

Guidelines for Catechesis of Youth Grades 6 to 8

Approaching Ministry with Youth

In 1997, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops published a Renewing the Vision and update and reflection on the of the ground-breaking 1972 A Vision of Youth Ministry. Both of these documents emphasized the importance of a comprehensive approach to ministry with youth --a ministry that does not strictly focus on catechesis or community but on forming well-rounded disciples.

Parish ministry to youth should strive to include the following components:

Evangelization - to seek out conversion of the spirit to the Spirit of God.

Worship - to celebrate the sacraments with the youth and for them to engage in meaningful participation in the liturgical life of the community.

Catechesis - to share the rich heritage of our faith, of the Scriptures and the teachings of the Church.

Justice and Service - to provide opportunities for youth to serve the marginalized and poor and to empower them to strive for justice.

Pastoral Care - to offer guidance to youth on life issues, to be a message of healing in times of pain, to reach out to the most marginalized of young people.

Advocacy - to be aware of youth trends, needs of the local community, and to communicate these to others.

Leadership Development - to pass on skills for leadership and to provide youth with real opportunities to take leadership roles.

Community Building - to create a welcoming environment that promotes mutual support and fun.

These components need to be expressed in a variety of ministry settings: gathered events, non-gathered time, in the youth program, in parish life, in the home, and in the community at large.

In 1997 in an address at World Youth Day in Paris , Pope John Paul reminded the youth as he reminds us too:

As disciples and friends of Jesus, become agents of dialogue and collaboration with those who believe in a God Who rules the universe with infinite love; be ambassadors of the Messiah you have found and know in His “dwelling,” the Church, so that many more young people may be able to follow in His footsteps; their way lighted by your fraternal charity and by the joy in your eyes that have contemplated Christ.

Our approach to ministry to youth should be evangelical in nature, pastoral in implementation, celebratory in spirit, and witnessed by action.

Stages of Development of Youth Grades 6-8 and Implications for Catechesis

GRADE 6-8 YOUTH

- sees peer group identification and friendship as important
- has increased, yet still limited, attention span
- bases reasoning on possibilities, not only on experience
- tends to be self-conscious and self-critical
- is often idealistic, argumentative, and self-centered
- seeks limited independence and autonomy
- resolves dilemmas on the basis of expectations outside of self, such as peers, law, and significant adults
- desires active involvement and are open to doing service
- begins to define their own image of God and explore a personal relationship with God
- depends often on the community for the content and expression of their faith
- is sensitive to physical changes and confused over sexual identity

THE CATECHIST

- discusses relationships and is aware of dynamics within the class group
- provides various activities and discussion opportunities within each session
- challenges students to deal with the “what if..”
- does not engage in sarcastic behavior and strives to personally affirm each youth
- challenges youth to dialog on issues of justice and is not discouraged with black/white moral mentality
- provides opportunity for youth to take ownership in ministry program and in class sessions
- processes with the youth the formal moral teachings on the Church and the implications on their lives
- provides opportunities for real, hands-on service to Church and community
- discusses issues of God’s relationship with the youth and shares personal faith stories
- provides opportunities for youth to participate actively in the Liturgy and life of the Church
- provides structured opportunities for youth to discuss issues of sexuality, relationships, and morality

Word
Middle School Youth Grades 6-8

REVELATION

- God is so full of life and love that God is greater than any single image
 - God's presence is revealed by the Holy Spirit, in the events of our lives, through creation, Scripture, and human history.
 - God has no limits of time and space (Infinite).
 - Jesus is the supreme and complete expression/revelation of who God is.
 - God calls for us to respond as a community and as individuals in words and actions.
 - The Church's response in words is written in the Scriptures and in Church teaching.
 - The Church's response in action is in our worship and in our service to one another and the world.
 - Faith is our free response to God.
 - Faith and understanding of God must constantly grow.
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SCRIPTURE

