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What to Expect from Catholic Schools:

For someone who is new to the Catholic school system, an understandable question is what makes the schools Catholic?

There is much that distinguishes the Catholic schools which students and their families can readily observe. Some of these distinctive features are obvious:

- Religion classes which are outlined in this document
- Prayer services (liturgies of the word and mass) at key points in the school year (opening, Thanksgiving, closing) and liturgical calendar (Advent, Lent, Easter)
- Religious symbols, posters, icons, art work et cetera
- The names of the school that tie into our faith tradition and understanding
- Prayer at key times and events (over the intercom or in the classroom)
- One-day or overnight retreats that supplement what is done in religion classes
- District wide and school-based faith related professional development days for all staff
- Our high schools have teaching, lay chaplains and we have a chapel in two of our high schools
- A full time religious education consultant
- A well funded faith formation program for all staff to take courses on mostly Catholic theology, scripture, and morality

In addition to the above items are the following critically important dimensions of Catholic schools:

- Teachers strive to integrate their faith with their teaching and interactions with everyone. A faith conviction that each child and person's dignity comes from being created in the image of God is promoted throughout Catholic schools. Our school division's vision statement of "Seeing Christ in Everyone" challenges us to embrace every person as someone of immense worth and potential. The Biblical values of respect for the common good and justice for all are guiding principles that those working in our schools are encouraged to adopt.
- Teachers work towards giving witness to their Christian faith by sharing their faith journeys and leading students in prayer and a life directed to the needs of those who are oppressed or destitute.
- God, who we meet most fully in Christ, is proclaimed in word and deed according to the ability of each person working in our division to do so.
- Schools actively work at connecting with the parishes by attending mass at the church or having parish priests visit the schools.

- Many of the schools support the sacramental preparation done at home and through the parishes by having retreats on the themes related to reconciliation and confirmation.
- All of our schools examine how they can improve the way they live out and give expression to their Catholic identity.

We see our homes, schools, and parishes as interconnected entities working together to teach, live, and celebrate the good news of Jesus Christ. The school system, then, needs the children enrolled in our schools and their families to support the Catholic values, beliefs and activities mentioned in this document. Our publicly funded Catholic schools are an immense treasure: they support our children on their faith journeys and help their families and parishes lead them with and to Christ.

We hope you find this information useful and should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call your child's teacher, the principal, or the Division Religious Education Consultant (449-6455).

The following pages provide a brief but detailed summary of what is taught in our religion classes.

Kindergarten Catholic Handbook for Parents

Spiritual Development

A young child's way of being "religious" is to play, to be creative, to be curious, and to express wonderment. Through these natural childhood activities children explore traces of God, the "marks" of God present all around them as they grow, learn and experience life. The essence of children's spirituality is their response to life.

In the uninhibited excitement that Kindergarten children feel toward nature, they are drawn toward a loving Creator. Their experiences of God are "sensed" through touching, smelling, tasting, seeing and hearing, rather than through intellectual explanations.

Young children come to know Jesus through their experiences of seeing people valued and celebrated. They recognize themselves first, and then their families, friends and classmates as made in God's image. Later, they are able to experience Jesus as the perfect image and likeness of God.

In a Catholic school, the spiritual development of a child in Kindergarten occurs through activities that are affective, to support positive feelings toward themselves and others; and sensory, to relate directly to the good things that God has created.

What do children learn in Kindergarten?

Early childhood is a significant period in human development. It is the time when children begin to develop independence, initiative, decision-making ability, creativity, early literacy and numeracy skills, the ability to learn, the ability to relate to others, verbal communication skills, and feelings of self-worth! What young children learn at this stage will have a major impact on successful learning experiences in school, on personal development and on future participation in society.

Young children begin all this important learning in a variety of environments—in their homes, in day care programs and in the community. Children arrive in Kindergarten from diverse backgrounds and with a variety of experiences.

In a Catholic school, children are affirmed and encouraged as they make their own journey toward God and greater participation in the Church.

Religious education crosses all the six learning areas described in the *Kindergarten Program Statement*.

Religious Education

The Kindergarten religion program, "In God's Image," consists of 8 modules containing 33 themes that can be sequenced by the teacher to best respond to the particular needs and interests of each class.

