

Religion Guidelines

Archdiocese of Philadelphia

These Religion Guidelines are those published in 2000 reformatted into trimesters. Each Grade contains the following:

- The **core content** with references to scripture

To help teachers in their presentations, the outline is referenced to scripture which suggests certain passages that complement a specific topic in the outline. Teachers are encouraged to use the scripture passages for personal prayer as well as for reflection and for sharing with students. This could help the children become increasingly more familiar and comfortable with scripture and its importance in the lives of both the Church and of those who are followers of Jesus Christ. The numbers on the right side of the page in parentheses correspond to the **paragraph numbers** in the Catechism of the Catholic Church which treat of a specific subject or concept. This to help the teachers in their own background reading. It is not intended that students be taught directly from the Catechism.

- The **Liturgical Year** (Ordinary Time; Advent; Christmas Season; Lent; Holy Week; Triduum; Easter Season; Saints, Feasts and Special People) is developed according to its appropriate placement in each trimester. The importance of *Sunday* is stressed.
- Summaries of the feasts of **Mary** and lives of the **Saints**
- **Praying with Children**

Each Grade is required to learn certain of our Traditional Catholic Prayers. The versions we should teach can be found in either the United States Catholic Catechism for Adults (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops), Appendix B: Traditional Catholic Prayers *or* the Compendium: Catechism of the Catholic Church, Appendix A: Common Prayers (English and Latin).

Hopefully, using these guidelines as the basis of teaching the subject of Religion will contribute to developing a strong religious foundation in the Catholic Faith for each student, and invite the student into the mission of the Church which is the mission of Jesus Christ. It is our hope that each student will come to a deeper understanding of the Catholic Faith and be able to articulate this faith. The **faith believed** is the **faith celebrated** in one's full, conscious and active participation in the sacramental life of the Church. The **faith believed** is the **faith lived** in a moral life that demonstrates the social consequences of living according to the demands of the Gospel. It is a life that serves the needs of others with care and compassion. The **faith believed** is the **faith prayed** in attitudes of adoration, praise, thanksgiving, and awe for the glory of God.

GRADE 1

FIRST TRIMESTER

I. GOD THE FATHER

A. FIRST PERSON OF THE TRINITY (238-40)

B. CREATOR OF HEAVEN AND EARTH Gn 1: 1-25

II. CREATION

A. CREATION OF THE WORLD (337)
Gn 1: 1-25
(275, 295)

B. CREATION OF PEOPLE Gn 1: 25-31,
2:1-25

C. HUMAN BEINGS HAVE A UNIQUE PLACE IN
CREATION

1. God created human beings in his own image. Gn. 1:27, (355,
1700, 1702)

2. God created them male and female.

3. God created people to know, love, and serve him. (51, 356, 357,
1719-21, 1726)

D. SACREDNESS OF HUMAN LIFE (2258)

1. Respect for ourselves

2. Respect for others

3. Respect for all life

III. MARY

A. TITLES OF MARY

1. Mother of Jesus Lk. 1:26-27
(488-95, 501)

2. Mother of the Church (963-72)

3. Mary is the Mother of God Jn.19: 25-27

4. Mary is our Mother Lk. 1: 26-38; 46-
56, (966, 968-69)

IV. LITURGICAL YEAR

A. **SUNDAY** – the Lord’s Day is the day on which we celebrate Jesus’ Resurrection. (1171, 1343, 2177)
It is the heart of the church’s life.

B. **ORDINARY TIME:** Liturgical color is green: hope, growth, life

C. **ADVENT** (524)

1. Liturgical color is purple: preparation, sorrow for sin, repentance
2. Period of four weeks of preparation for the birth of Jesus, Christmas
3. Symbol: Advent Wreath

- a. The circle of greens reminds us that God has no beginning and has no end.
- b. There are four candles – three purple and one pink
- c. One candle is lit each week.

D. **CHRISTMAS**

1. Liturgical color is white: joy, glory, innocence
2. Story of Jesus’ Birth

Mt. 1:18-2:23

V. SAINTS, FEASTS, AND SPECIAL PEOPLE

Special days to honor saints are ranked and celebrated in different degrees.

Solemnity: liturgies celebrating events, beliefs, and personages of principal importance and universal significance in salvation history

Feast: liturgies of major importance

Memorial: liturgies celebrating minor events in the life of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of saints significant to a local country, church or religious community.

