

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 4

First Trimester

I. GOD THE FATHER

A. REVEALED HIMSELF AND HIS LOVE FOR HIS PEOPLE (2059-60)

B. REVEALED THE COVENANT ON THE HOLY MOUNTAIN WRITTEN BY HIS OWN FINGER (2056)

II. COMMANDMENTS

Ex. 20:2-17

A. WORDS OF GOD (2056)

B. FULL MEANING REVEALED IN JESUS IN THE NEW COVENANT

C. PATH OF LIFE

D. COVENANT WITH GOD:
DUTIES TO GOD AND TO NEIGHBOR

1. I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that place of slavery. You shall not have other gods besides me. Ex. 20:2-5, Deut. 5:6-9, (2083, 2133-34)

2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain. Ex. 20:7, Deut. 5:11, (2142, 2156, 2160-62, 2166-67)

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|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3. Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. | Ex. 20:8-10, 31:15,
Deut. 5:12-15, (2168-70, 2175, 2177, 2189-92) |
| 4. Honor your father and your mother. | Ex. 20:12, Deut. 5:16, (2197, 2247-48, 2251, 2253) |
| 5. You shall not kill. | Ex. 20:13, Deut. 5:17, (2258, 2270, 2276, 2288, 2307, 2318-20) |
| 6. You shall not commit adultery. | Ex. 20:14, Deut. 5:18, (2331-33, 2237, 2393-95) |
| 7. You shall not steal. | Ex. 20:15, Deut. 5:19, (2401, 2426, 2450-54) |
| 8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. | Ex. 20:16, Deut. 5:20, (2464-65, 2473, 2482-83, 2504-05, 2507) |
| 9. You shall not covet your neighbor's house;
you shall not covet your neighbor's wife... | Ex. 20:17, (2514, 2531-32) |
| 10. You shall not covet ... anything that is your neighbor's.... | Ex. 20:17, Deut. 5:21, (2534, 2551-54) |

III. LITURGICAL YEAR

(1168-73)

A. SUNDAY

(2177)

The Lord's day is the day on which we celebrate Jesus' Resurrection. We go to Mass on this special day to give praise and thanks to God. It is the heart of the Church's life.

B. ORDINARY TIME: liturgical color is green for hope, growth, life.

1. Time in the winter between Christmas time and Lent.

2. Time in the summer and fall from Pentecost to the Feast of Christ the King.
3. Refers to ordinal, counted time.
4. Time to hear the Scriptures proclaimed inviting us to live out the mysteries of our faith and the message of the Gospels.
 - a. Cycle A - Gospel of St. Matthew
 - b. Cycle B - Gospel of St. Mark
 - c. Cycle C - Gospel of St. Luke

C. .ADVENT

(524, 1095)

1. Liturgical color is purple for preparation, sorrow for sin
2. Begins the Liturgical Year
3. Period of four weeks of preparation for the birth of Jesus, Christmas
4. Advent symbols
 - a. Advent Wreath
 - 1) The circle of greens reminds us that God has no beginning and has no end.
 - 2) There are four candles - three purple and one pink
 - 3) One candle is lit each week.
 - b. Jesse Tree

D. CHRISTMAS

(525-30, 563)

1. Liturgical color is white for joy, glory, innocence

2. Story of Jesus' Birth

Mt. 1:18 - 2:23

IV 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

August 23	St. Rose of Lima, Virgin
August 27	Memorial of St. Monica
August 28	Memorial of St. Augustine, Bishop and Doctor
September 14	Feast of the Triumph of the Cross
September 21	Feast of St. Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist
October 1	Memorial of St. Theresa of the Child Jesus, Virgin and Doctor (St. Therese, the Little Flower)
October 2	Memorial of the Guardian Angels
October 4	Memorial of St. Francis of Assisi
October 15	Memorial of St. Teresa of Avila, Virgin and Doctor

November 1	Solemnity of All Saints
November 2	All Souls Day
November 3	St. Martin de Porres, Religious
November 22	Memorial of St. Cecilia, Virgin and Martyr
December 3	Memorial of St. Francis Xavier, Priest
December 9	Blessed Juan Diego
December 27	Feast of St. John, Apostle and Evangelist
	Feast of the Holy Family (Sunday in the Octave of Christmas)