The "Me" module celebrates the child through such topics as feelings, senses, capabilities, needs and family. The "Earth Times" module celebrates the wonder of the earth through activities related to the seasons. The "Community" module celebrates caring through discussion, by making friends and by helping. The "Changes" module invites children to experience support and comfort at such times as the birth of a sibling or moving to a new house. The "Plants" and "Animals" modules celebrate creation through activities with trees, flowers, bugs, pets and other animals. The "Special Days"

module suggests activities for celebrating such events as birthdays, Mother's Day and Father's Day. The "Church Times" module is a sequential set of lessons that invite children to celebrate the Christian story as it unfolds through Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter.

"In God's Image" uses the existing special moments and experiences of young children and affirms their religious importance. Throughout the day, the children are encouraged to see "traces" of God in all of their experiences.

Grade 1 Catholic Curriculum Handbook for Parents,

Religious Education

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.

With an awareness of the uniqueness of each student 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.

The Grade 1 Religious Education Program invites students to explore their belonging to God who is introduced as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The students study what it means to belong to the tradition, faith and

community of God's people—the Church. They are introduced to the Bible—God's written word—which identifies Jesus of Nazareth as the witness of God who shows us the way to God.

Students explore these themes through the study of 10 units:

Unit 1

Welcome! You belong.

In experiencing and celebrating belonging, the students identify with their friends and together discover that they belong to God and the Christian community. Each person is valued as belonging to God's family.

Unit 2

Jesus welcomes us.

The students reflect on Jesus as someone who loves children, tells us that we are his friends and experience him as a wonderful storyteller.

Unit 3

We hear the story of God through Jesus.

The students explore the Bible as the treasured story of God which binds us together in the Christian family. They are invited to reflect on God through Jesus' story of the Good Shepherd, and see Jesus teach us how to pray. They visit our community church.

Unit 4

God dwells among us.

The students are invited into the season of Advent with a sense of waiting and discover how God chose Mary to give us Jesus. They listen to the story of the Annunciation, learn the 'Hail Mary' and celebrate Advent.

Unit 5

I'll always be with you.

In the stories of Christmas and Epiphany, the students explore how close God is to us and how God cares for each of us and for all of creation. They are invited to reflect on Jesus as our light and life.

Unit 6

Hallowed be your name.

The students are invited to reflect that God calls each of us by name, and we call God by name. They look to Jesus who shows us how to talk to God and learn the 'Our Father'.

Unit 7

Your will be done.

The students are invited to reflect on a meal as an experience of belonging where we share food, stories and ourselves. They see that Jesus shared meals with his friends and that he included everyone. They explore Lent as a time to live like Jesus and so prepare for Easter.

Unit 8

We belong to God's family.

The students discuss how Jesus invites us to become more loving, and

that it is difficult to love sometimes. They consider that in trying to love fully they will need to receive and give forgiveness. They learn the 'sign of the cross' which shows we belong and reminds us of Jesus' love for all people.

Unit 9

The Holy Spirit gathers us into God's circle of friends.

The students are invited to reflect on Easter as the celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus and his new life. They consider that through baptism we share in the life of Jesus and celebrate our belonging to the family of God.

Unit 10

We are born of the Spirit.

The students explore how the Holy Spirit is the life of God within us, and how through baptism we belong to one another and to God. They discuss how together we praise and thank God as part of the Christian family, the Church.

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 1, 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.

Grade 2 Catholic Curriculum Handbook for Parents

The Grade 2 Religious Education Program invites students to explore their relationship with Jesus through the Celebration of the Eucharist (the Mass). The students reflect on the four main parts of the Celebration of the Eucharist—the Gathering, the Liturgy of the Word, the Liturgy of the Eucharist, and the Sending Forth.

Students explore these themes through the study of 10 units:

Unit 1

Let’s be friends!

Through enjoying being together, the students share stories of friendship, discover the joy of having friends, and strengthen the ties of friendship by preparing and celebrating a friendship party.

Unit 2

Let’s come together.

The students reflect on belonging to their own family, and to the family of the Church. They focus on experiences of greeting, especially during the Celebration of the Eucharist. They reflect on their belonging to the Lord Jesus as experienced during the ‘Gathering’ part of the Eucharistic Celebration and remember that they belong to God and the faith community through Baptism.

Unit 3

Let’s treasure God’s word.