September	21	St. Matthew
October	1	St. Theresa of the Child Jesus (St. Therese, the Little Flower)
October	2	Guardian Angels
October	4	St. Francis of Assisi
October	31	Vigil of All Saints (Hallowed Eve or Holy Evening)
November	1	All Saints

November	2	All Souls Day
November	3	St. Martin de Porres

VI. PRAYER

A. PRAYER

Mt. 6: 5-15, (2564,
2697-04, 2742-45)

1. Definition

- a. Listening to God
- b. Talking to God
- c. Sometimes just being still with God.

2. Traditional Prayers

- a. Sign of the Cross (2157)
- b. Our Father (2792-93, Mt. 6:7-15, 2801)
- c. Hail Mary (Lk. 1:26-38)
- d. Doxology (Glory be...)
- e. Simple Grace before and after meals (2698)
- f. Simple Morning Offering (2698)
- g. Angel of God
- h. Introduce the Rosary

VII. SACRAMENTALS

(1667-79)

- A. Holy Water (1238)
- B. Holy Oils (Oil of Catechumens and Chrism) (695, 1237)
- C. Cross/Crucifix
- D. Sign of the Cross
- E. Blessed Candles (697)
- F. Blessed Medals
- G. The Rosary

VIII. SOCIAL JUSTICE

“The commitment to human life and dignity, to human rights and solidarity, is a calling all Catholic educators must share with their students. It is not a vocation for a few religion teachers, but a challenge for every Catholic educator and catechist.”
Sharing Catholic Social Teaching Challenges and Directions, 1998 USCCB, p.4

Major themes:

The Life and Dignity of the Human Person
Call to Family, community and participation

**Rights and Responsibilities of the Human Person
Care for God’s Creation**

- A. AWARENESS OF THE NEEDS OF OTHERS
 - 1. Foster a willingness to share.
 - 2. Participate in Thanksgiving and Christmas activities for the needy.

- B. AWARENESS OF THE NEED TO CARE FOR ALL OF CREATION

Catholic tradition insists that we show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God’s creation.

Sharing Catholic Social Teaching Challenges and Directions, USCC, 1998, p.6

For more ideas see From the Ground Up Teaching Catholic Social Principles in Elementary Schools, NCEA, 1999.

SECOND TRIMESTER

I. LIVING IN GOD’S WORLD

- A. FAMILY Col 3:18-21, Acts 3:25
(764,1934 –35, 2204-05)
 - 1. All families are special.
 - 2. We first learn about love and God in the family.
 - 3. We first learn to pray in the family.
 - 4. Families are important in our world and in our Church.

- B. CHURCH
 - 1. Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist make us members of the Church. (1265)
 - 2. The Church is the people of God.
 - 3. The parish is where God’s people gather as a family to worship. (1180-81, 1198-99)

- C. SCHOOL
 - 1. We learn more about God and the world in school.
 - 2. We learn to cooperate with others in school.

D. COMMUNITY

Lk. 3:11, Acts 2:42-47
Jas. 2:15-16, 1 Jn 1:7,
(1803, 2447)

1. We learn to share with others in community.
 - a. Feed the hungry.
 - b. Clothe the naked.
 - c. Care for the sick.
 - d. Pray for the dead

2. In and with the community we try to make the world more peaceful.
 - a. Forgive others. (1850, 1871)
 - b. Practice acts of kindness.

II. GOD THE SON: JESUS CHRIST

A. SECOND PERSON OF THE TRINITY

(262, 663)

B. JESUS' LIFE

1. Birth and Childhood

- a. Annunciation (Lk 1:26-38)
 - 1) Jesus – name given by angel;
means “God saves”
 - 2) Jesus is the Son of God;
St. Joseph is his foster father

- b. Nativity (Mt 1:18- 2:15
Lk. 2:1-20, (525))
 - 1) Birth in Bethlehem
 - 2) Angels appeared to Shepherds
 - 3) Visit of the Magi
 - 4) Flight into Egypt

- c. Life in Nazareth (Lk. 2:41-52, (527-34))
 - 1) Holy Family
 - 2) Finding in the Temple
 - 3) Hidden Life

2. Jesus' Public Life

- a. Baptism by St. John the Baptist (Mt. 3:13-17, Mk 1:9-11
Lk 3:21-22 (541-46))

