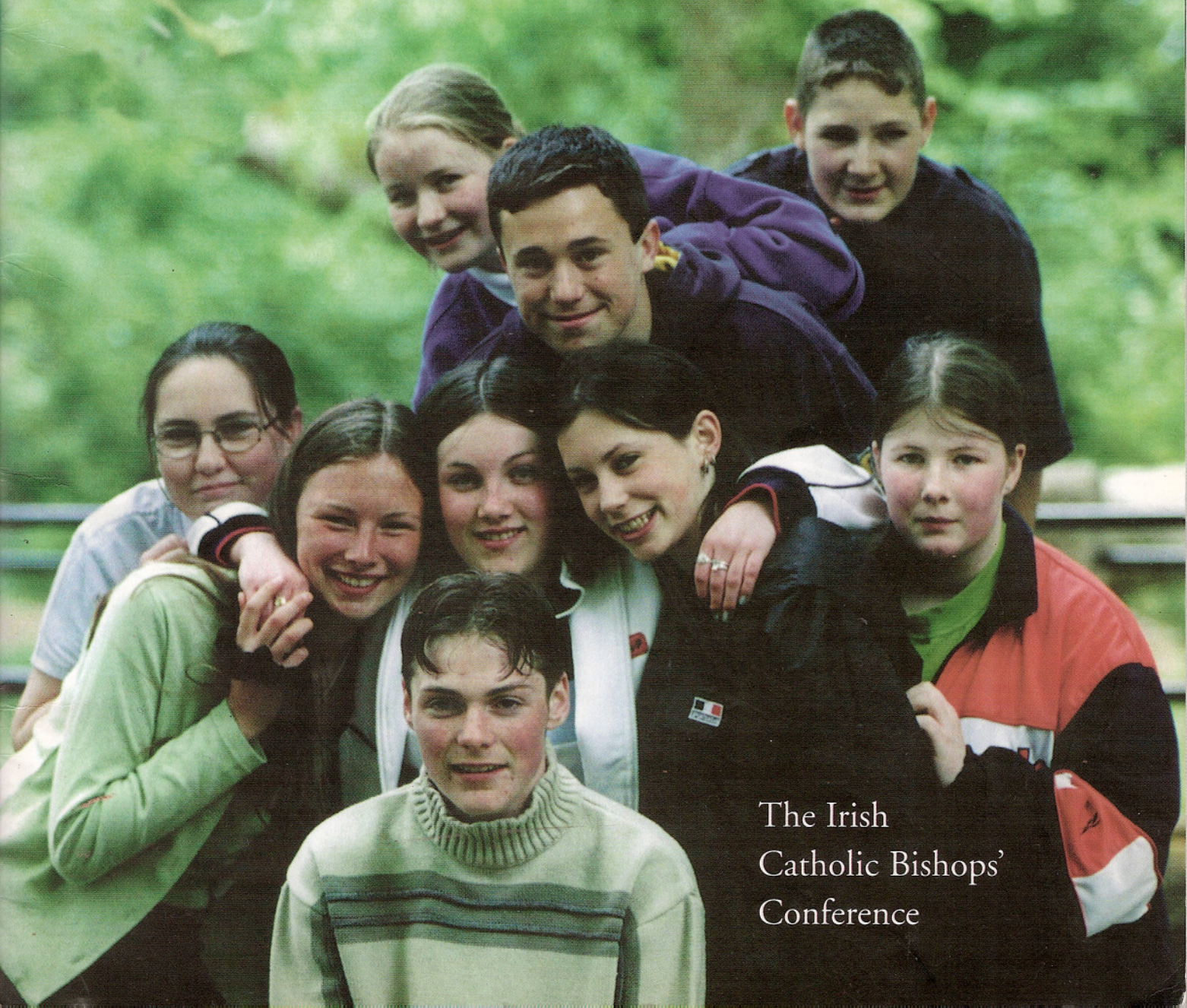


Guidelines for the Faith Formation and Development of Catholic Students

Junior
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Education
Syllabus

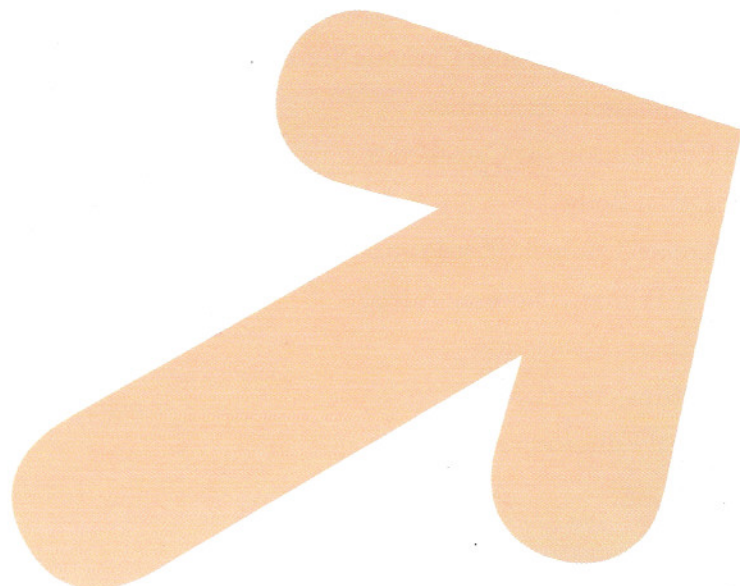


The Irish
Catholic Bishops'
Conference

Guidelines for the
Faith Formation and
Development of
Catholic Students



Junior Certificate Religious Education Syllabus



The Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference 1999

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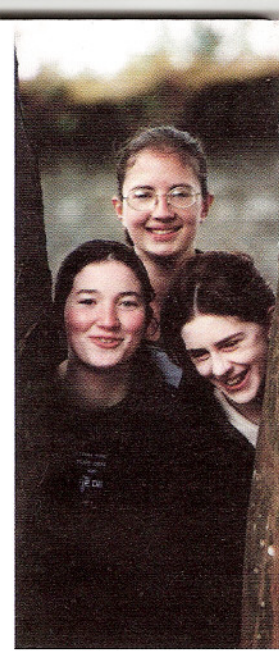
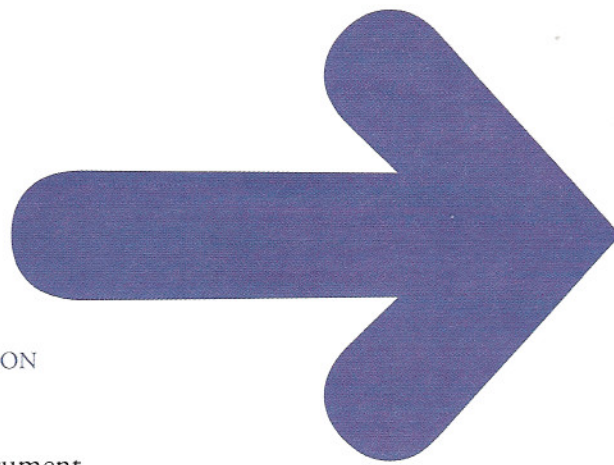
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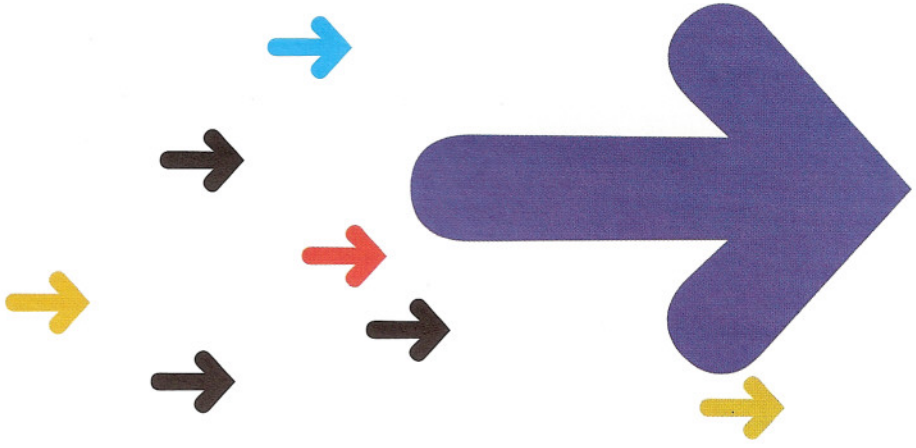
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Principles of Faith Formation

