

GRADE 7

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 themes of the Grade 7 program follow the scriptural themes of Creation, Revelation, Covenant and Redemption in Christ. The students are invited to reflect on the first two articles of the Apostles' Creed as the summation of the faith that has been handed on to us through the Church. They study the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures (Old and New Testaments) as the call to become co-creators with God in the responsible stewardship of creation. They learn of God's call to a Christian lifestyle of creedal faith in a praying and sacramental community.

Furthermore, from the study of women and men of faith, by the power of the Holy Spirit, they are invited to become faithful witnesses of Jesus Christ. Opportunities are provided to highlight the Catholic liturgical seasons of Advent and Lent in the context of their scriptural roots.

Students explore these themes through the study of 10 units:

Unit 1

I . . . We.

Students are invited to formulate, explore and express their identity in relationship to the larger faith community. They study the basic structure of the Bible and how to locate passages. They are invited to reflect on the Bible as the story of the Christian community and its relationship with God. They reflect on Scripture in history and study the key events in the history of Israel.

Unit 2

We believe in God.

Students explore and express the meaning of believing, and what it means to believe in God. They reflect on Abraham as an example of a person whose whole life was shaped by trust and belief in God. They hear of God's faithfulness to people as it is revealed in the story of the Exodus.

Unit 3

We believe in God the Father Almighty.

Students investigate the personality of God as parent. They are invited to appreciate that God's love goes far beyond human limitations and yet learn how fatherhood and motherhood help us understand God. They are invited to see the Ten Commandments as a call to live life rooted in respect for self, for others and for God. They learn about formation of conscience and of a three step decision-making model—observe, judge, act.

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Unit 4

We believe in God . . . the Creator of heaven and earth.

Students consider the wonder of creation and the ways in which God invites us to participate in creation and in God's creative action. They reflect on God as creator, read the biblical version of creation, and are invited to understand the relationship between biblical stories, science and history. They are invited to consider that to know and accept other people, they must accept their sexuality, their maleness or their femaleness, their physical gifts and limitations.

Unit 5

We believe in Jesus Christ his only Son.

Students explore what makes Jesus believable, and the ways the faith community identifies Jesus. Students consider the significance of the many titles for Jesus—Rabbi, Priest, Lamb of God, Prophet, Messiah, Son of David, the Nazarene, Saviour, Son of Man, Lord, Son of God. They are invited to reflect that through his actions, Jesus reveals God's care for us. People who encounter Jesus change. As a New Testament people we are likewise challenged to change.

Unit 6

We believe in Jesus . . . Our Lord.

Students explore the nature of the kingdom of God and what it means to be part of that kingdom, and so address Jesus as Lord. In reflecting on the parables and on the 'Our Father' they are invited to understand that the kingdom is Jesus' call to a way of life based on loving relationships.

Unit 7

We believe in Jesus . . . who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.

Students explore the ways in which God is with us in Jesus, in which God works with us, and in which we can work with God. They reflect on Mary as an example of one who hears the word of God and responds to it with her whole heart. They are invited to see Jesus as fully human and fully divine, and as the model of holiness. They study the geography and history of Jesus' homeland, Israel.

Unit 8

He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended to the dead.

Students are invited to name the ways in which they give of themselves and make connections to the suffering and death of Jesus. They are invited to reflect on the meaning of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross and on how they can participate in Christ's sacrifice at the Eucharist. They are invited to consider Jesus' descent among the dead as signifying that the message of salvation is for all people in all times and all places.

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Unit 9

On the third day he rose. He ascended into heaven.

Students are invited to name the hope which the resurrection of Jesus offers even during the most difficult moments of their lives. They are invited to reflect on experiences of resurrection. They consider the resurrection as the offer of new life in the face of death. They are invited to understand that Jesus can be heard in the Scriptures and seen in the blessing and breaking of bread.

Unit 10

He is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

Students are invited to name the ways in which Jesus judges, and to understand that judgement is a call to be whole. Students reflect on conversion, heaven, hell, purgatory, repentance and true goodness.

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As a result of participation in this program, students will:

- demonstrate a familiarity with and an ability to retell key biblical narratives that illustrate God's faithful relationship with a chosen people and the community's response to this relationship
- express connections between the relationships described in biblical events and their own life experiences
- show reverence for Scripture as God's living Word
- define human dignity and express its significance in Christian faith and practice
- name the articles of the Apostles' Creed as a summary expression of the Christian community's relationship with God and articulate some of the meaning of each article
- communicate their faith in ways that show a genuine understanding of the Apostles' Creed
- describe how the Creed is a summary of the faith community's understanding of who God is
- explain how the Creed calls them to make responsible choices and decisions in their everyday lives
- analyze (critique) events and personal decisions in light of a commitment to follow Jesus
- describe the relationship between real-life situations and the baptismal commitment to follow Jesus in the community of the Holy Spirit
- outline the ways that prayer deepens a relationship with God
- pray, using a variety of prayer styles
- participate in traditional forms of Catholic prayer.

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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.