- b. Call of the apostles and the disciples Mt 4:18-22,
Mk 1:16-20, Jn 1:35-51
- c. Jesus as Messiah
- d. Jesus as miracle worker and healer Mt 4:23-25, Mk 2:1-12,
Mk 8:22-26, Lk 8:49-56
- e. Jesus as Savior Rom. 5:6-11
- f. Jesus is Lord 1 Cor. 12:3 (209)

III. MARY

A. DAYS IN HONOR OF MARY

September	8	Feast of the Birth of Mary
October	7	Memorial of Our Lady of the Rosary
November	19	Our Lady of Divine Providence
December	8	Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception
December	12	Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe
January	1	Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God
February	11	Memorial of Our Lady of Lourdes
March 25		Solemnity of the Annunciation
May	31	Feast of the Visitation
July	16	Memorial of Our Lady of Mount Carmel
August	15	Solemnity of the Assumption

IV. LITURGICAL YEAR

A. SEASONS

1. Lent (1095)
 - a. Time of preparation for Easter
 - b. From Ash Wednesday to Mass of the Lord's Supper
on Holy Thursday
 - c. Liturgical color is purple: repentance, sorrow from sin
2. Holy Week
 - a. Palm Sunday
 - b. Holy Thursday
 - c. Good Friday
 - d. Holy Saturday
3. Easter Mt. 28:1-15, Mk. 16:1-8
Lk. 24:1-12, Jn. 20:1-10

- a. Easter Sunday: liturgical color is white for joy, glory, innocence
- b. Ascension Thursday: liturgical color is white
16: 19-20 Mt. 28: 16-20, Mk. Acts 1:6-12
- c. Pentecost: liturgical color is red for the Holy Spirit Acts 2:1-4

V. SAINTS, FEASTS, AND SPECIAL PEOPLE

December	6	St. Nicholas
January	1	Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God
January	4	St. Elizabeth Ann Seton
January	5	St. John Neumann
January	6	Epiphany
February	3	Memorial of St. Blase
March	3	Feast of Saint Katharine Drexel
March	17	Memorial of St. Patrick
March	19	Solemnity of St. Joseph

VI. PRAYER

- 1. Traditional
 - a. *The Way of the Cross*
 - b. *The Rosary*
- 2. Personal Prayer
 - a. Spontaneous prayers of praise
 - b. Spontaneous prayers of intercession
 - c. Spontaneous prayers of thanksgiving
 - d. Spontaneous prayers of sorrow
- 3. Various prayer expressions (*See Appendix on Prayer*)
 - a. The “Jesus Prayer”
 - b. Choral speech (Praying in Common)
 - c. Song and Gesture
 - d. Meditation

VII. SOCIAL JUSTICE

“The church’s social teaching is a rich treasure of wisdom about building a just society and living lives of holiness amidst the challenges of modern society...In this time of widespread violence and diminished respect for human life and dignity in our

country and around the world, the Gospel of life and the biblical call to justice need to be proclaimed and shared with new clarity, urgency, and energy.”

Major themes:

**Option for the Poor and Vulnerable
Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers.
Solidarity of the Human Family**

- A. AWARENESS OF THOSE WHO SUFFER HUNGER
 - 1. Participate in the Holy Childhood Association (HCA), the Bishop’s Relief Fund, Operation Rice Bowl
 - 2. Encourage children to be more careful and not waste food

- B. AWARENESS OF THE GOSPEL CALL TO BE PEACEMAKERS
 - 1. At home
 - 2. In school
 - 3. In the community

THIRD TRIMESTER

- I. **GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT** Rom. 5: 1-5
 - A. THE THIRD PERSON OF THE TRINITY

 - B. THE ONE WHO LIVES WITHIN US AND GIVES US THE GIFT OF GRACE Lk 3: 15-16, 21-22,
Rom. 8:14-17,
2 Cor. 1:21-22
 - 1. We receive the Holy Spirit for the first time at Baptism. (1265-70)

 - 2. The Holy Spirit is the gift of God’s love to us. 1 Jn. 4:7-13 (733-35)

 - C. THE ONE WHO HELPS US TO DO THE RIGHT THING (1827, 1939-42,
2319, 2415-18)
 - 1. Helps us respect ourselves
 - 2. Helps us respect others

2318,

- 3. Helps us care for all creation
- 4. Helps us in our prayer Rom. 8:26-27
- 5. Helps us to tell the truth, to obey, to forgive

II. SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION

A. BAPTISM Mt. 28: 16-20, Lk. 3:21-22, Eph. 4:1-6

- 1. Effects (1262-65)
 - a. Forgives all sin
 - b. We are born again as children of God (1213)
 - c. We become temples of the Holy Spirit

- 2. Symbols
 - a. Water (1238)
 - b. Oils (Oil of Catechumens and Chrism) (695, 1237)
 - c. Sign of the Cross (1235)
 - d. White Garment (1243)
 - e. Candle (697)

- 3. Words (1240)
 “Name, I baptize you in the name of the Father,
 and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

- 4. Minister (1256)
 - a. Ordinary minister – bishop, priest, deacon
 - b. Case of necessity – any person who has the right intention

B. CONFIRMATION

- 1. The Holy spirit gives us special strength. (1285)
- 2. Chrism signifies the Holy Spirit. (1289)

C. EUCHARIST

- 1. Sacrament of Christian Initiation (1322)
- 2. Sacrament of love and a sign of unity (1323, 1380)

III. MARY

A. PRAYERS TO MARY

- 1. The *Hail Mary*
- 2. The *Rosary*

B. MAY DEVOTIONS

1. In the Church, the entire month of May is dedicated to Mary. Traditional color is light blue
2. Special activities
 - a. Make a shrine in the classroom and/or at home
 - 1) Statue or picture of Mary
 - 2) Rosary
 - 3) Flowers
 - b. Pray the Rosary
 - c. Encourage the family Rosary

IV. SAINTS, FEASTS, AND SPECIAL PEOPLE

April	29	Memorial of St. Catherine of Siena
May	3	Feast of Saints Philip and James
July	26	Memorial of Saints Joachim and Ann

V. WORSHIP

Foster full, conscious and active participation in liturgy by becoming familiar with key phrases in the Mass.

1. Entrance Song – we gather as a community ready to celebrate
2. Responsorial Psalm – the Church’s response to God’s WORD
3. Response to the Reading – “Thanks be to God.”
4. Response to the Gospel – “Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.”
5. Responses – “...and also with you.” And “Amen.”
6. Become familiar with the phrases from the *Creed*
7. Memorial Acclamations
 - a. “Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.”
 - b. “Dying you destroyed our death, rising you restored our life. Lord Jesus, come in glory.”
 - c. “When we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim your death, Lord Jesus, until you come in glory.”
 - d. “Lord, by your cross and resurrection you have set us free,

You are the Savior of the world.”

VI. SACRAMENTALS

(1667-79)

- A. Blessed Ashes
- B. Palms
- C. Sign of the Cross
- D. Cross/Crucifix
- E. Paschal Candle
- F. Blessed statues, pictures, icons
- G. The Rosary

Saints, Feasts, and Special People

The following information is taken from Catholic source book, Edited by Rev. Peter Klein, BROWN ROA Publishing Media, 1990, p. 302.

HOLIDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

In the course of the year the Church:

- 1. **Celebrates** the mystery of the risen Christ
- 2. **Honors** Mary, and
- 3. **Venerates** saints as examples for the living.

HOLYDAYS OF OBLIGATION

In the United States, there are six holydays:

- 1. Mary, Mother of God, January 1
- 2. Ascension Thursday
- 3. Assumption, August 15
- 4. All Saints, November 1
- 5. Immaculate Conception, December 8
- 6. Christmas, December 25

September	8	<i>Feast of the Birth of Mary</i>	
September	21	<i>Feast of St. Matthew</i>	Mt. 9:9-10

St. Matthew was born in Capernaum and was also known as Levi. Jesus chose him to be an apostle. Before his work with Jesus, he was a tax collector. After Jesus died and rose from the dead, Matthew preached the Good News that Jesus taught. He wrote down many of the words and stories that Jesus had shared in one of the gospels.

October	2	<i>Memorial of the Guardian Angels</i>	Ex. 23:20-21
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Angels are pure spirits created by God. The word angel means *messenger*. There are many stories about angels in the Bible. Angels give us God’s messages, keep us safe from harm, and pray for us.