V PRAYERS

1. *The Hail Mary*
2. *The Hail, Holy Queen*
3. *The Rosary*
4. *The Angelus / Regina Coeli*

VI. MARY

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|----|-----------------------|--------|
| A. | EXAMPLE OF FAITH | (273) |
| B. | EXAMPLE OF HOLINESS | (2030) |
| C. | DAYS IN HONOR OF MARY | |

August 22	Memorial of the Queenship of Mary
September 8	Feast of the Birth of Mary
September 15	Memorial of Our Lady of Sorrows
October 7	Memorial of Our Lady of the Rosary
November 19	Our Lady of Divine Providence
November 21	Memorial of the Presentation of Mary
December 8	Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception
December 12	Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe

VII SACRAMENTALS (1667-79)

- A. SACRED SIGNS (1667)
- B. PREPARE US FOR GRACE (1670)
- C. HELP US TO COOPERATE WITH GRACE

Second Trimester

- I. GRACE** (2003-04)
 - A. FREE HELP OF GOD (1996)
 - B. GIFT OF THE SPIRIT
 - C. HELPS US IN OUR SPIRITUAL GROWTH

- II. SIN** (386, 1440)
 - A. ORIGINAL SIN (388-89)
 - 1. Definition Gen. 2:17, 3:1-11, (397-98)
 - 2. Effect Rom. 3:23, (399-402, 407-08)
 - B. PERSONAL SIN (1849-51, 1872-73)
 - 1. Mortal Sin (1855-59)
 - 2. Venial Sin (1862-63)

- III. CONSCIENCE** (1783-85)
 - A. DESCRIPTIONS (1776-85)
 - 1. Present in the heart of a person, it is a voice

deep within a person calling one to love
and do what is good and to avoid evil.

2. It judges particular choices. (1777)

3. It enables one to assume responsibility
for the acts performed. (1781)

4. One must always follow one's conscience.

B. FORMATION (1784)

1. A lifelong task

2. Assisted by the Holy Spirit (1785)

3. Guided by the Church

C. EXAMINATION (1454)

1. Preparation for any reception of the sacrament
of Penance

2. Daily reflecting on one's moral life in light of
the Scriptures (i.e., the *Ten Commandments*,
Beatitudes, etc.)

IV. LITURGICAL YEAR (1168-73)

A. LENT (1095)

1. Time of preparation for Easter

2. From Ash Wednesday to the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday
3. Liturgical color is purple for penance

B. HOLY WEEK

1. Palm Sunday Jn. 12:12-19
2. Triduum
 - a. Holy Thursday Mt. 26:26-35
 Mass of the Lord's Supper Mk. 14:22-31
Lk. 22:14-23
 - b. Good Friday Mt. 27, Mk. 15, Lk. 23

 Celebration of the Lord's Passion
 Liturgical color is red for the
 blood of Jesus shed for us.
 - c. Holy Saturday
 - d. Easter
 Sunset of Holy Saturday to sunset of
 Easter Sunday

V SAINTS, FEASTS, AND SPECIAL PEOPLE

Canonization - the declaration by the pope that a person is a saint, is now in heaven, and is worthy of veneration by all the faithful. (828)

Relic - Part of the physical remains of a saint or an object closely associated with a saint...

January 4

Memorial of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton,
Religious

January 5	Feast of St. John Neumann, Bishop
	Solemnity of the Epiphany (January 6 or the Sunday between January 5 and January 8)
	Feast of the Baptism of Jesus (Sunday after January 6)
February 2	Feast of the Presentation of the Lord
February 6	Memorial of St. Paul Miki and Companions, Martyrs
March 3	Feast of St. Katharine Drexel, Virgin
March 17	Memorial of St. Patrick, Bishop
March 19	Solemnity of St. Joseph
March 30	Thea Bowman, FSPA

VI. PRAYER

A. MODELS OF PRAYER

Examples of those who listened to God, acted on his Word,
and were blessed by God.