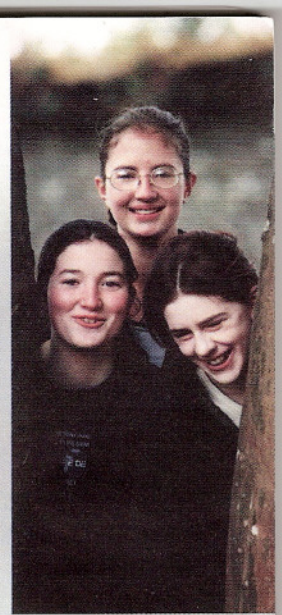
1. Introduction

As we celebrate the third millennium of the birth of Jesus Christ, it is timely to engage in reflection on the nature and purpose of our faith as Catholic Christians. At the same time we enter into a spirit of mutual understanding, trust and respect with other Christian Churches and the different faith traditions. Such reflection is undertaken in order that future generations may also have cause to celebrate the light of faith during the third millennium and beyond. We welcome the initiative taken by The Department of Education and Science to introduce a syllabus for the religious education of second-level students in Ireland. The syllabus, intended for certification and assessment, drawn up by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, allows flexibility in regard to the actual presentation of its content according to particular Christian denominations and faith traditions. It is for this reason that the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference (hereafter Conference) sets out guiding principles for the implementation of the State syllabus with respect to the religious education of *Catholic* students.

In the Ireland of today, the context within which religious education takes place has changed. The economic growth of recent years, the rapid development of information and communication technologies, the globalisation of culture and society and changing patterns of personal and family life have all had, and continue to have, a significant impact on the lives of adults and young people alike. As a result, the education of adolescents has become particularly complex and challenging. All those involved in religious education have to face the challenge of presenting the Gospel in the light of this new context. This offers new and exciting possibilities for religious education.

The educational aims of the syllabus make it clear that an understanding and critical appreciation of the moral, spiritual, religious, social and cultural values which are, and have always been, appreciated in our society, should form part of the educational experience of every young person. All of these factors show the necessity of reflecting on the religious education of Catholic students. The opportunities, therefore, afforded by the syllabus for the study and reflection of the Christian traditions, major world religions and other perspectives in life are most important. The introduction of the syllabus now means that valuable time given to the study and exploration of religion can be rewarded and certified nationally. It is also a recognition of the dedication, professionalism and ongoing commitment of teachers of religion in post-primary schools.

Recent developments in Irish education such as the renewed emphasis on educational partnership, and in particular the role of parents, have contributed to the need for greater reflection on religious education at post-primary level. Partnership and shared responsibility are the kernel of a renewed catechetical vision of the home, school and parish community working together in support of the young person's journey towards maturity of faith. In a time of declining religious practice, a partnership of commitment and affiliation between school and community is of the essence. The school community cannot and should not be expected to carry the responsibility for faith formation and development entirely on its own. Without such partnership, catechesis, in its fullest sense, is not possible.



2. The Purpose of this Document

The purpose of this document is threefold:

- a) to offer support to the partners in education who have the responsibility of leading students to a maturity of faith in Christianity according to Catholic teaching.
- b) to provide opportunities for the faith formation and development of students following *The Junior Certificate Religious Education Syllabus*, who are being presented for State certification and assessment.
- c) to facilitate the faith formation and development of students following the syllabus but who are not being presented for State certification and assessment.

In this way the partners in education will enable the students:

- to become aware of their own identity and worth as human beings who are created in the image of God and are in need of redemption from sin.
- to develop an awareness of the spiritual dimension of human life, of the mystery of God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit as understood in the Trinitarian concept of Catholic teaching and revelation.
- to interpret the events and experiences of life through a better understanding of what it means to be a Catholic Christian.
- to learn by guidance and example how better to express their relationship with God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.
- to deepen their sense of belonging to the Church; to participate more fully in the Church's liturgy and life, prayer, worship and retreats.
- to acquire the virtues of the Christian life through social justice issues based on praxis, by developing a sense of solidarity with others in the service of humankind.
- to have ever greater respect for, and appreciation of, Sacred Scripture and to act in accordance with the values of the Gospel by bringing its truth to the world.
- to understand the teaching of the Church and its relevance to the questions, problems, aspirations and hopes of the modern world.
- to understand and appreciate faith perspectives other than their own and the values and beliefs of those who do not espouse any religious affiliation.¹



1. Irish Episcopal Commission for Catechetics (hereafter, Commission), *A Syllabus for the Religious Education of Catholic Pupils in Post-Primary Schools* (1982), p. 4.

3. Religious Dimensions of Education

According to the document, *A Syllabus for the Religious Education of Catholic Pupils in Post-Primary Schools*, the principal agents of religious education are home, parish and school. Catholic education² begins and is nurtured in the home, it is taught and fostered by the school, and it lives and matures through the parish. The school cannot take the place of the home, the teacher cannot take the place of the parent and the parish cannot take the place of either. Therefore, communication, co-operation and consultation between home, school and parish are of the essence if the partners in religious education are to be effective in proclaiming the *Reign of God*.³ The 'general aim of religious education is to awaken people to faith and then to help them throughout their lives to deepen and strengthen that faith'.⁴ This means that there is a collective responsibility for the partners concerned to maintain and support the formative process for Catholic students. For these reasons also, the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference requires continued consultation when any future proposal to amend the syllabus is considered.

According to the *General Directory for Catechesis*, every believer has a right to receive adequate catechesis:

All the baptised, because they are called by God to maturity of faith, need and have therefore a right to adequate catechesis. It is thus a primary responsibility of the Church to respond to this in a fitting and satisfactory manner.⁵

The Directory also acknowledges that in the transmission of the faith there is a diversity of methods used in catechesis. (This may or may not be done with a view to students sitting examinations):

Catechetical methodology has the simple objective of education in the faith. It avails of the pedagogical sciences and of communication, as applied to catechesis, while also taking account of the numerous and notable acquisitions of contemporary catechesis.⁶

Catechetical method should be considered within the context of three criteria: a) fidelity to the Word of God, b) fidelity to the teaching of the Church, and c) fidelity to the person being taught. This means that the content of catechesis should be Christ-centred while the method of teaching should be student-centred. Following the command of Christ, 'Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples...' (Mt 28:19), the partners in religious education are called to communicate the living mystery of God to their students. As well as being knowledgeable in their own faith, they must be living witnesses of the Gospel and be able to set an example of Christian practice for those in their care. Scripture, tradition, liturgy, the sacraments, prayer and retreats are all normative practices for the Church community. These are also integral to the religious education of students in school and should be fostered in every way possible in Catholic education.