October **4** *Memorial of St. Francis of Assisi*

October **7** *Memorial of Our Lady of the Rosary*

This feast was established by Saint Pius V. Pope Gregory XIII later named this the Feast of the Holy Rosary. This feast invites everyone to meditate upon the mysteries of Christ, following the example of the Blessed Virgin Mary who was so singularly associated with the incarnation, passion and glorious resurrection of the Son of God. (Christian Prayer, 1976, p. 1285)

October **31** *Vigil of All Saints*
(Hallowed Eve/Holy Evening)

November **1** *Solemnity of All Saints*

November **2** *All Souls Day*

November **3** *St. Martin de Porres*

Saint Martin de Porres was born at Lima in Peru of a Spanish father and a Negro mother in 1579. He helped the poor, having studied medicine as a boy, and was devoted to the Holy Eucharist. (Christian Prayer, 1976, p. 1310)

November **19** *Our Lady of Divine Providence*

On November 19, 1969 Pope Paul VI declared Our Lady Mother of Divine Providence principal patroness of the island of Puerto Rico, since November 19 was the date that the island was discovered. The image of Our Lady that is so special to the people of Puerto Rico shows the Divine Child sleeping peacefully in the Virgin Mary's arms. However, the name and worship of Our Lady of the Divine Providence originated in Italy in the 12th century, then spread to Spain and then to Puerto Rico.

December **6** *St. Nicholas*

December **8** *Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception*

Under the title of the Immaculate Conception, Mary is revered as the patroness of the United States and of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. In 1854, Pope Pius IX declared: "From the first moment of her conception, the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, by a unique grace and privilege of God and in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the human race, was preserved from all stain of Original Sin." (CCC #490-91)

December **12** *Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe*

Our Lady appeared to Juan Diego, a poor Mexican Indian, on December 9, 1531. Mary told Juan to build a church. Juan went to the Bishop to tell him the lady's request. The bishop did not believe him. Three days later, when Juan again went to the bishop and opened his cloak to give roses to the Bishop which the lady had arranged in Juan's cloak, there was a picture of Mary on his cloak. The Bishop believed and built a church in honor of Mary. We honor Our Lady of Guadalupe because we recognize her concern for all people especially the suffering and the poor. December 9 is not the feast of Blessed Juan Diego.

December **25** *Solemnity of Christmas*

Jesus Christ was conceived and born of the Virgin Mary. Mary remained a virgin before and after the birth of Jesus Christ. We call this the Virgin Birth. (CCC #499)

Feast of the Holy Family
(Sunday in the Octave of Christmas)

January **1** *Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God*

January **4** *Memorial of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton*

Elizabeth Ann Bayley was born in 1774 in New York. She grew up and married William Seton and had five children. After Will died, Elizabeth Ann became a Catholic. A priest from Baltimore asked her to come to Maryland to open a school. Elizabeth Ann started the first Catholic school in America. She also started a community of sisters called the Sisters of Charity. She died in 1821 and was canonized in 1975. She was the first native-born North American to be raised to sainthood.

January **5** *Feast of St. John Neumann*

John Neumann was born on March 20, 1811. He had a great desire to come to the American missions. He was ordained a priest in New York in 1836. He worked in Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Maryland. In 1852 he was consecrated bishop of Philadelphia. There he worked hard to establish parish schools. He also started many parishes for the numerous immigrants. Bishop Neumann died on January 5, 1860; he was beatified in 1963; and, he was canonized on June 19, 1977 by Pope Paul VI. (Christian Prayer, 1976, p. 1062)

January **6** Solemnity of the Epiphany
(or the Sunday between January 2 and January 8)

February **3** *Memorial of St. Blase*

Blase was a priest and later became a bishop. When evil people were seeking to kill him, Blase went to live in a cave. He spent his time in prayer and taking care of the wild animals who lived near his cave. After a while, he was discovered and placed in jail. Blase's blessing is sought for health of the throat because, once when a child was choking on a bone, Blase prayed and the boy was healed.

“Through the intercession of Saint Blase, bishop and martyr, may God deliver you from ailments of the throat and from every other evil. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy spirit.”

(Blessing of Saint Blasé that is prayed each year
As throats are blessed)

February **11** *Memorial of Our Lady of Lourdes*

Mary appeared to a fourteen year old girl named Bernadette Soubirous on February 11, 1858 in Lourdes, France. Our Lady appeared dressed in white with a blue sash, yellow roses at her feet and a rosary in her hand. Mary appeared eighteen times to Bernadette. The Lady told her many things among them that, although Bernadette would not find happiness in this life, she would find it in Heaven. Our Lady told Bernadette to pray for sinners and to do penance. The Blessed Mother told Bernadette to have a chapel built at the site where she appeared and that processions were to be held. When Bernadette asked the Lady what her name was, she said, “I am the Immaculate Conception.” Through Bernadette, the Blessed Mother called sinners to a change in heart, to reach out and care for the sick, the poor, and those who had lost hope. Each year millions of people make their way through the mountainous country of southeastern France to the shrine at Lourdes. They come to ask Jesus through the intercession of his Mother for a cure of their body or soul.