The students are encouraged to develop a listening attitude to the Word of God, to experience Jesus Christ as Word, and to celebrate that Jesus is God’s Word revealed to us.

Unit 4

Let’s treasure God’s presence.

The students are invited to celebrate Advent as an invitation to respond to God’s Word as Mary did, to rejoice in God’s presence among us, and, in listening to John the Baptist, hear the invitation to change our hearts.

Unit 5

Let’s treasure God’s gift.

The students are invited to treasure the gift we have in God’s Word, enter into God’s story given to us in the Creed, and explore the

community's prayer in the 'General Intercessions' at Mass.

Unit 6

Let's take.

The students are invited to appreciate that God's gifts of the created world are intended for all God's people, that at the Celebration of the Eucharist we give thanks to God for these gifts, as well as for the work of human hands. At the Sunday assembly we take all to the Eucharistic table and celebrate this.

Unit 7

Let's bless.

The students see that during the Liturgy of the Eucharist we praise, honour and thank God for what God has done in creation, what God has done in our midst, and explore how the Holy Spirit acts in the Eucharist.

Unit 8

Let's break.

The students explore the meaning of the 'Our Father' as our request for daily bread and reconciliation. They are invited to enter into the suffering and death of Jesus as bread broken, to recognize the call to serve others, and to listen to the invitation to feast at the table of the Eucharist.

Unit 9

Let's eat and drink.

The students explore the joy of the Easter story, reflect on Jesus' abiding presence and how he gathers us, feeds us, and invites us to be 'bread' for others.

Unit 10

Let's go forth.

The students explore the meaning of the 'dismissal rite' and what it is to be 'sent forth' at the conclusion of the Celebration of the Eucharist. They are invited to remember the joy of being together and to treasure belonging to the risen Jesus.

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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.

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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.

Grade 3 Catholic Curriculum Handbook for Parents

The Grade 3 Religious Education Program invites students to explore their belonging to God in the community of faith, the Church. The students study the Church as the people of God gathered in the Spirit of the Lord Jesus. They reflect on the Church as a visible expression of God's Spirit among us, as a community which gathers those who follow Jesus to express and celebrate faith in him, and, to live and act through his Holy Spirit.

Students explore these themes through the study of 10 units:

Unit 1

We welcome and gather in the Spirit.

The students welcome one another, get acquainted, begin to create their classroom environment and gather their hopes and dreams for the year. They reflect on God's dream of gathering people into one family. The students celebrate and savour that dream.

Unit 2

The Holy Spirit gathers and feeds us at Eucharist.

The students deepen their experience of gathering and focus on the Eucharist as the central act of gathering the Christian community. They

begin to see the eucharistic action as the activity of the Holy Spirit working toward God's dream of gathering all people into "one body, one spirit, in Christ". The students engage in the preparation and celebration of the Eucharist.

Unit 3

The Holy Spirit calls and anoints us in Baptism and Confirmation.

The students reflect on the Eucharist and on their membership in this assembly of God's people. They explore Baptism and Confirmation as ritual celebrations of their initiation into Christ. As they explore these they begin to recognize that the sacraments of initiation call and empower everyone to serve others.

Unit 4

The Holy Spirit comes upon Advent people.

The students are invited to experience the true meaning of the season of Advent. Through ritual, symbol and story they enter into the hopes and expectations of the season, to better understand the meaning of God's coming among us, and to see how Jesus continues to come into our lives today. The students celebrate the hope of God's dream to gather all people together into Christ.

Unit 5

The Holy Spirit dwells in Jesus.

The students are invited into the mystery of Christmas and the celebration of God's dwelling among us. They begin to explore the activity of the Holy Spirit in Jesus' ministry and how this power of the Spirit helps Jesus to accomplish God's dream.

Unit 6

The Holy Spirit dwells in the followers of Jesus.

The students explore how Jesus, filled with the Holy Spirit, begins the gathering of God's people through the calling of men and women as disciples. They are invited to see the working of the Spirit in the new community called the Church. The students enter into the stories of people who are witnesses to the actions of the Spirit in our time.

Unit 7

The Holy Spirit fills the whole earth.

The students are invited to see all of creation as Spirit filled and to recognize the role and responsibility of human beings in caring for God's creation. As "images of God" they see that what they do can make a difference. They are invited to praise and bless God for creation.

