

PARENTS' GUIDE TO THE JUNIOR HIGH CATECHETICAL CURRICULUM GUIDELINES

Theme: To teach each young person how
to pray with Christ.

As Parents you are the first to nurture a love of God in your child. You introduce and model your faith for your child. We invite you to more fully understand what this year will bring to your child as they grow in their faith through the instruction they receive. In the Prayer component of the Junior High curriculum we hope to help each young person grow in their prayer life by exploring the fundamentals of prayer and introducing various methods of praying.

The Junior High curriculum guidelines have been organized to present a systematic, organic and comprehensive catechesis. At the backbone of the curriculum are the Six Tasks of Catechesis which are presented in the *National Directory for Catechesis*, the U.S. Catholic Bishops' directives for passing on the Faith. In the Junior High Curriculum the Six Tasks of Catechesis are presented in six units. Each unit focuses on one of the Tasks. Included in this pamphlet is a brief outline of the prayer component your child should be exposed to during this year. To find the complete curriculum guidelines for Junior High, including references to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Scripture, as well as vocabulary resources, visit <http://www.diocesefwsb.org> and look under the Office of Catechesis.

While Christ was on earth He formed His disciples by instructing them, praying with them, showing them how to live, and by passing down His mission to them. The *National Directory for Catechesis* has outlined Six Tasks that can best shape us in our Catholic Faith. All six Tasks are covered at the Junior High Level. Each grade level focuses on three of the Six Tasks. Below is a summary of information introduced in the Prayer component of the Junior High Curriculum:

SESSION ONE: INTRODUCTION TO PRAYER

- God desires to have a personal relationship with each person. He created in every human a longing and desire for Him.
- A great saint who lived hundreds of years ago stated, “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you. (St. Augustine)
- Prayer is communication with God. Praying is both thinking about God and allowing the heart to be moved by love for God. In all good relationships a person thinks a lot about another and has love for that person.
- Scripture helps us to understand that we have a covenant relationship with God. It speaks of a covenant relationship as having two commitments. God’s commitment is the first part of the covenant. The Old Testament affirms God is Lord of the Covenant. His love is steadfast, meaning He will always be faithful. The other part of the covenant is the person’s response of faith to know, love, serve and obey God. A person can accept or reject their part of the covenant relationship. It is their choice.
- Prayer can be private (personal) or communal. Private prayer means praying alone. Communal prayer is gathering together with others to pray. The Church calls us to pray as a community as well as in private.
- The worldwide community prays together through the Church’s Liturgical Year.
- The Liturgical Year is divided into seasons: Advent, Christmas, Ordinary Time, Lent, and Easter. Each season has its own liturgical color.

SESSION TWO: THE FORMS OF PRAYER

- There are various ways of expressing prayer as we grow in relationship with God. These are referred to as forms of prayer. They are adoration/blessing, petition, intercession, thanksgiving and praise.
 - Adoration and blessing acknowledge the great gifts God gives to each person through His revelation of love.
 - Petition is the form of prayer which asks God to grant requests. The Scriptures state: “Ask and you shall receive.” (Matthew 7:7)
 - Intercessory prayers ask God’s help for other people.
 - Prayers of thanksgiving are powerful and important prayers. A heart that is grateful gives thanks for all the blessings and goodness God gives.
 - Prayers of Praise recognize that God is the One who is above all others. This prayer expresses love for the God who IS.
- The greatest prayer of praise and thanksgiving is the celebration of the Eucharist, the Mass. The Church requires of each Catholic to participate by going to Mass each Sunday.

SESSION THREE: PERSONAL PRAYER

- Personal prayer is communication between God and each person which helps to nourish the person’s relationship with God.
- There are three common methods of prayer: vocal, meditation, and contemplation.
 - In vocal prayer the voice is used to say the words of the prayer, the mind is attentive to the words that are said, and the heart, stirred by love, becomes attentive to the mind.
 - Meditation is a form of prayer in which a person thinks about the truths of God. God is present to each person who is meditating on His truths.
 - Contemplation is the highest form of prayer. It is a peaceful being with God, a gift of love given by God to a person who chooses to be with Him through a loving personal relationship. A

person can prepare themselves for God's gift of contemplation. However, the person cannot produce contemplation by their own efforts but must receive it from God..

SESSION FOUR: CHALLENGES TO PRAYER

- Each person must make an effort to be faithful to prayer.
- To live in the Spirit of Christ we must pray to grow continually in virtues of love, kindness towards others; and standing up for what is true, good and God-like.
- There are many challenges to staying faithful to prayer. Young people who choose to develop talents in sports, music or other areas must develop a routine and be faithful to practicing so they become experts. It is the same with prayer. Through discipline a person should pray to God each day; morning before rising, and each evening before going to bed.
- Frequent reading of the Scriptures and the lives of the saints helps us to understand what being holy 'looks like'.
- We must have quiet prayer time with God in order to grow in our relationship with him.
- Another struggle in prayer is called dryness. Dryness may be also described as just 'not feeling like' praying. Even when a person feels this way they should fight against it and continue to pray.

SESSION FIVE: PRAYING WITH THE SCRIPTURES - *LECTIO DIVINA*

- A very special method of praying is using the Scriptures. The Scriptures contain God's very own revelation. The Church assures us that all the Scriptures are divinely inspired by God.
- 'Lectio Divina' is a Latin expression which means 'holy reading'. It has been practiced for thousands of years.
- There are four steps for Lectio Divina.
 - The first step is to read the Word of God (*lectio*).
 - The second step is meditation on the words one has just read (*meditatio*).
 - The third step is a prayer in which one turns the desires of their hearts towards what is good and what is of God (*oratio*).
 - The fourth step is simply being in God's presence quietly, knowing He created you, loves you and wants a personal relationship with you (*contemplatio*).
 - 'Actio' or action is a result of praying Lectio Divina. It is not a part of this way of praying but it is a fruit. The person who prays acts with greater charity in many ways.
- The Holy Spirit, the third person of the Blessed Trinity, is the Spirit of love. At Confirmation we receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit. We must pray to the Holy Spirit to make us strong in love and wisdom.

SESSION SIX: CATHOLIC PRAYERS AND DEVOTIONS

- Catholic prayers and devotions are pious practices of the Catholic Church. They assist people to grow in their life of faith and prayer. People choose various devotions for various times in their life.
- Of the many devotions that are popular, seven will be discussed in this session. They are:
 - Eucharistic Adoration: A very special devotion is the adoration of Christ out-side of the Mass.
 - Novenas: A novena is a special devotion of nine days of prayer.
 - The Sign of the Cross: This is a ritual gesture which honors the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.
 - Prayer to the Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit He brings God's grace to all people through the sacramental life, bearing the fruits of new life.
 - The Rosary: The Rosary is a powerful and popular devotion which focuses on the twenty mysteries of the life of Christ.
 - The Advent Wreath: The Advent Wreath is a popular devotion to begin the Liturgical Year of the Church.
 - Stations of the Cross: Each parish Church has the Stations of the Cross which take people through Christ's sufferings prior to his death and Resurrection.

VOCABULARY

Adoration	Communal Prayer
<i>Contemplatio</i>	Contemplation
Conversion	Covenant Relationship
Grace	Holy Father
Humility	Intercession
<i>Lectio</i>	<i>Lectio Divina</i>
Liturgical Year	Liturgy
Mass	<i>Meditatio</i>
Meditation	Messiah
Novena	<i>Oratio</i>
Personal Relationship	Petition
Praise	Prayer
Private Prayer	Rosary
Salvation	Thanksgiving
Vocal Prayer	Vocation