March **3** *Feast of St. Katharine Drexel*

Saint Katharine Drexel was born in Philadelphia on November 26, 1858. Her mother died when she was a baby. Her step-mother was a wonderful woman. Katharine's family was very wealthy, but she was taught to be especially concerned about the poor. When Katharine grew up, she was very generous with her time and money. She turned her energies and her fortune to the poor and forgotten. She worked with the African-American and Native-American people. In 1891, she began the sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. She became known as Mother Katharine. The sisters center their life around Jesus in the Eucharist. The community of sisters started schools, convents, and missionary churches. In 1925, they established Xavier University in New Orleans. Mother Katharine Drexel died on March 3, 1955 at the age of ninety-seven. She was declared blessed by Pope John Paul II on November 20, 1988. Pope John Paul II proclaimed her a saint on October 1, 2000 (Saints for Young Readers for Every Day, Volume I)

March **17** *Memorial of St. Patrick*

March **19** *Solemnity of St. Joseph*

March **25** *Solemnity of the Annunciation* Lk. 1:26-38

The Annunciation is the feast commemorating the appearance of the Angel Gabriel to Mary. The angel told her that she had been chosen to be the Mother of Jesus Christ, the Son of the Most High God. Mary, through the power of the Holy Spirit, became the Mother of Jesus.

April **29** *Memorial of St. Catherine of Siena*

May **3** *Feast of Saints Philip and James*

May **31** *Feast of the Visitation* Lk. 1:39-56

After the Annunciation, Mary left immediately to visit her cousin, Elizabeth, who in her old age was soon to be the mother of John the Baptist. As soon as Elizabeth saw Mary, her own child leapt for joy within her. Elizabeth greeted Mary as the Mother of the Lord. Mary responded with the prayer known as the *Magnificat*. Mary's whole life was filled with joy at the good news that Jesus was coming. Mary brought Christ to the world and she brings him to everyone by the holiness of her words and example.

July **16** *Memorial of Our Lady of Mount Carmel*

Mount Carmel is located on the coast of Israel. For many centuries, many people who wanted a quiet place to pray and to live closely with God came together at Mount Carmel. Here a large monastery was built to honor the Mother of God. The members of the monastery were called Carmelites. On July 16, 1251, Mary appeared in England to St. Simon Stock, who was in charge of the Carmelite Order, and give him a brown scapular as a sign of her love and protection. Wearing a scapular medal or cloth scapular has become a popular way of honoring the Blessed Mother.

July 26 Memorial of Saints Joachim and Ann

August 15 Solemnity of the Assumption

Pope Pius XII, on November 1, 1950, infallibly defined what Catholics always believed: Mary was assumed body and soul into heaven. (CCC #966)

Prayer

The Jesus Prayer

The **Jesus Prayer** is used as a “prayer word” simply by uttering the word “Jesus” or the phrase “Lord, Jesus, have mercy on me” in harmony with one’s breathing. This technique is a help to become “centered” or still within one’s being.

All the various activities in a child’s life can distract her/him from the important task of building a relationship with the all-holy, transcendent God. This *prayer form* is especially helpful if the classroom mood is restless or emotionally charged. It allows you and the children to become still, to become more aware of the Presence of God and to rest in that Presence.

Technique:

Address the children in words similar to these:

1. Let’s settle down and become very quiet so that we can experience God’s Presence here in this room, within us. God is as close to us as our own breath. Now close your eyes and take in a deep breath.
DO THIS WITH THE CHILDREN at this point.
Then, let it out very, very slowly.

2. Now let us breathe and pray all together.

Breath in. **PAUSE.** Breath out. **PAUSE.**
Breathe in and pray, “Jesus” or “Lord Jesus.”
Breathe out and pray, “have mercy on me.”

Repeat this as you continue to breathe.

Continue this exercise until you feel the room quiet. Then join the children entrusted to your care in prayer to the God who has loved them - and you - into being.

3. Time: Primary grades: 3 - 4 minutes
Intermediate: 4 - 5 minutes
Upper: 5 - 8 minutes

4. Other Prayer Words that could be used as a substitute:

“Lord Jesus - I love you.”