2. This document is concerned primarily with Catholic Religious Education.

3. The phrase *Reign of God* is more appropriate in the modern context than the phrase *Kingdom of God*.

4. Commission, *A Syllabus for the Religious Education of Catholic Pupils in Post-Primary Schools* (1982), p. 4.

5. Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis*, par. 167, English translation, p. 181.

6. Ibid, par. 148.



4. Partners in Education, Diocesan Advisers

This document is also intended for all those who are partners or partner bodies in education, such as boards of management, management bodies, chief executive officers, trustees, principals, diocesan advisers, religious education co-ordinators, catechists, teachers of religion, chaplains, parents' associations, retreat teams, pastoral ministers, Church leaders and anyone who is involved in, or who has responsibility for, religious education in second-level schools. Also, those publishers who intend to produce texts and resources for the religious education of Catholic students are required to keep the contents of this document in mind.

A key function of the Diocesan Adviser's role is to inform religion teachers of the programmes, venues and availability of places of all in-services or relevant courses in religious education whether they concern the State syllabus or not. Diocesan Advisers should keep themselves informed of provisions being made both in State syllabi and in religious education in general. They should be in a position, at all times, to advise the principals, boards of management and teachers of the schools for which they have responsibility of impending changes, information, theological and catechetical programmes and updates in these areas as they come on stream.

5. Ecumenism and Inter-Faith Dialogue

The dialogue that takes place among Christian communities is generally referred to as ecumenism. Similarly, dialogue is taking place between Christian Churches and non-Christian religious communities and this is usually referred to as inter-faith dialogue. It is clear from the State syllabus that it is necessary for students to take seriously this dialogue among the religions of the world. To this end, second-level pupils will study religion as a world-wide phenomenon which takes into account the major world religions, different types of religion and the New Religious Movements. This idea is not new to Catholic education. The Commission has previously recognised the importance of studying the disciplines, structures, doctrines and liturgical practices of other faith communities.⁷

Those who do not espouse any particular faith are included in the State syllabus and this is also something that is recognised in the *General Directory for Catechesis* when it points out that:

Many communities and individuals are called to live in a pluralistic and secularized world, in which forms of unbelief and religious indifference may be encountered together with vibrant expressions of religious and cultural pluralism.⁸

Honest and respectful study of Christian and non-Christian religions, secularist and atheistic philosophies and the beliefs of those who do not espouse any religious or philosophical affiliation will ensure an openness and respect for humankind as commanded



7. Commission, *A Syllabus for the Religious Education of Catholic Pupils in Post-Primary Schools* (1982), p. 21.

8. Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis*, par. 193, English translation, p. 203.

by Christ in the Gospels. Study of this kind has the added advantage of helping students to recognise the similarities and differences between their own faith and the belief systems of others. It can also help them to draw closer together in a bond of mutual understanding and make them aware of their duty to foster unity and charity with those around them. The students will be enabled to see that 'humanity forms but one community... because all stem from the one stock which God created to people the entire earth... and also because all share a common destiny, namely God'.⁹

6. Certification and Assessment

It is desirable that all students be afforded the opportunity to study the programme contained in the *Junior Certificate Religious Education Syllabus*. With respect to certification and assessment, it is the students' knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes which are being assessed without prejudice to their personal faith.

Where students are not taking the State examination it is desirable that they also be afforded the opportunity of obtaining some other form of certification, such as a 'Certificate of Participation' in the courses. This will pave the way for students, who may never have been awarded certification for religious education, to gain something of tangible value for their efforts. Students, therefore, might be given accreditation for partaking in projects such as liturgical involvement, social justice projects and other areas of religious education which are deemed worthy by the school authorities. Certification of this nature is an internal matter for schools. However, school authorities, in collaboration with Diocesan Advisers, might draw up terms of reference for this initiative, with accreditation being awarded by either local or national diocesan bodies.

7. Professional Qualifications and In-Service Education

Religion is a specialised subject and so religion classes should be entrusted to those who are committed to the faith, professionally qualified to teach religion and willing to do so. The teaching of religion is not a soft option. It requires a competent knowledge and understanding of the scriptures, systematic and moral theology, liturgy, and the ability to communicate these from the perspective of the teacher's own faith commitment. Faith commitment alone, while important, is not enough. Teachers are professional people. Teachers of religion should be people *with* a faith commitment and a recognised professional qualification to do the work competently. To become a teacher normally requires four years' full-time study of a given subject, including training in the methodology of that subject. The teaching of religion, in this respect, is no different to any other subject in the curriculum and so due care should be given when appointing teachers of religion. Criteria of assessment for suitability with respect to professional qualifications include: a) that the candidate be formally qualified to at least degree level in theology, divinity or religious education, b) that the nature of the course followed by the candidate be theologically suitable, c) that the level of teaching skills and teaching qualifications of the candidate be educationally comparable to that obtaining in other subjects.



9. Second Vatican Council, *Nostra aetate* (1965), par. 1, translated in A. Flannery, Vatican Council II, p. 569.



In this way the professional qualifications of religious educators will be in line with the aspirations outlined in the National Education Convention Secretariat where it says that:

It was regarded as desirable that post-primary teachers should, as far as possible, have taken their teaching subjects to degree level, particularly for the teaching of such subjects as Senior Cycle. In terms of promoting quality in education, it would be unwise to allow a situation develop whereby a significant portion of subject teaching was being taught by non-specialists.¹⁰

Furthermore, in these days of demographic change in Ireland, teacher/pupil ratios are often adversely affected. Sometimes hard-pressed school management finds it easier to offer some classes to non-formally qualified teachers of religion. This practice should be kept to a minimum, with a resolve to right the situation as soon as possible. It should be the aim of all management, responsible for the education of Catholic students, to **phase out** the practice of using non-formally qualified personnel whenever the first opportunity arises. In this way, only those with recognised formal qualifications in religion will teach the subject.

At present all teachers of religion, either those with no formal qualifications or those specifically qualified to teach religion, should be provided with opportunities for in-service education. In addition, they should be strongly encouraged by the appropriate school personnel to attend any such in-services offered by the State, their diocese or their subject associations.

8. Texts, Resources and Time-Tabling

With respect to the use of texts and resources, those responsible for the religious education of Catholic students should follow criteria in line with Catholic perspectives and attitudes to the teaching of religion. Within this context, consideration should be given to the appropriate needs of the students, including those studying religion through the medium of the Irish language. Texts and resources should be student-friendly. Due care should be given to the reading age, academic abilities and differing needs of the students; formulae should be in accordance with the teaching of the Church and doctrine should be presented in a succinct and accurate manner in order to facilitate both pedagogical and experiential learning; material should also be appropriate to the Irish culture. As new information technology comes on stream and educational software becomes more available, these should be given consideration, where appropriate, as useful teaching aids for religious education.