1. Old Testament (2568)
 - a. Abraham Gen. 12:4, (2570-72)
 - b. Moses Ex. 3:1-10, (2575-77)

2. New Testament	(2598)
a. Jesus	(2599, 2602)
b. Mary	(2617-22)
B. OUR FATHER	Mt. 6:9-13, Lk. 11:2-4, (2759)
1. Summary of the whole Gospel	(2761)
2. "Our Father"	(2786-87)

C. ASPIRATIONS

1. Short prayer invoking the name or title of a saint.
2. Common response: pray for us.
3. Example: *Our Lady of the Rosary, pray for us.*

D. OTHER PRAYER FORMS (See *Appendix on Prayer*)

1. The "Jesus Prayer"
2. Praying in Common (Choral Prayer)
3. Song and Gesture
4. Meditation

VII MARY

A. DAYS IN HONOR OF MARY

January 1	Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God
February 2	The Purification of Mary
February 11	Memorial of Our Lady of Lourdes

The Litany of the Blessed Virgin (See Appendix: Litany)

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, USCC, 1998, p. 7

Major Themes:

**The Life and Dignity of the Human Person
Call to Family, Community and Participation
Rights and Responsibilities of the Human Person
Option for the Poor and Vulnerable**

A. AWARENESS OF THE UNIQUE IMPORTANCE OF EACH PERSON

1. Celebrate each person's birthday, cultural and ethnic heritage
2. Write to a legislator about issues affecting the poor and vulnerable

B. RESPOND TO COMMUNITY NEEDS

1. Participate in parish and/or school collections:
food, clothing, toys, etc.
2. Connect with Archdiocesan Social Service Agencies

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

Third Trimester

I. JESUS CHRIST OUR REDEEMER

- A. REVEALS MEANING OF NEW COVENANT
- B. FULFILLS GOD'S PROMISES

II. THE BEATITUDES

Mt. 5:3-12, Lk. 6:20-26, (1716-17)

- A. THE HEART OF JESUS' PREACHING
- B. EXPRESS THE VOCATION OF ALL THE FAITHFUL
 - 1. Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
 - 2. Blessed are those who mourn,
for they shall be comforted.
 - 3. Blessed are the meek,
for they shall inherit the earth.
 - 4. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they shall be satisfied.
 - 5. Blessed are the merciful,
for they shall obtain mercy.
 - 6. Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they shall see God.
 - 7. Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they shall be called children of God.

8. Blessed are those persecuted for righteousness' sake,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

III. WORKS OF MERCY

A. CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY

Actions that show respect for the body as a temple of the Holy Spirit.

1. Feed the hungry.
2. Give drink to the thirsty.
3. Welcome the stranger. / Shelter the homeless.
4. Clothe the naked.
5. Visit the sick.
6. Visit those in prison.
7. Bury the dead.

B. SPIRITUAL WORKS OF MERCY

1. Teach the ignorant.
2. Give advice to those who need it. / Counsel the doubtful.
3. Comfort those who suffer.
4. Be patient with others. / Bear wrongs patiently.
5. Forgive those who hurt you.
6. Correct those who need it.
7. Pray for others.

IV.	VIRTUE	(1803)
A.	CARDINAL VIRTUES	(1805-09)
1.	Prudence	
2.	Justice	
3.	Fortitude	
4.	Temperance	
B.	THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES	(1812)
1.	Faith	(1814-16, 2088, 2098)
2.	Hope	(1817-21, 2091, 2098)
3.	Charity	(1822-24, 2093,2095)
V.	LITURGICAL YEAR	(1168-73)
A.	EASTER SEASON	(1168-69)
	Sunset of Easter Sunday to sunset of the Solemnity of Pentecost	
1.	Easter Sunday: liturgical color is white	Mt. 28:1-15, Mk.
	for joy, glory, innocence	16:1-8, Lk. 24:1-12, Jn. 20:1-10
2.	Ascension Thursday: liturgical color is white	Mt. 28:16-20, Mk. 16:19-20, Lk. 24:50-53, Acts 1:6-12