“Spirit of God - fill me with love.”

Feel free to use your favorite phrases.

Choral Speech (Praying in Common)

This *prayer form* invites all to pray as one voice in response to another through the use of selected religious readings or Scripture. The **Psalms** lend themselves to this type of reading.

To develop an understanding of praying in unison, or as reply to another, it is necessary to communicate a sense of rhythm by reading, singing within parts, speaking in different voices. Examples: “O” antiphons, Canticles (Magnificat, Benedictus), psalms, hymns, prayers, litanies, novena, etc.

Technique:

1. Make copies of the *choral reading* for each of the students.
2. Divide the children into groups and assign the parts to be read in unison rhythmically by each group.
3. Decide if any parts are to be read individually and assign those parts.

Song and Gesture

Singing is particularly popular with young children, but can be used when praying with children of all ages. Gesture helps the children to express their feelings through the use of body language. Combining song and gesture makes for a very expressive prayer form.

Technique:

- 1 Explain that gesture and song are acceptable *prayer forms*. Prayer is not just

rote-recited prayers.

2. Choose a song with gestures with which you are familiar. Listen to the song and teach the gestures to the class.
3. Explain to the children that they are now going to create gestures of their own for a given song.
4. Upon choosing an appropriate hymn for the liturgical season, divide the children into groups. Assign each group a verse of the hymn. Instruct the group to create their own gestures for the assigned verse or chorus.
5. Have each group present their gestures to be learned by the entire class. This song can now be used during a prayer service.

Journal Keeping

This *prayer form* (tool) enables a student to reflect on the goals and directions of his/her life, and to appreciate and deepen a personal relationship with a loving Father. It provides a method to assess these experiences.

Technique: Grades 1 - 3

Journal Keeping could be adapted to the level of the student. Responses could be in written or picture form. Springboards to follow a religion lesson could be:

- How would you feel if you had been at the Last Supper?
- How do you think Jesus felt when His friends, the apostles, all walked away from Him?
- If you were blind, how would you feel if Jesus helped you to see? What would you say to Him?

Grades 4 - 8

- 1 Present the value of journal-keeping as a means of writing

personal thoughts and feelings.

2. Differentiate “diary” from “journal.” A diary records personal thoughts and feelings; a journal records personal feelings and thoughts addressed to God as Father, Jesus as Brother, Friend.
3. There is no one particular format. Journaling may be in the form of an informal letter (Dear Father, from Your son/daughter), (Dear Jesus, from Your pal), or a poem, etc.
4. A copybook should be set aside for this special purpose. This helps to make it a special book for conversations with God.

Discuss the idea of a spiritual journey with students: one in which they will discover things about themselves and God. Ask them to think of pictures, symbols, and words that help them to think about God and the things He has created.

Decorate the cover with pictures and / or words which represent aspects of the student’s self.

Discuss titles that would express the above discussion. Allow each student to design artistically a title page.

5. Establish a quiet atmosphere in the classroom for this special time. As a class, journal several times a week. However, students should feel free to use the journal at any time to express their thoughts and feelings to God.
6. Students need to be assured that no one will read their journals without permission. Periodic evaluation with students can take place to determine effectiveness of journaling.
7. Journaling is a student’s personal response from a springboard initiated by the teacher. Such springboards can come from:
 - the Religion lesson (Is there enough evidence to convict you of being a Christian? What are some signs in your life?)
 - a particular Scripture passage
 - inspirational quotes, such as found on calendars, etc.
 - reflections on personal talents, gifts or on those shared with us by others (In your life who reminds you of God and makes you feel special?)

- problems encountered by the age group or within your class, e.g., How does it feel to be left out of a group, to be ignored?

Meditation

Meditation is a form of mental prayer in which one thinks reflectively about God, the Blessed Mother, the saints, or the mysteries of faith.

Technique:

1. Select a Scripture passage. Choose one that is suggested in the Religion textbook.
2. Establish quiet time for approximately two or three minutes before the reading of the passage.
3. Read the passage slowly, aloud or softly. Repeat a word or phrase to capture the attention of the listener.
4. Allow about three or four minutes of quiet time to awaken feelings.
5. Respond with or without words. Remind students of different types of prayer, praise, love, thanksgiving, and petition.