Unit 8

The Holy Spirit reconciles people.

The students explore the experience and reality of evil, and the activity of the Holy Spirit as the power that makes reconciliation and forgiveness possible in our world. They reflect on Jesus' understanding of forgiveness, and on their own readiness to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation. They reflect on the love of God as shown in the Passion of Jesus and how this love heals our sin and division.

Unit 9

The Holy Spirit gives new life.

The students savour the Easter feast and enter into the mystery of new life in the Spirit. They hear about people who have experienced the power of Jesus' resurrection in their lives and begin to see how that "new life in the Spirit" is witnessed in the actions of people.

Unit 10

The Holy Spirit is alive.

The students are invited to enter into their participation of the great gathering of God which is the Church. They gather with the community to listen to God's word and recite the Creed, symbolizing who we are in Christ.

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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 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 1, but continue to be deepened and intensified in each year thereafter. Children who have not yet celebrated First Communion or First Reconciliation are encouraged to contact their parish to begin their immediate preparation for the sacraments.

Grade 4 Catholic Curriculum Handbook for Parents

The Grade 4 Religious Education Program explores the experience of the Church handing on the Good News of Jesus in the written Gospel. Through the Gospel stories of those people who encountered Jesus, we

explore the meaning of Jesus Christ for us today. In the Gospels we hear the invitation given by the Holy Spirit to be disciples and friends of Jesus. The tree stump is used as a symbol of Jesus to evoke many meanings throughout the program.

Students explore these themes through the study of 10 units:

Unit 1

The Church hands on the Good News.

As a new school year begins, the students experience the joy and enthusiasm of new beginnings. They enter into the story of the first Christian community through the Pentecost story. The students receive the gospel book and begin to learn how to use it. They begin to develop reverence for the Bible as the word of God.

Unit 2

The Good News about Jesus Christ.

The students hear how the first Christians were attracted to Jesus, how they came to understand who Jesus is, and how the Gospels came to be written down, and how the Holy Spirit keeps alive the memory of Jesus through the Church.

Unit 3

Jesus tells us about the reign of God.

The students meet Jesus the story teller, entering into and enjoying the parables: the Sower, the Pearl of Great Price and the Good Shepherd. Through these parables they hear about the reign of God and are invited to wonder and delight in God's unconditional love, especially as seen by people past and present.

Unit 4

A light shines in the darkness.

Through the message of John the Baptist the students explore their experiences of darkness and light. Advent is celebrated as a season of longing and waiting for the great light: Jesus Christ, God-with-us. The Jesse Tree introduces the ancestors of Jesus and invites the students to be rooted in the life of Jesus.

Unit 5

Jesus, "born of a woman."

The students celebrate and explore the humanity of Jesus through Mary and Joseph, Simeon and Anna. They reflect on the uniqueness of Jesus' relationship with God. The students explore the Jewish heritage of Jesus and begin to appreciate that, as a Jew, he was deeply shaped by his people's customs, culture and encounter with God.

Unit 6

Jesus reveals the compassion of God.

The students are invited to see and hear the healing, preaching and prayer of Jesus through which he reveals to us the power and compassion of God. They reflect on our call to participate in the building of the kingdom of God.

Unit 7

Jesus says, “I am the Way.”

Through Jesus’ conversations with Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, and Philip, the students are introduced to new life and rebirth in Baptism and the Holy Spirit. Story and symbol evoke in the students trust in the action of the Holy Spirit and the desire of God to immerse each of us in love.

Unit 8

Jesus gives his life for us.

The students are invited to deepen their understanding of the death of Jesus as an act of forgiveness and love through the stories of the Last Supper and the Way of the Cross. They reflect on the Eucharist as an invitation to live a life of love and service.

Unit 9

“My Lord and My God.”

The students share the joy of the disciples while reflecting on the meaning and mystery of the resurrection of Jesus. They come to recognize Jesus in our midst and see how we share the life of the Trinity.

Unit 10

Jesus’ Spirit is with us.

The students discover how Jesus continues to transform and affect our lives through the power of the Holy Spirit. They recognize that through Baptism and Confirmation we are empowered by the Spirit of Jesus and in faith we are invited to continue the mission of Jesus.

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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, ritual action, song and formal community prayer. The experience of classroom celebrations is an important component of the Grade 4 program. 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 1, 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.