In non-examination classes religious education should be allocated a *minimum of two hours per week*. It is not acceptable, **for any reason**, that this requirement be reduced in schools where the education of Catholic students takes place. Boards of management and principals should do all in their power to prevent the erosion of this small number of hours on the timetable. Diocesan Advisers should also be vigilant on the matter and help management wherever possible to maintain the requirement.

10. Ireland, Dublin: The National Education Convention Secretariat. *The Report on the National Education Convention*, edited by J. Coolahan (1994), p. 88.

9. The School Environment

Educating students for life takes place within the context of the whole school environment and not only in the classroom. Equally the faith formation of Catholic students is inspired by the dedication and faith commitment of principals, teachers, chaplains, parents and all involved in the school community. In any school system the commitment to education stems from the characteristic spirit of these partners who contribute to the educational welfare of the students. Attention to the characteristic spirit of the school encourages students to excel according to their own God-given capacities and gifts. The witness asked of all schools is to practise what they preach so that the potential of the students will be attained in such personal, social and spiritual values as honesty, justice, telling the truth, respect, compassion, love and mercy. If these values permeate the life of the school on a daily basis, they are more likely to be effective in the present and future lives of its students.

10. Pastoral Care, the Chaplain, the Liturgical Year

Many schools have already put in place key personnel for the pastoral care of the whole school community. While the membership of this team varies in kind and number, the following are included: the guidance counsellor, the chaplain, the home-school liaison co-ordinator, the pastoral care co-ordinator, the deputy principal, the class tutor and the year head. Various aspects of the school are focused on areas such as students at risk, staff development, referral services and procedures, co-ordination of personal development programmes and the building up of home-school links.

The role of the chaplain in collaboration with others is of great importance. The chaplain takes care of the spiritual life of the school. By acting in a supportive manner, the chaplain represents the concerns of the faith community, especially among those who wish to celebrate their faith, deepen their faith commitment, follow the values of Christ as lived by the Church community and have one among them who is a caring and spiritual presence.¹¹

Good liturgical experience is vital to the faith formation of the students. The academic year is busy and shorter than the calendar year. However, it is important that students be given the opportunity to worship with their school community on those occasions which are important to the school and which often coincide with the celebrations of the liturgical year. The religion team and the chaplain would normally begin the academic year with a liturgy for the entire school community. In addition, they will, from time to time, have penitential services during Advent and Lent, provide liturgies of the Eucharist for Holy Days of Obligation when school is in session, organise class Masses, offer devotional prayers, morning assemblies and arrange Masses for the bereaved of the school community. They will also have some form of liturgy for the graduating students who are leaving school. Well-prepared liturgies are an experience of catechesis in action.



11. L. Monahan and C. Renehan, *The Chaplain: A Faith Presence in the School Community* (Dublin: Columba Press, 1998), p. 12.

11. Death and Bereavement

Unfortunately, even in an environment as young as the school community, death and bereavement are not uncommon occurrences. Great sensitivity is required on the part of those responsible for the pastoral care of staff and students who have been bereaved. Special empathy is required when a young student or a teacher has died. Particularly heavy demands are made upon the chaplain at this time and his/her approach is vital to the well-being, not only of the bereaved but of all those who are affected by the loss. The principal, counsellor, year head and class tutor also feel the burden of loss, while at the same time working, teaching and caring for large numbers of young people who may be experiencing the pain of their own, or someone else's, bereavement for the first time in their lives. Good catechesis at this time makes provision for prayer, meditation, reflection, a listening ear, sensitivity, silence, and above all gives witness to the love of Christ.¹²

12. Parents and Guardians, School/Home/Parish Links

Parents and guardians have a much greater influence on the lives of their children than anyone else. Children learn much more about life from their home environment than anywhere else. Parents and guardians are all too aware that religious attitudes and practices are now being challenged in our changing world in a way that was unknown heretofore. Many continue, nonetheless, to try to raise their children on Gospel values and attempt to show them the significance of these values for present-day culture. Many remain constant in the understanding of their faith and make monumental efforts to contribute to the life of the Church by setting good example and sharing their Catholic beliefs with their children. For these reasons it is essential that the school provide a network of communication with parents and guardians, which is necessary if they are to be supported in their role as the primary educators of the faith.

Channels of communication should be open between the school, home and parish. The parish is the primary eucharistic community, the place of worship, service and welcome; it 'is the pre-eminent place for catechesis'.¹³ This means that whether or not students attend Catholic schools, the parish has the responsibility of integrating all Catholic students into the life of the Church. The parish ought to affirm and strengthen the life of its parishioners, which includes single people, families and school-going students. When this community of school, home and parish come together, it celebrates the mystery of God in Jesus Christ, it reflects on the complexities of its life as a community and lives the experience of Christ's Paschal Mystery.

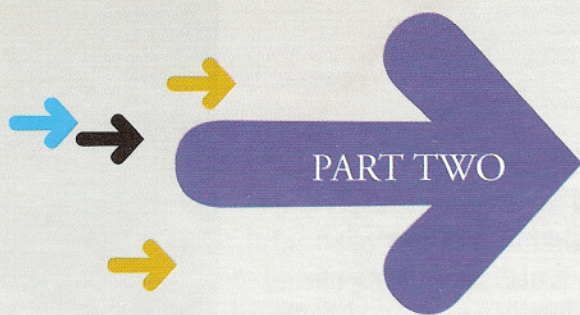
12. See L. Monahan, *Suicide Bereavement and Loss* (Dublin: The Irish Association of Pastoral Care Education, 1999).

13. John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, par. 67, English translation, p. 87.

13. Social Justice for the Reign of God

The key teaching of Jesus' ministry was focused on bringing about the Reign of God on earth. All people desire to live in harmony and peace but an unequal sharing of resources and opportunities is frustrating the realisation of Jesus' ideal for humankind. Neglect of social justice is a refusal to accept the dignity of the human person and it is also a forsaking of the values of the Gospel. It is expected of those who espouse Christianity to be aware of the needs of the disadvantaged and the marginalised. Catechesis is about leading students to seeing the value of giving practical assistance and shaping their own lifestyles so that justice will prevail. Students can be taught to identify and appreciate the values and conditions which will promote harmony, social change and conversion. One of the chief concerns of faith formation and development, therefore, is actively to encourage participation of students in social justice projects. Those who have the responsibility of teaching these matters to Catholic students will be greatly assisted by the principles of Catholic social teaching as is found in the various papal and magisterial encyclicals.





All Catholic students in the course of Junior Cycle religious education should be given an appreciation of the key dimensions of their faith, with particular emphasis on the following:

ECCLESIOLOGICAL DIMENSION

- The Catholic Church is a Community of Faith whose members are initiated through the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist.
- The Church is the Body of Christ; the life of the Christian community is centred in Christ.
- For a Catholic, Church structures are universal, parochial and diocesan.

(State Syllabus Section A: Communities of Faith)

MORAL DIMENSION

- Sacred Scripture, inspired by the Holy Spirit, is the source of Christian moral teaching.
- The Church interprets and teaches morality for its members.
- Participation in the sacraments is necessary for the Christian's moral life.
- The Sacrament of Reconciliation heals and reunites; sin separates *us from God and the rest of humankind*.
- The Christian seeks God's justice in personal and societal life.

