

## HIGH SCHOOL

Within the context of Catholic high schools, the program of studies in all of its aspects—content, the teaching process, and the total school environment—reflects the values of faith, hope, charity, forgiveness and justice as found in the gospels and the message of Jesus Christ as understood by the Catholic Church.

In Catholic high schools, there are many opportunities for integrating gospel values and nurturing the presence of God in our midst within the curriculum. Teachers will determine where religious values and church teaching can be integrated within each course.

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.
- 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 we learn how to pray.
- 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.

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### **Religious Studies 15–25–35:**

#### **Alberta Youth Search for Meaning**

This Religious Studies program was written by the Catholic Religious Studies teachers in response to the needs of students in Alberta Catholic high schools today. The program “Alberta Youth Search for Meaning” is approved by the Bishops of Alberta and is in compliance with the teachings of the Catechism of the Catholic

Church. The curriculum strives to engage students in the search for meaning through three major themes: belonging, believing and relating. The program further addresses the study of specific topics through four “windows of authenticity”: truth, goodness, the spiritual, and religious community.

#### **Religious Studies 15—Christ in Culture**

The overall aim of the program is *to assist young persons with the help of the gospel, to participate as Catholics in the shaping of our culture.* *Christ and Culture* brings Canadian culture into conversation with Christ for young people. It explains the terms and concepts of such a conversation. How can such a conversation between the person of Christ and culture take place? What are the partners in the conversation? What are the ways that we converse? Why is such a conversation helpful?

To explore this dialogue, *Christ and Culture* focuses on three key elements:

- the human being—the student who enters into the dialogue
- culture and the things that shape culture in Canada
- the person of Christ as he is present and active among us and in us today in the power of the Holy Spirit.

#### **Religious Studies 25—Believing**

Young people search to find answers about themselves, others and God. The beliefs that adolescents hold will greatly influence the choices they make in the future.

This course is intended:

- to explore how believing is integral to human living
- to study the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) and Christian Scriptures (New Testament) as the source of our Judeo- Christian faith
- to recognize the importance of Christ’s message in the Gospels and how that message challenges us to bring about the reign of God.

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### **Religious Studies 35—In Search of the Good**

The aim of *In Search of the Good* is to assist young people to understand themselves as moral persons living the way of Christ through and examination of ethical theories, the revelation of sacred Scripture, and the experience and teaching of the Catholic Church. This aim is grounded in the broader aim of catechesis to foster our students' faith, so that it may be living, conscious and active as they examine how, as Catholics, they may contribute to the good life with and for others in a just society.

The aim of *In Search of the Good* is met through these six units:

- mapping the ethical experience
- guided by the light of Revelation
- discovering the good life
- gifted with freedom
- proclaiming justice and mercy
- building a civilization of love.

### **Resource-based Program**

Teachers will make use of a variety of approved resource books to assist in the delivery of the program. The Program Outline for each grade provides references to specific texts that can be used to teach a particular objective or topic. Throughout the province, variation in student texts will occur, although the course content is consistent in all Catholic high schools. The Catechism of the Catholic Church is a primary resource for teachers and interpreted for students in a manner appropriate to their age and development.

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)

### **Time Allotment**

Each component of the (RS 15–25–35) high school program is designed to be taught as either a 3-credit or a 5-credit course, as outlined on pages 39, 60 and 81 of the *Alberta Youth Search for Meaning* May 2006 program.

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### **The Study of Other Religious Traditions**

Approval of the high school Religious Studies program is granted by Alberta Education. An essential criterion for approval of locally developed Religious Studies courses is that at least twenty percent of each course addresses issues that extend beyond the specific religious tradition reflected in the program. Since the Catholic tradition is inclusive and respectful of other religious traditions, it is appropriate that a religion program in Catholic schools attend to the religious experience of other major world religions. "Alberta Youth Search for Meaning" addresses the religious traditions other than Catholic in an integrated way.

### **Assessment and Marking**

Religious educators distinguish four different aspects of learning:

- knowledge of material,
- critical thinking and interaction with the material,
- individual acceptance of the material as meaningful,
- actual incorporation into one's personal life.

Religion teachers strive to achieve all four outcomes, recognizing however, that some lend themselves to evaluation and grading better than others. Teachers will clarify for themselves what it is that they are marking and how they arrive at the grades. They will clearly and explicitly inform the students how they will be graded. Students will be reassured that their grades are not a function of their belief or disbelief, or of their agreement or disagreement with the teacher on controversial questions.

### **Family Dialogue and Participation**

The school, through the Religious Studies program, complements parents in their role as primary and principal educators of their children. At the high school level, home and family continue to play a vitally important role in the faith development of young adults. Within the family, seeds of faith have been planted and continue to be nurtured. Family relationships and daily experiences continue to be major factors in shaping the young adults' values, attitudes and Catholic identity. Regular religious practice and the application of classroom learning to daily life are a critical part of religious formation. The school assists families through a variety of opportunities throughout the years to engage in prayer, liturgy, community service and retreats.