture, in 1982, John Paul II said: "A faith that

does not become culture is a faith not fully accepted, not entirely thought out, not faithfully lived.”

**Cautions about the Culture.** In her wisdom, the Church is always cautions: “[T]he 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) Pope John Paul II likewise cautions in his encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, that in taking values from a culture, we “must in no way compromise the distinctiveness and integrity of the Christian faith.”

**Definitions.** Some definitions may be helpful in understanding the concepts of culture and inculturation.

**What is Culture?** “The sum total of a people’s social and psychological organization which shapes the way they perceive, relate to and interpret themselves and the world, including values, language, customs, food, child-rearing practices, educational systems, history, political structure and religious expression.” (*Who are My Sisters and Brothers?* Washington, DC: USCCB, 1996, Glossary.)

**What is Inculturation?** “An ongoing reciprocal process between faith and culture. It is a way of looking at the customs, rites and rituals of people to discover in them the saving presence of God”. (*Who are My Sisters and Brothers?* Washington, DC: USCCB, 1996, Glossary.) The light of the Gospel transforms and uplifts cultures.

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 understanding reaches especially to those who are presently coming to the United States and who may be members of the same parish that the children/youth attend. 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.

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Note: The indices of the CCC, GDC and NDC provide many helpful references to culture and inculturation.

These curriculum outcomes contain many foundational principles and faith statements relative to culture and inculturation.

## 8. Human Sexuality

The NDC states that human sexuality should be incorporated into the total curriculum. Those using this curriculum should pay special attention to these outcomes for a complete catechesis. (NDC pp.292-293) Included in these outcomes are:

- statements regarding human sexuality in the context of Catholic sexual morality



- the commandments
- the virtues, especially chastity
- respect for the dignity of the human person
- the sacrament of marriage.

## 9. Justice and Peace

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" In his introductory letter to the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, Cardinal Angelo Sodano, former Vatican Secretary of State, writes: "Throughout the course of her history, and particularly in the last hundred years, the Church has never failed, in the words of Pope Leo XIII, to speak 'the words that are hers' with regard to questions concerning life in society."

The beginnings of an understanding of these "words that are hers" i.e., 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 are foundational to justice and peace and are vital elements of catechesis. A practical reference is: *Sharing Catholic Social Teaching and Leader's Guide to Sharing Catholic Social Teaching*, USCCB, Washington, DC, 1998. A comprehensive reference is: *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church/Pontifical Council for Peace and Justice*, USCCB, Washington, DC 2005

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For additional information, refer to the indices of the CCC, GDC and NDC for entries related to this topic.

## 10. Art and Music

The Church promotes and protects music and art especially sacred music and art. The NDC tells us, "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. Jesus sang hymns with his apostles at the Last Supper, and the first Christian writers attested to the customary inclusion of sacred music even in the earliest forms of Eucharistic liturgy. (NDC, p.150)

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For additional information please refer to CCC 477, 1157,1158; NDC (pp.148-151).

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.

# 11. Saints who Lived Nearby

Four saints who worked tirelessly for the Kingdom of God are part of our regional culture and Church history. They should receive special attention in a study of the saints. Additional information about these saints may be obtained from websites on “Catholic Saints.”

**St. Elizabeth Ann Seton** (b.1774, d.1821) first native-born North American to be canonized (1975 by Pope Paul VI). A widowed mother of five children and Catholic convert who became a religious nun, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton ministered to the poor in New York before her conversion to Catholicism and in Maryland after her conversion. In the early 1800’s she sent members of her newly founded community of sisters, the Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph, to minister, educate and catechize in Pennsylvania and New York. She is honored as the foundress of Catholic schools in the United States and the Catholic Patroness of the State of Maryland. The National Shrine of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton , where she is entombed, is in Emmitsburg, Maryland. Her Feast Day is January 4.