(State Syllabus Section F: The Moral Challenge)

**DIMENSION
FAITH FOR
AND DEVELOPMENT
OF CATHOLIC
STUDENTS
JUNIOR**

LITURGICAL DIMENSION

- People of all religions worship, pray and meditate; religious ritual moves humankind closer to the Divine Mystery.
- The Church unfolds the whole mystery of Christ during the liturgical year, with special place given to Mary and the saints.

CHRISTOLOGICAL DIMENSION

- Jesus, born of the Virgin Mary, is fully human and fully divine.
- Jesus is the Christ and the Son of God Incarnate.
- Jesus lived, died and rose again, bringing salvation to the world.
- Jesus announced the Reign of God in parables and in miracles.

(State Syllabus Section B: Foundations of Religion – Christianity)

FOUNDATIONS OF FORMATION DEVELOPMENT CATHOLIC SACRAMENTS AT CYCLE

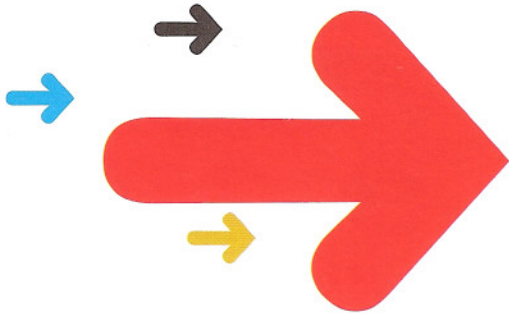
FAITH DIMENSION

- Study of one's own religion requires a faith response to God's revelation.
- The Holy Spirit is in the Church through the unique gift of Pentecost.
- A spiritual life is an integral part of all religions.
- Mary the Mother of God perfectly embodies the person of faith.
- Christian life is about carrying out the teachings of Jesus.
- Christian faith is expressed in creed, code and cult.

(State Syllabus Section C: Foundations of Religion – Major World Religions and Section D: The Question of Faith)

- Christ is present to his followers through participation in the seven sacraments, which confer the grace they signify.
- Participation in the Eucharist on Sunday is essential for the community, which celebrates Christ's presence in meal, memorial and sacrifice.

(State Syllabus Section E: The Celebration of Faith)



The Junior Certificate Religious Education Syllabus

Dimensions of Faith Formation and Development

EXPLANATORY NOTES

- a) The faith formation dimensions that follow will only make sense when read in conjunction with the State syllabus drawn up by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA).¹⁴
- b) The Section Headings A, B, C, D, E and F in this document are those of the State syllabus.
- c) The Aims in sections A to F are those of the State syllabus.
- d) Each page has two columns.
The left-hand column is headed 'State Syllabus'.
The right-hand column is headed 'Faith Formation Dimensions'.
Parts 1 to 5 in the left-hand column are those drawn up by the NCCA.
Parts 1 to 5 in the right-hand column are those drawn up by the Irish Episcopal Commission for Catechetics.¹⁵
- e) The 'Objectives', 'Description of Content' and 'Key Concepts' of the State syllabus have been omitted for reasons of space. However, the 'faith formation dimensions' correspond to these as closely as possible.
- f) The 'Faith Formation Dimensions' column contains references to the biblical data and the official teaching of the Catholic Church which are relevant to the content matter of the State syllabus for the religious education of Catholic students.

SYLLABUS OUTLINE

Syllabus sections may be taught in any order. It is not necessary to follow the sequence outlined below.

The course consists of two parts.

Part One

Students take *any two* of the following:

Section A

Communities of Faith

Section B

Foundations of Religion – Christianity

Section C

Foundations of Religion – Major World Religions

Part Two

Students take *all* of the following:

Section D

The Question of Faith

Section E

The Celebration of Faith

Section F

The Moral Challenge

14. Ireland. Dublin: The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. *The Junior Certificate Religious Education Syllabus* (1998).

15. The Irish Episcopal Commission for Catechetics is a Commission of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference.

Section A: COMMUNITIES OF FAITH

Aims

1. To explore the nature and pattern of human communities.
2. To identify the characteristics of communities of faith/churches.
3. To examine these characteristics as they occur in communities of faith/churches in local, national and international examples.

Note: Areas shaded yellow below are designated by the Syllabus of the Department of Education and Science as study for higher-level students.

STATE SYLLABUS

Part One Community

- Christianity is *lived* in a community, united in Christ and centred on him.
- Christianity has a divine *mission* to foster community.
- Christians establish true equality/justice *through* community.
- The Catholic Church is a *community* of disciples of Christ.
- Each member of this Church community is *initiated* through the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist.
- The sacraments are *celebrations* of the Christian community.
- The Church is the *Body of Christ*.
(Lk 13:34)
(*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pars. 1913-17)
(*General Catechetical Directory*, par. 66)

Part Two Communities at work in the World

- Christian *commitment* is first experienced in the faith community and is lived in the faith community.
- Christian communities are filled with the spirit of God's loving *presence*.
- The Holy Spirit *guides/inspires* the Christian communities.
- Christians receive their vision and base their leadership on Gospel values and the teachings of the Church.
- God acts in history and the Christian community is a *co-worker* in this act.
- The Church by its very *nature* is missionary.
(1 Cor 4:1-21)
(*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pars. 767, 1695, 2044)
(*General Directory for Catechesis*, pars. 58-59)

Part Three
Communities of Faith

- Jesus Christ is the *founder* of the Christian community.
- Christians come to understand Jesus through *revelation*.
- The response of faith to revelation gives rise to the community of the Body of Christ.
- The Church is a *community of faith, hope and love*.
- The Church is a pilgrim people *led* by the Holy Spirit and called to serve humankind in the world.
- Members of the Church act out the teachings of Jesus in their own lives and in the *various ministries* of the Church.

(Mk 16:14-16)

(*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pars. 790-795, 898)

(*General Catechetical Directory*, par. 65)

Part Four
Relationships between
Communities of Faith

- Restoration of Christian unity is one of the principal aims of *Vatican II*.
- Christ prayed that his followers would be *one*.
- Christ continually gives his Church the *gift* of unity.
- The desire to *recover* the unity of all Christians is a call of the Holy Spirit.
- The Church *urges* its members to enter with prudence and charity into discussion and collaboration with other religions.
- The Church rejects nothing of the *truth* in other faiths.

(Roms 2:6-7; Acts 17:26)

(*The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pars. 820-21); (*General Directory for Catechesis*, par. 197); (*Unitatis redintegratio*, pars. 2-12)

(*Ut Unum Sint*, pars. 2-4; 28; 44-48)

Part Five
(higher level only)
Organisation
and Leadership
in Communities of Faith

- Jesus Christ established the Church by sending out his apostles as he himself had been sent by God.
- The Church is the new People of God constituted by communion in the mystery of Jesus Christ.
- In order that the people of God would have continual growth Christ set up his Church with a *variety* of offices.
- The structure of the Church consists of parishes and dioceses in collegial *union* with the Pope.
- Ministers of the Church are at the service of their brothers and sisters in the community.