Grade 5 Catholic Curriculum Handbook for Parents

The Grade 5 Religious Education Program seeks to assist students in understanding more fully what the Church does as it gives witness to Jesus in the Spirit. It focuses on how the Church is a gathering, a communion of people from all nations in and through the Spirit of God. In the Church, the Lord Jesus is visible, active and present in the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus rekindled the hope and vision of God's chosen people, and the Church continues the ancient promise of God to gather and assemble a community of believers.

Students explore these themes through the study of 10 units:

Unit 1

The Church proclaims the Good News.

The students recognize that we are made and chosen by God and are called to lasting friendship with Him. They reflect on God's dream to gather all people as one. We are called by the Spirit into community and are gathered in the name of Jesus.

Unit 2

The Church believes in the Lord Jesus.

The students explore the Acts of the Apostles and see the development and growth of the early Church. They discuss and learn the steps of Christian initiation—Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), baptism, confirmation and eucharist.

Unit 3

The Church celebrates God's mighty deeds.

The students are invited to deepen their sense of belonging to the

community of praise. They explore the structure of the eucharist, plan a eucharistic celebration and are invited to celebrate the eucharist.

Unit 4

The Church expects the coming of the Lord.

The students experience the season of Advent as a season of hope through Isaiah, John the Baptist and Mary. They learn to pray with Mary and the Church.

Unit 5

The Church welcomes all nations.

The students celebrate Epiphany as God calls all people of all nations. They hear God's call in Scripture through Abraham, Moses, Ruth, Naomi and Jonah. They learn about the Church in Canada and in their own diocese and parish.

Unit 6

The Church acts justly.

The students discover what it means to act justly—to respect and be of service to others, to respect all of creation and to have compassionate regard for the disadvantaged.

Unit 7

The Church reconciles.

The students explore the Church as an agent of God's reconciliation in the world. They explore the concepts of the mystery of evil, sin and temptation. Through prayer and activity, the students reflect on Lent as preparation for Easter. They explore the relationship of baptism and eucharist to reconciliation and learn about the sacrament of reconciliation.

Unit 8

The Church loves.

The students look at how God's love is active in the Church, and they reflect on the Church's mission as one of love and service. Through parables and stories of Jesus' miracles, they discover how Jesus reveals God's love. They deepen their understanding of the Chrism mass, the passion of Jesus, the Easter Triduum and the sacrament of Holy Orders.

Unit 9

The Church rejoices.

The students reflect on what it means to be an Easter people and celebrate the risen Jesus through sign, symbol and story. They explore the sacraments and rites of the Church. Through story and research, they discover the work and life of Canadian martyrs and how Canadians have been changed by the risen Lord.

Unit 10

The Church witnesses.

The students explore the structure and marks of the Church. Through the missionary journeys of Paul, they reflect on the Church's witness to God's gracious purpose and love throughout the world. The students

celebrate their being sent forth as Church.

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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.

Grade 6 Catholic Curriculum Handbook for Parents

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.

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.

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.

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Grade 7 Catholic Curriculum Handbook for Parents

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.

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.

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.

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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Grade 8 Catholic Curriculum Handbook for Parents

Building on the scriptural themes of Grade 7, the Grade 8 program focuses students' attention on the person of Jesus Christ, revealed as the fullness and perfect image of God. The students reflect on the last part of the Apostles' Creed which is studied as the summation of the faith that has been handed onto us through the Church. They study key aspects of the Sacraments and reflect on the Ten Commandments.

They are invited to a meaningful life based on gospel values and morality, a call to hope and personal faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Through a study of the various forms of prayer and sacramental celebrations, students are encouraged to make life-affirming choices as a response to Jesus' invitation to live a life of love and service.

Students explore these themes through the study of 8 units:

Unit 1

We believe in the Holy Spirit.

Starting with the story of Pentecost the students deepen their understanding of the mystery of the Holy Trinity and the action of God in their lives. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit all are empowered to live the Gospel call to love and service.

Unit 2

We believe in the holy Church.

The students are invited to broaden their understanding of holiness and sacrament, and to deepen their awareness of God's presence in signs, symbols and ritual. They study the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation) as calling and empowering us to live in holiness and the Sacraments of Healing (Anointing of the Sick and Reconciliation) as signs of hope and wholeness in the midst of pain, confusion and brokenness.