- Scripture provides many images of God.
 - The Holy Spirit provided inspiration and guidance throughout the development of the Scriptures.
 - Major themes of the Hebrew Scriptures are creation, covenant, exodus, prophecy, prayer, and exile.
 - The key men and women in the Old Testament are Adam, Eve, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Moses, David, the prophets, etc.
 - The books of the New Testament are organized into the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles, and the Book of Revelation.
 - Major themes of the New Testament are God, discipleship, prayer, justice/peace, forgiveness, service, and the moral life.
 - The key men and women in the New Testament are the Apostles, Mary, Joseph, Mary Magdalene, Martha and Mary, Paul, and Timothy.
 - The writers of the Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, are called the Evangelists.
 - The Scriptures help us to understand our call to Gospel discipleship and to explore what following Jesus and living the Good News means.
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CREED

- God is a mystery to be explored not solved.
 - God is three Persons, Trinity, yet one Being, God.
 - God is very close to us and intimately involve in our lives.
 - God loves us unconditionally, is all-powerful, merciful, and just.
 - Jesus, The Holy Spirit, and God the Father have always existed.
 - Humankind is the climax of God's creative activity.
 - God, in the form of a human, Jesus, came to earth through the Virgin Mary and gave human form to God's compassion.
 - Jesus' passion, death and resurrection is the assurance that death and sin have been conquered.
(Redemption)
 - The Holy Spirit guides us as individuals and as Church.
 - The Church is the People of God, the Body of Christ.
 - The Church is to carry on the mission of Jesus until Jesus Christ come again.
 - The sacraments are visible signs of Christ's presence and have their origin in the actions and values of Jesus.
 - Loving God and our neighbor are key to living a life of grace.
 - We are responsible for our actions and for choosing right from wrong.
 - Mary's Annunciation and Immaculate Conception are important feasts and concepts for the Church
 - Saints are models of women and men living the Christian lifestyle.
 - We live the Pascal Mystery.
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Worship

Middle School Youth - GRADES 6-8

SACRAMENTS

- Sacraments celebrate the risen Christ acting in His Church to love, heal, and call us to change. (Conversion)
 - Through Baptism we are reborn, enter the Church, and our sins are forgiven.
 - Eucharist is the central celebration of the Church and the sign of our unity.
 - Real Presence is the term used to refer to the special sacramental presence of Jesus in the Eucharist.
 - During the Eucharistic Liturgy special symbols and gestures are used.
 - The Sacrament of Reconciliation is a celebration of conversion, healing, and rejoining expressing a need to forgive and be forgiven.
 - Through Confirmation we are sealed with the gifts of the Holy Spirit.
 - Marriage and Holy Orders are Sacraments of vocation which celebrate adult commitment and service.
 - Anointing of the Sick is the sacrament that strengthens those who are suffering from illness.
 - Catechumen is the term used to identify one who is preparing for the Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist.
 - The process by which unbaptized adults and children of catechetical age are initiated into the Catholic community is called the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA).
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PRAYER

- There are many styles of prayer within the Catholic tradition and several variations of each style.
 - Our image of God influences our experience of prayer.
 - We are called to pray continuously.
 - Formal prayers that all members of the Church should know are the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Glory Be, the Apostle's and Nicene Creeds, acts of contrition, Come Holy Spirit, and the Sign of the Cross.
 - Sometimes we have struggles with our ability to pray.
 - God listens to our prayers.
 - Each person needs to discover their personal prayer style.
 - Dance, singing, art, etc. can also be forms of prayer.
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LITURGICAL YEAR

- Sunday is our weekly celebration of Easter. It is the day of worship, rest, and community.
- The Church year is structured by liturgical seasons and feast days.
- The liturgical year starts with Advent.
- Advent is the four weeks of preparation before Christmas. It is time for growth in our understanding of Jesus.
- Christmas celebrates the Incarnation of Jesus, our Savior and Messiah!
- We celebrate that Jesus is God with us in the Paschal Mystery of His life, death, and resurrection.