(Mt 16: 16-18; Jn 20:21; Eph 4:4-16; 1 Cor 12: 4-31)

(*Lumen gentium*, pars. 18-29, Vatican II)

(*Redemptionis donum*, par. 15, John Paul II)

Section B: FOUNDATIONS OF RELIGION – CHRISTIANITY

Aims

1. To explore the context into which Jesus was born.
2. To identify the gospels as the main source of knowledge about Jesus.
3. To examine the meaning of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus for his followers then and now.

STATE SYLLABUS

Part One The Context

FAITH FORMATION DIMENSIONS

- Jesus' people were under the rule of the *Roman Empire*; many of them awaited the coming of the Messiah.
- Jesus was born of the virgin Mary; he is truly human and truly divine. He is the *Incarnation* of God, the Word made Flesh.
- Jesus, Son of God, as a Jew *shared* the culture of his people.
- His disciples gradually came to see him as the *Messiah* and the Wisdom of God.
(Lk 2:1-20)
(*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pars. 464-69, 480-82, 596)
(*Nostra aetate*, par. 4, Vatican II)

Part Two Evidence about Jesus

- God is the *author* of Sacred Scripture; it was the Spirit of God who inspired its human authors.
- In Sacred Scripture God *speaks* to humankind in a human way; the reader must be attentive to the text and context.
- The Gospels outline the life of Jesus.
- The chief *sources* for evidence about Jesus are the Gospels, the Letters of Paul and the Acts of the Apostles.
- The Gospels arose out of *Spirit*-led communities of faith.
- *Living* the Gospels was and is normative for Christian life.
(Jn 20:31; 2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:19-21)
(*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pars. 115-19, 124-33)
(*Dei verbum*, pars. 11-12, Vatican II)

Part Three
The Person
and Preaching of Jesus

- Central to Jesus' teaching is his call to *repent* and *believe* in the Gospel, since the Reign of God is at hand.
- *Everyone* is called by Jesus to enter the Reign of God.
- The call of Jesus demands a radical, personal *conversion*.
- Those who have welcomed Christ's call are urged by his love to *proclaim* the Good News everywhere in the world.
- Disciples of Christ must follow him along the *way of the Cross* and be prepared to confess Christ before everyone.
- The *Beatitudes* are at the heart of Jesus' preaching.

(Mt 5:3-11; Mk 1:15)

(*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pars. 3, 425, 543-50, 1716-29)

(*Libertatis nuntius*, pars. 1-9, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith)

Part Four
The Death and
Resurrection of Jesus

- Jesus remained *faithful* to his mission even though he knew it would eventually cost him his life.
- Through his *life, death and resurrection*, Jesus brought about the salvation of the world.
- Jesus' disciples recognised him in the *breaking* of the bread.
- The key to understanding the mission and ministry of Jesus is the *Paschal Mystery*.
- The celebration of the Paschal Mystery takes place in all the Sacraments especially the *Eucharist*; the Eucharist is meal, memorial and sacrifice.

(Lk 24:26; Heb 2:9)

(*Dei verbum*, par. 4, Vatican II), (*Evangelii nuntiandi*, par. 12, Paul VI)

(*One Bread, One Body*, pars. 27-40, Bishops' Conference)

Part Five
Faith in Christ

- The Church became known to the world on the day of *Pentecost* through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.
- The Holy Spirit *continues* to animate all the baptised.
- The people of God are *called* to action, prayer, mission and ministry.
- We know that Jesus is God's *unique* and final messenger through the titles Son of Man, Son of God, Christ/Messiah and the Word of God.
- The early Christological Councils are Nicea and Chalcedon.

(1 Cor 11:26)

(*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pars. 429, 441, 436-40, 1076)

(*Lumen gentium*, par. 4, Vatican II)

Section C: FOUNDATIONS OF RELIGION – MAJOR WORLD RELIGIONS

Aims

1. To explore in detail a major world religion.*
2. To examine the impact of this religion on its followers today and on other individuals and communities.

* Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam or Judaism

STATE SYLLABUS

Part One

The Context

FAITH FORMATION DIMENSIONS

- The study of one's own religion calls for a *faith* response.
- The study of other religions calls for *objective* understanding.
- The study of other religions enables students to recognise that other faiths provide identity within their respective communities.
- Other religions carry with them the echo of thousands of years of searching for God.

(Jn 17:21-26, 1 Pet 2:9)

(*General Catechetical Directory*, pars. 199-201)

(*Evangelii nuntiandi*, par. 53, John Paul II)

(*Nostra aetate*, par. 2, Vatican II)

Part Two

Sources of Evidence

- Christians are *open* to the seeds of truth found in other faiths.
- The Church *encourages* the study of world religions.
- Those who *seek* God find traces of God in other religions.
- Sacred heritage, both *written and spoken*, is common to all major religions.
- The human experience of religion is reflected in the writings of their respective traditions.
- Non-Christian religions possess an impressive patrimony of deeply religious texts.

(1 Cor 14:1-6)

(*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pars. 839-42)

(*Evangelii nuntiandi*, par. 53, John Paul II)

(*Nostra aetate*, pars. 2-5, Vatican II)

(*Ad Gentes*, pars. 2-9, Vatican II)

Part Three

Rites of Passage and other Rituals

- Every religion uses signs, symbols and ritual to *express* its belief in the Divine/divinities.
- All major religions express belief in *salvation* of some kind.
- Most major religions use *penitential* forms of expression.
- Religious ritual moves humankind *closer* to the Divine Mystery.
- Ritual events *presuppose*, nourish, strengthen and express faith in the Divine/divinities.

(Jn 17:4)

(*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pars. 28, 1189)

(*General Directory for Catechesis*, pars. 88-89)

Part Four

Development of Tradition

- Early Christians were *to conduct* themselves among Gentiles.
- Through religious charity the Church deploras all *persecutions*.
- The Church *repudiates* unjust discrimination.
- By her very mission the Church travels the *same journey* as all humanity and shares the same earthly lot with the world.
- Missionary endeavour requires *patience* and dialogue with other cultures.

(1 Pet 2:12)

(*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pars. 842)

(*Dignitatis humanae*, pars. 4, 9, Vatican II)

(*Gaudium et spes*, par. 351, Vatican II)

Part Five

Tradition, Faith and Practice Today

- All religions experience some form of disunity.
- All religions experience renewal and reform at one time or another.
- The Church respects and esteems non-Christian religions because they are the living expression of the soul of vast groups of people.

(Acts 17:26).

(*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, par. 843)

(*Evangelii nuntiandi*, par. 53, Paul VI)

Section D: THE QUESTION OF FAITH

Aims

1. To explore the situation of religious faith today.
2. To identify the beginning of faith in the asking of questions and the search for answers.
3. To recognise expressions of human questioning in modern culture.
4. To identify the characteristics of religious faith.
5. To examine the challenges of religious faith today.
6. To offer opportunities for exploration of, and reflection on, personal faith positions.

STATE SYLLABUS

Part One

The Situation of Faith Today

FAITH FORMATION DIMENSIONS

- The first victims of the spiritual and cultural crisis gripping the world are usually the *young*.
- Christians, in the most diverse situations, perceive the world as having a destiny in the reign of God.
- Faith is a *free* assent to the whole truth that God has revealed in Christ.
- Belief is possible only by the interior *grace* of the Holy Spirit.
- We receive faith and *new life* in Christ through the Church.