Suggestions for Levels

Primary:

Stress that mental prayer or meditation is listening and talking quietly to God. Encourage students to listen to a selected Scripture story or view a slide presentation or audio-visual reflection. Children should be directed to think about what God is saying to them in this story. Encourage a short response such as the following:

Thank you, God.
I love you, God.
I am sorry, God, etc.

One acclamation should be selected by the child and repeated silently. Allow approximately three minutes for this prayer. Some may choose to share their response with others, to draw a picture of themselves in the Scripture story, or print their short response in their prayer notebook.

Intermediate:

Repeat all or any of the above.

Children may write their own prayer. They may volunteer to read their prayer. In order to keep the spirit of prayer, no more than one child's prayer should be read at a given time.

Junior High:

Use any of the above suggestions.

Follow - up activity: Write a modern day story which parallels the Scripture story. Teacher would ask questions after the meditation such as: Whom would you like to be in the story? Why? What struck you about the story? Why?, etc.

Guided Meditation

Guided Meditation allows the children to consider a Bible verse. It encourages the children to consider their feelings and their relationship with God.

Technique:

1. Call the children to prayer, invite them to be still.
2. When they are still and quiet, invite the children to close their eyes. Remind them to listen very carefully and to try to keep their minds really focused on what you are going to read to them.
3. When they are quiet, read them the story of Jesus blessing the children (Matthew 19: 13 - 15). You may want to read it again after a short pause.
4. Allow a few minutes to pass. Then suggest the children imagine themselves as one of the children whom Jesus blessed. Encourage them to see themselves with Jesus, to imagine where they are. Suggest that they think about how it felt to be near Jesus, how it felt to be sent away from Jesus, and how it felt to be blessed by Jesus. Any ideas of your own would be great!
5. Allow a few minutes for children to consider this. Encourage the children to remember a time when they felt loved and blessed. Who was there? When did this happen? Where did his happen?
6. Older children may be more comfortable seated in a circle facing away from the center.

7. Many other gospel stories lend themselves to guided meditation. For example: The Ten Lepers, Jesus on the Road to Emmaus, or the parable of the Good Samaritan.

Follow Up:

Primary: Draw what you imagined. Write a prayer thanking Jesus for his blessing.

Intermediate: Discuss the blessings they have received. Write a prayer thanking God for these blessings.

Junior High: Journal their feelings during this meditation. Discuss times when you have not felt loved or blessed. Discuss how to help others feel loved and blessed.

Shared Prayer

This *prayer form* helps the students to become more aware and sensitive to God's presence in their lives and in the world around them and to aid them in responding to that presence by sharing prayer with others. This prayer may be spontaneous by having them respond to a few questions relating to a passage read from scripture, or it may take on a more structured format such as creating a litany or the format of the *Prayer of the Faithful* in the Eucharistic Liturgy.

Technique:

1. Take the time to create a prayerful environment; if possible darken the room, have a lit candle. In some way, make a conscious effort to change the area from what the students ordinarily experience. Prepare the students by setting a tone of quiet reverence.
2. For **Intermediate** or **Junior High** levels select one of the students to do the reading of the Scripture passage. Give him/her the selection ahead of time and have him/her carefully prepare, read slowly, etc. For **Primary** levels, it may be best to do the reading yourself. You may want to use a children's Bible for easier understanding.
3. During the Lenten Season, we take on a new awareness of Jesus' life in the light of His passion, death, and His new life in glory. Select a passage from one of the Gospels on the passion of Jesus.
4. Allow for a period of silent reflection following the reading.

5. For **Primary** levels, prepare beforehand materials needed for drawing: paper, crayons, markers, etc. Have the children draw a picture of the story and then describe what they drew. You may aid them by asking a few questions, e.g. How do you think Jesus felt when the crowd mocked him and his close friends deserted him? Have they ever felt that no one cared?
6. For the **Intermediate** and **Junior High** levels, prior to the prayer experience, it will be necessary to prepare the students by familiarizing them with the formula used for the *General Intercessions* at Mass.
7. Help them to move from the time of Jesus to our own time. In the reflection on the passion of Jesus we are able to see that we are not alone in our suffering. When we condemn others because of race, color, or religion we are repeating the action of Pilate. Mary's sorrow today is shared by the families of sons and daughters of all the war-torn nations of the world. Reflected in Jesus' innocence is the innocent children in famine-afflicted countries, etc.
8. Invite them to write a prayer about one of the many concerns of our world today. These can be put together to be used as a *Prayer of the Faithful*.