- Lent begins on Ash Wednesday and is a forty day period of preparation for Easter.
 - Lent for the baptized is a time of change of heart through prayer, fasting, and works of mercy to help us become more fully Christian.
 - Lent for the RCIA elect/candidates is a time of intense spiritual formation.
 - Triduum is the three days during Holy Week that celebrate the passion and resurrection of Jesus. The days of the Triduum are Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday.
 - Easter Sunday is the “Sunday of Sundays” and the ultimate celebration of the resurrection of Christ. (CCC
 - Pentecost is celebrated 50 days after Easter and recalls the coming of the Holy Spirit.
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Community

Middle School Youth - GRADES 6-8

FAITH AND IDENTITY

- Faith is a gift.
 - Christ is the model of a completely faithful person.
 - Faith demands risk.
 - Faith is a way of looking at the world and how God interacts in it.
 - Faith involves a relationship with God and an expression of this relationship.
 - God reveals God's self in our everyday lives.
 - Faith is an ongoing process of conversion.
 - Doubt is a natural part of faith.
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PERSONAL GROWTH

- Each person is born with the right to be treated with dignity and respect.
 - Each person is a unique creation of God and is loved.
 - Each person is called to live a life of holiness.
 - Our talents and gifts are given to us to be shared for the service of others.
 - We are challenged to replace our fears with God's love.
 - God calls us to be the best person that God has created us to be.
 - We can learn to respond to struggles and problems in light of the Gospel.
 - There are skills for handling negative pressure.
 - The desire to be loved and to love is a deep-seated and natural yearning.
 - Human sexuality is a divine gift, a blend of spirit and body that shares in God's creative love and life.
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RELATIONSHIPS

- Relationships are part of everyone's life.
 - Responsible relationships are developed with an emphasis on honest, love, and respect.
 - Our sexuality, as distinct from sexual activity, is an innate force that can draw us out of ourselves into loving relationships.
 - There are many different kinds of relationships present in the Christian community
 - There are factors that mark healthy and unhealthy relationships.
 - Responsible relationships involve honesty, love, and respect.
 - Relationships can be enhanced through active listening, self-disclosure, and learning to communicate effectively with peers, family, and other adults.
 - Jesus models healthy relationships through His life of service and teaching.
 - There is value in modesty and chastity.
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CHURCH

- The Church is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.
 - The Church is a community of people who share the same faith and sacraments, and are united in the Holy Spirit under the leadership of the Pope and the other bishops.
 - The Church, the People of God, is called to be God's presence in the world.
 - Canon Law is the official code of law use for governance within the Roman Catholic Church.
 - The Church is continually in need of change and renewal.
 - The Church is global and multicultural.
 - The Church has been and continues to be influenced by the Jewish tradition and other major Christian traditions.
 - The Church has been formed and changed by many events in history.
 - The Church lives out its mission through community, prayer, teaching, evangelization, proclamation, service, and the seeking of justice
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Discipleship

Middle School Youth – GRADES 6-8

JUSTICE AND PEACE

- Jesus proclaimed freedom for all.
 - The Scriptural vision of life includes a commit to justice, peace, equality, and stewardship.
 - We are called to conversion, and to live the vision, values, and lifestyle of the reign of God.
 - We are called to recognize injustices in our communities and in our world.
 - We are called to respect just authority that supports human rights and seeks to change structures that oppress people.
 - Social justice draws its strength from Scripture, worship, prayer, and the People of God.
 - Respecting dignity of the human person includes all issues that concern the sacredness of life in all its forms; eg, abortion, violence, discrimination, poverty, healthcare, euthanasia, etc.
 - We are called to care for God’s creation and to live as good neighbors in the world community.
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MORALITY