(Eph 1:18)

(*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pars. 150, 153, 168)

(*General Directory for Catechesis*, pars. 16, 182, 184)

Part Two

The Beginnings of Faith

- A close relationship exists between faith, reason and human experience.
- Knowledge of the faith (*fides quae*) is required to understand the personal act of faith (*fides qua*).
- Assent of faith is by *no means* a blind impulse of the mind.
- Believing is an act of the *whole person* assenting to the divine truth.
- Christian faith is above all a conversion to Jesus Christ, adherence to his person and a decision to follow him.
- Faith is the beginning of *eternal life*.

(Lk 21:28; Rom 6:10)

(*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pars. 156-58, 163)

(*General Directory for Catechesis*, pars. 53, 85)

(*Fides et Ratio*, pars. 36-42, John Paul II)

Part Three
The Growth of Faith

- Exploration of different images of God is a quest to *glimpse* the divine.
- Living faith moves people towards an *ever new* experience of God.
- Faith received in *childhood* must be continually reflected upon and developed through adolescence into adulthood.
- Believing in the One, true and loving God with all our being has *enormous consequences* for our whole life.
- The Virgin Mary most *perfectly* embodies the person of faith.
- Mary, the Mother of God Incarnate (*Theotokos*), gave herself entirely to the person and to the work of her Son.
(Gen 1:27; Ex 34:6; Is 49:15; Mt 23:37; Lk 1:28-38)
(*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pars. 222, 494-95)
(*General Directory for Catechesis*, pars. 24, 25)
(*Marialis cultus*, pars. 16-25, Paul VI)

Part Four
The Expression of Faith

- Prayer is an *expression* of our covenant relationship with God.
- You shall *worship* the Lord God and only God shall you serve.
- *Christian life* cannot be separated from prayer.
- Communion in faith needs a *common language* of faith.
- From the beginning, the apostolic Church expressed her faith in *brief formulae* and creedal statements which became normative for all.
- Such formulae are called 'professions of faith', which summarise the faith that Christians profess, e.g the *Credo*.
(Deut 6:13; Lk 4:8; Roms 10:9)
(*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pars. 185, 186)
(*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, pars. 6-7, Vatican II)

Part Five
Challenges to Faith

- Faith *does not* keep itself outside human progress.
- The Gospel message *interprets* challenges to the faith, as does the teaching of the Church.
- Christianity *transcends* every advancement of culture.
- Scientific research complying with moral laws does not conflict with faith since science and faith derive from the *same God*.
- Agnosticism/atheism/religious indifference *can* be interpreted as flight from the ultimate question of existence, that is, God.
(Jn 1:9)
(*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, par. 159)
(*Gaudium et spes*, pars. 4, 36, 57, 62, Vatican II)
(*Fides et Ratio*, pars. 64-74, John Paul II)

Section E: THE CELEBRATION OF FAITH

Aims

1. To show how ritual and worship have always been part of the human response to life and to the mystery of God.
2. To identify how communities of faith express their day-to-day concerns in various forms of ritual.
3. To explore an experience of worship.
4. To explore the link between patterns of worship and the experience of mystery/that which is of ultimate concern to individuals and communities.

STATE SYLLABUS

Part One

The World of Ritual

FAITH FORMATION DIMENSIONS

- Our visible churches and holy places are images of the *heavenly Jerusalem* towards which we make our way in pilgrimage.
- The gathering in fellowship around the *sacrificial altar* for worship is an essential practice for the faithful.
- The Church has instituted *sacramentals* which are sacred signs bearing the grace of Christ.
- The tabernacle containing the *Blessed Sacrament* is situated in a worthy place in the church to foster adoration.
- The *liturgical year* and adherence to it by the faithful unfolds the whole mystery of Christ.
(1 Pet 2:4-5; 2 Cor 6:16)
(*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pars. 1668, 1181, 1183, 1198, 1379)
(*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, pars. 41, 59-79, 102, Vatican II)

Part Two

The Experience of Worship

- *Adoration* of God is the primary reason for worship.
- Ritual helps to bring about the full and active *participation* of the faithful when they assemble in the same place.
- Ritual is the *participation* of the People of God in prayer.
- The Church offers *spiritual* nourishment to the faithful when they participate in the seven sacraments.
- A certain *resemblance* between the stages of natural life and the stages of spiritual life takes place in the sacraments.
- Participation in the sacraments is *supremely effective* in enabling the faithful to *express* their faith in Christ.
(Mt 4:10)
(*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pars. 1210, 2096)
(*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, par. 1, Vatican II)

Part Three

Worship as Response to Mystery

- When the *presence of God* has been encountered, the person of faith responds in prayer and worship.
- Christian worship is founded on *belief* in Jesus Christ.
- Christ is the *revelation* of the mystery of God hidden for ages but now made manifest.
- Worship expresses and mediates the relation which takes place between the *divine and the human*.
- Mystery is *encountered* in Sacred Scripture and in the rites of the Church.

(Mk 4:10-12; Col 1:1-2:6; Eph 2:3),

(*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pars. 1083),

(*Gaudium et spes*, pars. 22, 41, 93, Vatican II),

(*Dies Domini*, pars. 1-18, John Paul II)

Part Four

Sign and Symbol

- Spiritual realities are *perceived* through signs and symbols.
- The sacraments *confer* the grace they signify when they are celebrated worthily in faith.
- Jesus is present in the Church in and through the *seven sacraments*.
- In the sacraments Christ *meets* his followers at the deepest level of faith.
- The Eucharist occupies a *unique* place as the Sacrament of the sacraments.
- The Church is *both* human and divine, visible but endowed with invisible realities and committed in action.

(Lk 5:17; 6:19; 8:10)

(*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pars. 1127, 1145-62, 1210)

(*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, par. 2, Vatican II)

(*One Bread, One Body*, pars. 15-19, Bishops' Conference)

Part Five

Prayer

- Prayer is the raising up of one's *mind and heart* to God.
- Prayer is the *living* relationship between God and humanity.
- Prayer is the *response* of faith to the promise of salvation and a response of love to the Son of God.
- Prayer is *co-operation* with God's providence and humankind's answer to God's call.
- When it *appears* that prayer has not been answered the Christian battles to gain humility, trust and perseverance.
- The Eucharist contains and expresses *all forms* of prayer.

(Pss 1-150; Mt 6:9-15; Lk 11:2-4)

(*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pars. 2558-2865, 2705-8, 2709-19)

Section F: THE MORAL CHALLENGE

Aims

1. To explore the human need to order relationships at the personal, communal and global levels.
2. To explore how this need can be expressed in a variety of ways.
3. To identify how this need is expressed in civil and other legal codes.
4. To show how religious belief is expressed in particular moral visions.
5. To explore the moral visions of two major world religions, one of which should be Christianity.
6. To analyse the impact of these visions in the lives of believers and non-believers in addressing some current moral issues.
7. To introduce students to some aspects of the relationship between religion, morality and State law.