**St. John Neumann** (b.1811, d.1860) first male American and first American Bishop canonized a saint (1977 by Pope Paul VI). A missionary Redemptorist priest and bishop known for his humility, simplicity and zeal, Bishop Neumann ministered tirelessly to Catholic populations in Delaware, Maryland, New York, and Pennsylvania. He was instrumental in establishing opportunities for Catholic education and in the founding of a congregation of women religious. The National Shrine of Saint John Neumann, where he is entombed, is at the Parish of Saint Peter the Apostle in Philadelphia, PA. His Feast Day is January 5.

**St. Katharine Drexel** (b.1858, d.1955) canonized in 2000 by Pope John Paul II. The daughter of a wealthy banker, Katharine was a well-educated and cultured Philadelphia debutante who used her inheritance to educate and assist Native and African Americans. She ministered in Pennsylvania, Virginia, Louisiana, and many western states. Known for her deep Eucharistic spirituality, she founded the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament and established Xavier University in New Orleans in 1915. The Saint Katharine Drexel Shrine, where she is entombed, is located at The Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament Motherhouse in Bensalem, PA just North of Philadelphia. Her Feast Day is March 3.

**Servant of God, Pierre Toussaint** (b.1766, d.1853) received the title of Venerable by Pope John Paul II in 1996 (his cause for canonization continues today). Born into a Haitian slave family, he migrated to New York and was apprenticed as a hairdresser. He listened to the heartaches of many of his clients and advised them to confide their cares and difficulties to Christ. He purchased the freedom of many slaves and collaborated with St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in the founding of one of the first orphanages in New York. John Cardinal O’Connor arranged for his remains to be moved to the crypt below the main altar of St. Patrick’s Cathedral where he is interred. Servant of God Terence Cardinal Cooke and Servant of God Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen are also buried there. For more information on his cause of canonization, search the web: “Archdiocese of New York/Pierre Toussaint.”

# References

## Religious Sites to Visit

**Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception**, *Washington, DC*

**Franciscan Monastery**, *Washington, DC*

**John Paul II Cultural Center**, *Washington, DC*

**St. Peter Cathedral**, established 1796, *Wilmington, DE*,

**St. Francis Xavier**, established 1704, *Old Bohemia, Warwick, Cecil County, MD*

## Websites of Interest

Websites of religious textbook publishers often give many resources independent of their textbooks that may be helpful to parents/catechists/religion teachers, e.g., some give the characteristics of children at a particular age.

Benziger — [www.benziger.glencoe.com](http://www.benziger.glencoe.com)

Harcourt — [www.harcourtreligion.com](http://www.harcourtreligion.com)

Loyola Press — [www.LoyolaPress.org](http://www.LoyolaPress.org)

Sadlier — [www.webelieveweb.com](http://www.webelieveweb.com)

Silver Burdett Ginn — [www.blestarewe.com](http://www.blestarewe.com)

Resources for Christian Living — [www.faithfirst.com](http://www.faithfirst.com)

**There are several websites available that provide information on the lives of saints e.g.:**

<http://www.catholic-forum.com/saints/indexsnt.htm>

<http://www.magnificat.ca/cal/index.html>

<http://www.catholic.org/saints/>

**Other Websites of Interest:**

Official Vatican website — [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va)

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops — [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org) (*The New American Bible is available on this site*)

Diocese of Wilmington — [www.cdow.org](http://www.cdow.org)

Holy Childhood Association — [www.worldmissions.catholicchurch.org](http://www.worldmissions.catholicchurch.org) (*Encourages children to be missionaries today.*)

Catholic Relief Services American Catholic Bishops' outreach to the poor in other nations — [www.crs.org](http://www.crs.org)

National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC — [www.nga.gov](http://www.nga.gov)

(NB: select subject: religious; paintings illustrating the following are available for selection: Old Testament, New Testament, Life of Mary, Madonna and Child, Saints, etc.)

## Abbreviations

Used in this Introduction and the Curriculum Outcomes

CCC	<i>Catechism of the Catholic Church</i>
GDC	<i>General Directory for Catechesis</i>
NDC	<i>National Directory for Catechesis</i>
CT	<i>Catechesi Tradendae (On Catechesis in Our Time)</i>
CCCC	<i>Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church</i>

For additional historic churches founded in the 1700's see Diocesan Directory

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#### Elementary Curriculum Outcomes Committee

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