- The basis for moral decision-making for a Catholic includes a well formed conscience, an understanding of sin, and a desire of reconciliation.
 - Conscience formation is a life-long process requiring development of skills for resolving moral dilemmas.
 - To develop a well-formed conscience a person must:
 - ✓ study Scripture, the law of God, and Church teaching.
 - ✓ apply these teachings to daily life.
 - ✓ consider the consequences of the choices we make.
 - ✓ pray for guidance from the Holy Spirit.
 - ✓ act in accordance with our formed conscience.
 - Mature persons take responsibility for their actions.
 - Temptation to make selfish choices is not sinful. Deliberately choosing to make selfish choices is sinful.
 - Sin is primarily concerned with deliberately damaging relationships, not breaking laws.
 - Mortal sin involves deliberate choices which are so serious they are capable of destroying our relationship with God and others, because our freedom has the power to make some choices forever, with no turning back.
 - Venial sin refers to sins which weaken our relationship with God and others.
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CHRISTIAN LIFESTYLE

- Each of us is called to a particular lifestyle.
- Gospel values help us make personal, social, political, and economic choices.
- Learning to think independently is a necessary step toward adulthood.
- Skills for effective conflict resolution can be developed.
- Jesus’ life of service and teaching show us how to live a life of loving service to others.
- Serving others is an essential element of discipleship.
- Christian lifestyles include single people, married people, vowed religious brothers/sisters, and ordained deacons/priests/bishops.
- As Church we all have the mission to witness, worship, build community, and serve as Jesus did.

Vocabulary Words for Youth Grades 6-8

The following definitions are found in Our Sunday Visitor's Catholic Dictionary. See bibliography for details. This is not an exhaustive list.

Advent - The liturgical season approximately four weeks before Christmas during which themes of expectation and conversion prepare the faithful for the remembrance of Christ's birth.

Annunciation - The announcement by the angel Gabriel to Mary that she will conceive a son Who will be the Son of God.

apostolic - rooted in the Apostles, ones who represent the Sender with authority.

Canon Law - the official body of laws by which the Church is governed.

Catechumen - someone who is receiving formal instruction in the Catholic faith, with a view to reception into the Church.

catholic - (with a small "c") universal

Conscience - the inner core of the human person that identifies morally good and evil choices in accord with right reason and the teachings of the Church.

Conversion - (in the Christian context) an embracing of Jesus Christ and a disavowal of whatever keeps one from God.

Discipleship - (in the Christian context)

Epistles - a type of letter (see the correspondence of Paul, Peter, John, etc.)

Evangelists - one who proclaims the Gospel; common reference to the Gospel writers, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

Holiness - one of the four marks of the Church, arises from the communion of faithful members under the Headship of Christ.

Immaculate Conception - The doctrine affirming the Blessed Virgin Mary was free from all stain of Original Sin.

Incarnation - The doctrine that the Son of God assumed our humanity, body and soul, and was born of the Virgin Mary, to live among us in order to accomplish the work of our redemption.

Infinite - having no limits or bounds.

Lent - the forty day liturgical season of fasting, prayer, and almsgiving in preparation for Easter.

Liturgical Year - the year of the Church, starting with Advent, Christmastime, Ordinary Time, Lent, Easter Season, and Ordinary Time again.

Mortal Sin - a violation of the law of God that concerns grave moral matter, is done with full knowledge, deliberation, freedom, and consent, and concerns serious moral transgressions and not light insignificant issues.

Paschal Mystery - the passion, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ.

Pentecost - the day on which the Holy Spirit was poured out onto the Apostles; the liturgical celebration of that event 50 days after Easter.

RCIA - Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults; process by which adults are received into full communion with the Catholic Church. There are four stages: pre-catechumenate (inquiry), catechumenate, election, final initiation.

Real Presence - reference to the actuality that Christ is truly present in the Eucharist.

Redemption - the deliverance of humanity from sin and the restoration of grace due to the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Reign of God - the Kingdom of God; the salvation that has come with power and might, which we are to witness in the final days.

Stewardship - the management of the physical and spiritual things which are to be used and administered responsibly, because all things ultimately belong to God.

Triduum - a period of three days for the most exalted liturgical celebration of the year beginning with the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday evening and concluding with Vespers on Easter Sunday.

Trinity - the central doctrine of the Christian faith which states that the one God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Three Persons sharing one nature.

Venial Sin - a violation of the law of God that concerns a light moral matter or is done without adequate knowledge, full consent, or adequate freedom.