STATE SYLLABUS

Part One

Introduction to Morality

- Morality is about accepting self and others as part of God's *plan* of creation; Christians act out of love of God and neighbour.
- Christ laid down his life for us; Christians thus take up the *challenge* of forgiveness, the struggle for justice and liberation.
- Neglect of Christian duties on the part of others is the same as *neglect* of Jesus himself.
- The origin, the subject and the purpose of all social institutions is and should be the *human person*.
- Christ reveals, first and foremost, that the frank and open acceptance of the truth is the condition for *authentic* freedom.
(Gen 2:17; Jn 8:32; 1 Cor 1:17; Gal 5:1)
(*Gaudium et spes*, par. 43, Vatican II)
(*Veritatis splendor*, pars. 84-87; 95-98, John Paul II)

Part Two

Sources of Morality

- The roots of religious moral vision for the Christian are found in the Hebrew Scriptures, especially in the Covenant with its *Decalogue*.
- The *Gospel* is the climax of all saving truth and moral teaching.
- The Church has *faithfully* preserved what the Word of God teaches concerning truths and moral actions pleasing to God.
- It is the mission and duty of the Church to *announce* moral principles.
(Ex 20:1-17; Mt 5:17-20; Mk 2:23-28)
(*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pars. 2052-2557)
(*Dei verbum*, par. 7, Vatican II)
(*Evangelium vitae*, pars. 1-142, John Paul II)

Part Three
Growing in Morality

- There is a relationship between the moral good, one's own destiny in life, and eternity.
- God calls us to a response from selfishness to *selflessness*.
- Growth in morality requires the *guidance* of the Holy Spirit and the knowledge and practice of the teachings of the Church.
- *Conscience* is not always an infallible judge, it can make mistakes.
- An *informed* conscience is essential to Christian life; conscience must be informed and moral judgement must be enlightened.
- The reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation ought to be prepared for by *examination* of conscience.

(Mt 5:7; 1 Tim 1:5; Rom 9:1)

(*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, par. 1454; 1776-89)

(*Veritatis splendor*, pars. 54-64, John Paul II)

(*Gravissimum educationis*, par. 1, Vatican II)

Part Four
Religious Morality in Action

- The Christian, faced with a moral decision, can either make a right judgement in accordance with the *divine law* or against it.
- Truth, justice and peace come from *assimilation* of the Word of God, the teachings of the Church and putting them into practice.
- Since Christians identify with Christ, they must *act* like Christ.
- Sin is an *abuse of the freedom* that God gives to humankind; sin is basically an offence against God.
- Original/mortal/venial sin *separate* people from each other. These sins are an offence against God.
- Relationships are restored through the *Sacrament of Reconciliation*.

(Pss 105, 119; Rom 3:8; 1 Jn 3:19-20)

(*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pars. 388; 1420-98; 1790-1802)

(*Veritatis splendor*, pars. 69-70, John Paul II)

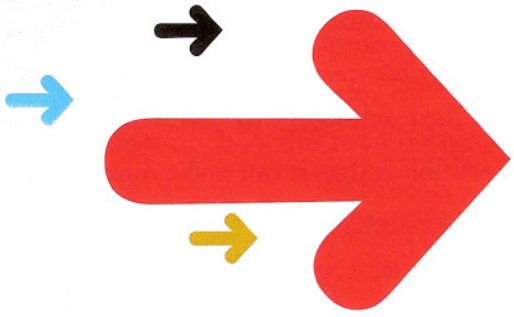
Part Five
Law and Morality

- Christian morality is *embodied* in the law of Christ and his Church; the Law of God *surpasses* all human laws.
- Christians, as citizens, have a *duty* to work with civil authorities to build society in a spirit of truth, justice, solidarity and freedom.
- In fundamental human rights and the salvation of souls, the Church has a mission to pass *moral* judgements on civil laws.

(Ps 1:1-2; Mt 19:8; Acts 5:29)

(*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pars. 2244-57)

(*Veritatis splendor*, pars. 42-50; John Paul II)



Principles of Faith Formation as a Foundation for Journal Work

The Journal – Engaging Christianity as Lived Experience



1. The Value of *The Journal* from the Perspective of Faith Formation

Work undertaken by the students with respect to *The Journal* is supported by all the aims of the State syllabus. It has, however, particular reference to the third aim which goes as follows:

To identify how understandings of God, religious traditions, and in particular the Christian tradition, have contributed to the culture in which we live and continue to have an impact on personal lifestyle, inter-personal relationships and relationships between individuals and their communities and contexts.

From the perspective of faith formation and development, *The Journal*, therefore, affords students the opportunity of engaging with the lived experience of Christianity. The distinctive features of journal-writing in religious education permit students to explore the truth of their faith in real life situations which they will encounter as they progress in their practical research. As the students work through the tasks required of them in the preparation of *The Journal*, they will be enabled to interpret their experiences in the light of scripture, tradition and the teachings of the Church. Here is a unique opportunity for the students to know and understand their own faith while accepting its challenge in freedom and responsibility.

This is in keeping with the *General Directory for Catechesis* where it states that catechesis is about encouraging 'a sense of co-responsibility on the part of all for the mission of the Church in the world, and a raising of consciousness with regard to the social obligations of the faith' (par. 24).

Action and research undertaken by the students for *The Journal* is also consistent with the guidelines laid down in the 1982 *Syllabus for the Religious Education of Catholic Pupils in Post-Primary Schools* which upholds the Christian life as an integrated one of the living of values in lifestyle and vocation (pp. 22-24). It goes on to say that 'Christianity is a way of life involving attitudes, values and practices which are 'caught' from others. It is the whole Christian people which teaches religion; teaches it by the way it lives much more than by the way it lectures' (p. 4). The work of *The Journal* undertaken by the students will help them to encounter people of faith in the process of their enquiry and reflection.

2. Engaging Christianity as Lived Experience

The Journal opens the way for the students to engage actively with the issues that matter to them in their own lives. Religious Education is not just about academic study; it also

encourages a process of enquiry which may lead to a maturity of faith. *The Journal* presents a considerable challenge for students since, over a period of three years, they will be expected to undertake preparation of work which will involve a wide range of knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes while at the same time engaging the human spirit. Insights from this process will prepare them for their future for it is they who will have the task of building new communities. This is, in effect, the essential mission of the Church. In this light the work afforded by *The Journal* can help the students to:



- engage with the lived experience of Christianity as members of a faith community.
- develop their understanding of Christ, Church, morality, faith and liturgy through practical means.
- reflect upon their own spiritual journey and share that spirituality with others.
- serve others and live justly according to the values of the Gospel and the teachings of the Church.
- express their discipleship in their interaction with others in the world.
- become more aware of God's presence in themselves, in others and in the world.
- affirm the dignity and rights of others as committed members of a faith tradition.
- become involved in the links between home, school, parish and local community.
- work at the level of love and compassion, responsibility and respect.
- put what is learned in the home and in the classroom into practice.
- sympathise and empathise with the needs of others at home and abroad.
- say 'yes' to God in word, deed and action.

3. Facilitation of *The Journal* from the Perspective of Faith Formation and Development

The Department of Education and Science intends to vary its titles from year to year with the same set of titles being available to both ordinary and higher level students. The National Catechetical Office will facilitate work on *The Journal* by producing suggested catechetical resources and references with respect to the titles for journal work accordingly as they are published by the State. This office will also suggest catechetical approaches to *The Journal* which will facilitate research, engagement and action from a faith perspective.

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