

GRADE 6

Religious education is an essential and integral part of the life and culture of a Catholic school. Through it, students are invited to develop the knowledge, beliefs, skills, values and attitudes needed to build a relationship with God and community through the person of Jesus Christ. Religious education shares the same goals and objectives set forth for all good education, that is, the growth and development of the whole person in all his or her dimensions—physical, intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual.

Religious education has four essential characteristics.

- It is **Trinitarian**. It recognizes God as the creator of all things who gives us Jesus. It is Jesus who reveals God to us, and in turn reveals God's Spirit, through whom we understand our faith and live Christian lives.
- It is based on **Sacred Scripture** through which we hear the mystery of God revealed, the call to be in relationship with God and each other, and also use as prayer.
- It is based on the **life experience** of the students through which they are invited to discern signs of God in their daily lives.
- It is presented within the tradition of the **Catholic faith community** which, based on Church teachings, sacramental and liturgical life, provides students with experiences of faith, prayer, love and justice.

With an awareness of the uniqueness of each student's life experience and a recognition that religious development takes place through a process of stages and within a community, it is expected that program presentation will vary from place to place to meet the diverse learning and religious formation needs of all students.

The Religious Education Program for elementary and junior high schools is authorized by the Bishop of the local diocese. Some school districts have developed supplementary resources and adapted the program to better meet local needs.

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The content of the Grade 6 Religious Education Program is the moral life of young Christians. Based on the Bible, the general aim of the program is to explore how young Christians, rooted in the Christian tradition, are witnesses of God's justice and love.

Students explore these themes through the study of 10 units:

Unit 1

"You are my friends."

The students are invited to discover God's love in our friendships. They are encouraged to recognize God as our source of light and how they (the students) are lights to others. They learn that Christian moral life is based on love and that by good relationships they create a moral world.

Unit 2

"I love you with an everlasting love."

The students explore how others come to us as the image and likeness of God and how this evokes a moral response. They meet the prophet Moses and explore the image of God as liberator. They learn that Christians are called to reverence God's Holy Name and to respect the names of others.

Unit 3

"I shall be your God; you shall be my people."

Students reflect on the meaning of covenant and what a covenant relationship implies. The ten commandments are explored with emphasis on how they are like a light for us on the path of life. The students learn how Jesus summarized the Ten Commandments.

Unit 4

"God so loved the world."

Students discover how the covenant with God is kept—or not kept. They celebrate Advent, as a time of hope, through ritual. They meet the prophet Isaiah as a prophet of hope. The students learn about those who kept alive the hope of salvation; about Mary, the bearer of God's promise and about how Jesus is the fulfillment of the promise.

Unit 5

"I am the way, the truth and the life."

The students reflect on Christmas as a celebration of God's abundant love and how the new covenant is revealed in Jesus. They also examine global relationships and issues of justice and injustice. Students are encouraged to find ways to respond and accept the challenge of justice.

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Unit 6

"Love your enemies."

The students examine justice issues through the Beatitudes. They explore ways of living the Beatitudes to reveal God's kingdom.

Unit 7

"What you do to the least of my brothers and sisters."

The students explore Lent (the Christian's journey to Easter) as a time of prayer, fasting, almsgiving and a time of covenant renewal. Students learn that, by engaging in the corporal works of mercy, they meet Christ in the poor.

Unit 8

"No greater love."

The students, by exploring the events of Jesus' passion and death, remember His forgiveness and discover what it means to forgive and to seek forgiveness.

Unit 9

"Do not be afraid."

The students celebrate the risen Lord and identify the ways that Jesus is present among us. They reflect on the sacraments of initiation: Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist.

Unit 10

"You shall be my witnesses."

The students explore what it is to be a moral witness in the power of the Holy Spirit and the practical application of this in their lives. They research the "witnessing" of saints and modern day martyrs and saints in our midst. They also learn how to prepare a celebration of the Eucharist.

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The school, through the Religious Education Program, complements parents in their role as primary and principal educators of their children. Home and family play a vitally important role in the faith development of children. Within the family, seeds of faith are planted. Family relationships and daily experiences are major factors in shaping a child's values, attitudes and Catholic identity. Regular religious practice and the application of classroom learning to daily life are critical parts of religious formation.

Prayer is an integral part of the Religious Education Program and of each school day since intimacy with God is the ultimate goal of Catechesis. Respecting the individual differences of children and our changing human needs, prayer is experienced in many different ways: silent reflection, guided imagery, scriptural prayer, song and formal community prayer. As we enter into prayer we give praise and thanks for God's loving presence, and call upon the Spirit to guide, nourish and empower our lives through Jesus Christ.

Teaching the sacraments occurs within the Religious Education Program. Sacraments celebrate the presence of Christ in our lives. They are effective signs that make God's grace present to us in love, healing and the transformation of our lives. Eucharist and Reconciliation are an essential part of each child's religious formation and a necessary grounding for a mature faith. As with many basic themes, Eucharist and Reconciliation are introduced in Grade 2, but continue to be deepened and intensified in each year thereafter. Children who have not yet celebrated First Communion or First Reconciliation are always welcome to contact their parish to begin their immediate preparation for the sacraments.

The Religious Education Program interprets for the students what the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches about our faith in a manner appropriate to the age and development of the students. Not everything in the Catechism is incorporated because, as the Catechism itself points out, what is taught must be adapted to the "differences of culture, age, spiritual maturity, and social and ecclesial conditions among all those to whom it is addressed" (#24). Specific excerpts are quoted at the end of each theme for the teacher to help root the contents and activities of the theme in Church tradition.

The Religious Education Program is structured around the Church liturgical year. This enables students to live and express faith in an integrated way at school, at home and in the parish community.