3. Pentecost: liturgical color is red
for the Holy Spirit

Acts 2:1-4

B. OTHER CELEBRATIONS

1. Trinity Sunday - Sunday after Pentecost
2. Corpus Christi (Body and Blood of Christ) - Sunday after Trinity Sunday
3. Solemnity of the Sacred Heart - Friday after the Second Sunday
after Pentecost

C. ORDINARY TIME: Liturgical color is green for hope, growth, life

VI. SAINTS, FEASTS, AND SPECIAL PEOPLE

April 29	Memorial of St. Catherine of Siena, Virgin and Doctor
June 3	Memorial of St. Charles Lwanga and Companions, Martyrs
June 22	St. Thomas More, Martyr
July 22	Memorial of St. Mary Magdalene

VII. MARY

A. APPARITIONS

1. Definition - an extraordinary, visible appearance seen by one or more persons. The authenticity of it is a matter for evaluation by the Church.

2. Principle Apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Banneux, Belgium - 1933

Beauraing, Belgium - 1932-33

Fatima, Portugal - 1917

Guadalupe, Mexico - 1531

Knock, Ireland - 1879

LaSalette, France - 1846

Lourdes, France - 1858

Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal, France - 1830

B. DAYS IN HONOR OF MARY

May 31	Feast of the Visitation
May (variable)	The Immaculate Heart of Mary
August 15	Solemnity of the Assumption

C. TITLES OF MARY

1. The Immaculate Conception - under this title Mary is patroness of the United States and the Archdiocese of Philadelphia

2. Our Lady - Notre Dame (French for "Our Lady")

VIII. PRAYER

A. PRAISE AND THANKS

1. "We come to you, Father, with praise and thanksgiving,
through Jesus Christ your Son."
(Eucharistic Prayer I)
2. "Father, it is our duty and salvation, always and everywhere
to give you thanks through your beloved Son, Jesus Christ."
(Eucharistic Prayer II)
3. "Father, you are holy indeed, and all creation rightly gives you praise."
(Eucharistic Prayer III)
4. "Father in heaven, it is right that we should give you thanks and glory,
you alone are God, living and true."
(Eucharistic Prayer IV)

B. CONTRITION

(1451-54)

1. Definition - sorrow for sin and
the intention of sinning no more
2. Most important act of the penitent in the
Sacrament of Penance
3. A gift of God and a prompting of the Holy Spirit (1453)
4. Act of Contrition

C. OTHER FORMS OF PRAYER

(See Appendix on Prayer)

1. Journal Keeping
2. Guided Meditation
3. Shared Prayer

IX	SACRAMENTALS	(1667-79)
A.	BLESSINGS	(1678)
B.	CONSECRATION	(1672)
	1. Things	
	2. People	
C.	INSTITUTED BY THE CHURCH	(1667)
D.	HAVE MEANING AND PURPOSE	(1668)
E.	SACRED SIGNS	(1667)
F.	PREPARE US FOR GRACE	(1670)
G	HELP US TO COOPERATE WITH GRACE	

X. 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."

Sharing Catholic Social Teaching Challenges and Directions, USCC, 1998, p. 4

Major Themes:

Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers
Solidarity of the Human Family
Care for God's Creation

A. AWARENESS OF THOSE WHO SUFFER

1. Participate in Operation Rice Bowl, the Bishop's Relief Fund and/or the Holy Childhood Association (HCA)
2. Encourage children to be conscientious about not wasting food and natural resources

B. AWARENESS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF WORK

1. Practice care of personal belongings
2. Show care of classrooms, school buildings, and parish grounds
3. Encourage respect for each one's responsibilities
 - a. At home
 - b. In school

United States especially in Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Maryland. As a priest and later as a bishop, he worked tirelessly to educate the members of the Church. He increased the number of parochial schools in Philadelphia, instituted the Forty Hours devotion, and constructed a cathedral. He died on January 5, 1860, was beatified in 1963, and canonized by Pope Paul VI in 1977.

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

Feast of the Baptism of the Lord
(Sunday after January 6)

February **2** *Feast of the Presentation of the Lord* Lk. 2:22-40
The Purification of Mary

February **6** *Memorial of St. Paul Miki and Companions, Martyrs*

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

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

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 peoples. 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, Bishop*

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

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

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*.