Unit 3

We believe in one Catholic and Apostolic Church.

The students explore the unity and diversity of the Church. They reflect on the primary mission of the Church to share in the love of the Trinity and by examining different models of the Church come to better understand the richness of its diversity. As members of an apostolic Church the call to love and serve others is lived out and expressed in the Sacraments of Marriage and Holy Orders.

Unit 4

We believe in the communion of saints.

The students examine what it means to live as part of a community, identify those who are part of the community of saints, and reflect on the Christian attitude toward death. Through stories of saints the students are invited to reflect on God's love for them and their call to live the Gospel challenge even in the face of difficulty and hardship, realizing that ultimately each person is called to be a saint!

Unit 5

We believe in the forgiveness of sins.

The students are introduced to the Ten Commandments in terms of the challenges they pose for their lives today. Sin is seen as an abuse of the freedom that God gives us, weakening our love for God and one another and impairing our growth towards wholeness. Conscience is likened to a navigation chart that helps us to do the right thing as we go through life, with the grace of the Sacrament of Reconciliation making it

possible for us to re-orient our lives toward God.

Unit 6

We believe in the resurrection of the body.

The students reflect on the human body as a precious gift from God and on their responsibility to care for their body since the way they treat their body affects their relationships with God and with others. In studying the Catholic teaching about responsible sexual conduct the students discuss appropriate and inappropriate expressions of love and affection. The sacrament of Marriage is presented as the context for total, lifelong and life-giving sexual love. Using Gospel stories which touch upon the issue of suffering, guidance is given to help students evaluate attitudes toward suffering and identify Christian ways of responding to pain.

Unit 7

We believe in life everlasting.

The students examine and appreciate the goodness of all creation and express a growing sense of responsibility for stewardship of the earth. By identifying some of the causes and results of violence within their own community students evaluate their attitudes toward violence and seek ways of being peacemakers and agents of justice for all especially for the weak and powerless. The question: “Do I live justly?” is explored by illustrating the relationship between poverty and excess consumption, and discovering how daily decisions about lifestyle affect the global community.

Unit 8

Amen.

The students review the Creed in its entirety examining it as both a statement of who we are and who we are called to become as followers of Jesus. Their “amen”, their “yes”, is both personal and communal and is made possible, reinforced, and lived out, in their participation in the Eucharist. While examining the flow of the Eucharistic liturgy the students discover the purpose and value of each part of the liturgy in relation to their faith and their lives.

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
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Grade 9 Catholic Curriculum Handbook for Parents

.The Grade 9 program assists young people in understanding both the joy and the demands of following in the way of Christ and living out the faith that our community professes in the Creed. Using the Beatitudes as a touchstone, young people are invited to examine the attitudes and actions that characterize the Christian life. They are encouraged to understand and nurture within themselves the virtues which will enable them to deepen their relationship with God in and through Christ in the context of a spirit-filled community.

Students explore these themes through the study of ten units:

Unit 1

Be with Me.

The students will examine the qualities of relationships. They will identify ways that the Beatitudes help us to understand the distinctive Christian attitudes that shape wholesome relationships. The Ten Commandments and Beatitudes are seen as stepping stones that show the way to true happiness and friendship with God and others.

Unit 2

Be Alive.

The students are invited to deepen their appreciation for the gift of life, and as they become increasingly aware of their gifts and abilities through the mystery of the Incarnation. Jesus affirms the dignity of every person and the sacredness of the human body. The 5th Commandment underlines the sacredness of human life from the moment of conception to the moment of death. Emotions are a gift that help us to relate to God and others. Our faith guides our expression of emotion so that we relate to others in a responsible and loving way. “Blessed are the peacemakers.”

Unit 3

Be Faithful.

The students are introduced to the virtue of faithfulness as an attitude that encourages them to involve God in their lives. The 1st and 2nd Commandments are seen as a call to love and respect God above everything. The students will deepen their understanding of prayer as a lived relationship with God, and the 3rd Commandment as a call to “stop and pray.” They will describe and demonstrate a variety of forms of prayer and articulate the different ways God responds to prayer. “Blessed are the poor in spirit.”

Unit 4

Be Loving.

The students will explore the Christian dimensions of love within the context of popular notions of love. They will analyze ways they love others and articulate what it means to be loved and to love unconditionally. They will review and apply a decision-making model, define conscience, and name its role in moral decision making. Within the context of the 6th Commandment as a protection for the sacred bonds of committed love, the students will explain how sexuality helps them to love, identify acceptable Christian expressions of love, and analyze sexual issues in relation to the virtue of chastity. They will identify signs of manipulative, coercive and abusive behaviours in relationships and demonstrate an understanding of the assertiveness skills necessary for developing and maintaining healthy relationships. “Blessed are the peacemakers.”

Unit 5

Be Obedient.

The students will explain and interpret the 4th Commandment as it applies to families and identify the roles, duties and responsibilities that are shared within Christian families. They will recognize legitimate authority within various sectors of society: school, civic community, Church, and identify, explain and affirm their respective duties.

Unit 6

Be Just.

The students will identify social justice issues and use the preferential option for the poor as the criterion for analyzing issues of injustice. They will demonstrate an understanding that Christian justice is rooted in love, mercy and compassion. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. The students will also evaluate their lifestyle in terms of its ecological impact and identify the correlation between their relationship with God and their relationship with others and the earth. “Blessed are the meek.”

Unit 7

Be Honest.

The students will define stewardship in terms of respect for the goods and property of another. They will identify the balance between the right to own and the requirement to share. The students will explain the role of truthfulness in relationships and recognize God as the source of absolute truth and they will evaluate their own behaviour in light of the 7th and 8th Commandments.

Unit 8

Be Generous.

The students will understand how Jesus models a generous attitude toward others and enables us to rejoice in our own and in other’s good fortune, happiness and blessing. They will define pure of heart, modesty and envy, comparing and contrasting common attitudes in society with the 9th and 10th Commandments. These commandments will be used as a tool for critical reflection on career and life skills planning. “Blessed are the pure of heart.”

Unit 9

Be Forgiving.

The students will define forgiveness, examine the ways Jesus models forgiveness, and identify areas in their life where they are called to forgive. They will understand reconciliation, give examples of how it restores and heals relationships, and explain how the Church enables and facilitates reconciliation. “Blessed are the merciful.”

Unit 10

Be Hopeful.

The students will understand hope and its role in Christian living and explore the ways that prayer nourishes hope. They will identify people who model Christian hope and examine the 1st Commandment as a call to place all our hope in God. A review of the Virtues and Beatitudes that underlie the Christian lifestyle will culminate in a celebration of faith. “Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven.”

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Senior High Catholic Curriculum Handbook for Parents

Religious Education

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.

Religious Studies

15–25–35: Alberta Youth

Search for Meaning is the program used for Religion 25 for now and for Religion 35 for one more year. 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. Religion 15 now uses the Canadian Catholic Conference program *Christ in Culture*.

Religious Studies 15—

Christ in Culture

Christ in Culture brings Canadian culture into conversation with Christ for 15 and 16-year olds. It explains the terms and concepts of such a conversation. *Christ in Culture* focuses on three key elements:

1. The human being—the student—who enters into the dialogue.
2. Culture and the things that shape culture in Canada.
3. 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.

Religious Studies 35—

Relating

Humans are relational beings and it is often through our relationships that we find meaning in life. The way that young people relate to the world is often shaped by a variety of sources, some of which are life giving and others which are destructive. Regardless, young people continue to search for ways that will bring them into relationship with self, others and God. This course is intended:

- to assist students in their realization of relating as a fundamental human activity
- to acknowledge the spiritual dimension of human relationships
- to explore how sacraments deepen our relationship with the Creator and how we are called to live out our Christian vocation.

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 (RS 15–25–35) of the high school program is designed to be taught in 75 instructional hours. Districts wishing to increase credit offering to 5 credits may do so by including a service component, a retreat experience, and/or by expanding the study of objectives and topics.

Alternative Delivery of Religion Program

Because it is resource based, this program allows for imaginative and creative opportunities for providing students with a variety of learning experience. Districts may wish to be creative, as well, with scheduling and delivery methods in presenting the program.

The Study of Other Religious Traditions

Accreditation for the high school Religious Studies program is granted by Alberta Learning. An essential criterion for accreditation of locally developed Religious Studies courses is that at least twenty per cent of the program 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 traditions, Christian and otherwise. "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, and 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.