

# Becoming Disciples

## Curriculum Tips

Volume 1

Office for Religious Education, Catholic Diocese of Wilmington

September, 2007

### **Becoming Disciples -**

*Religious Education Curriculum of the  
Diocese of Wilmington  
Commences Fall 2007*

In his letter of introduction to *Becoming Disciples*, Bishop Saltarelli encourages catechists with these words:

*You are the Lord's disciples who will bring life to these guidelines. I entrust the mission of catechesis to you and I believe you will take the knowledge of our faith and blend it with the heart of your faith as you teach the Word of God in Scripture and the doctrine of our Church to the young disciples of our Diocese.*

*“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.”*

*Mt. 28:19-20*

What a privilege to be part of this effort! Remember this Curriculum is addressed to priests, deacons, DREs, catechists, catholic school religion teachers, and parents, including parents of home schooled children/youth.

This newsletter, *Becoming Disciples/ Curriculum Tips*, will be published periodically to assist in the implementation of the Curriculum. Look for the Curriculum at [www.cdow.org](http://www.cdow.org).



### **Textbook and Curriculum: A Happy Match**

As a busy teacher or catechist, you might be saying, I use the textbook. Why do I need a curriculum guide, too? This outcome-based curriculum guide can help you focus on what is most important, so that your end result (or outcome) can be better accomplished. This curriculum gives you specific guidelines at each grade level, in order that the children and youth you teach:

- *Grasp core Catholic beliefs*
- *Participate with understanding in the sacramental life of the Church*
- *Live by the values of the Gospel in day to day decision-making*
- *Pray, alone and with others in community*
- *Have an identity and lifestyle as a Catholic Christian*

## **An Easy, Practical Approach to Using the Curriculum Guide**

**A**. Read over your own grade level guidelines before you start planning each session. Taking this time will give you a positive feel for the outcomes. As you become more and more familiar with the whole set of desired outcomes, you will start to notice how they all fit together.

**B**. Look at the correlation that your religion textbook company prepared for you. Sadlier, RCL, Harcourt, Silver Burdett, Loyola and Benziger have all done correlations between your textbook and the curriculum guide. Your principal or DRE will provide you with this correlation.

**C**. Take a second after class, to check off and date each outcome you actually addressed in class. You will be amazed and gratified at how much you really are teaching. It will help you to be aware of any gaps as the year goes on.

## **The Value of Outcome-Based Objectives**

### ***Did They Get It? Yes or No.***

After all your valuable planning and engagement with the students, it is important to know how well your students “got” the lesson. The curriculum suggests observable ways you can test this. You have lots of leeway for creativity in how you both instruct and assess your students, and the curriculum makes clear the Church’s teaching.

Here are some sample ways to creatively plan and assess a few student outcomes across the grade levels. Notice that these desired outcomes spiral throughout the whole curriculum.

### **Key Concept 1: Knowledge of the Faith**

***Understand that heaven is promised to those who love and obey God; in heaven we will see God and be happy with God forever.”***  
(K, 1, 2)



***“Recognize that those who live faithful lives and who die in God’s grace and friendship are purified and live forever with Christ in Heaven.”***  
(Gr. 4-7)

Around All Souls Day in November, invite the children/youth to bring in pictures of relatives and others who have died and place them on a prayer table. Put a picture of Jesus in the center. Let each one tell a story about how the person they knew was faithful in some way. Together, pray the prayer “Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May their souls and the souls of the faithful departed rest in peace. Amen.” Talk about how our love and prayers help each other to be closer to God, even after death. Have each student write a prayer for their departed loved one on a stand-up card and place it on the prayer table. You may also want to have a speaker come in to explain the Dia de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) tradition celebrated by many Hispanics and Filipinos.

### **Key Concept 2: Liturgical Education**

***“Identify and celebrate some feasts of Mary as they occur in the liturgical year.”***  
(K-8)



Example: Celebrate the Feast of the Holy Name of Mary (Sept. 12.) Children and youth can place flowers in front of an image of Mary and say the Hail Mary. They can repeat a simple litany that links Mary’s name with qualities of

Mary and other traditional titles for her. (i.e. “Mary, most loving, pray for us” or “Mary, Jesus’ mother, pray for us.”) You might also have a Name Day celebration and include the saint names of the children and youth, a great activity for the beginning of the school year.

Mary’s name can be traced, written artistically or colorfully decorated, surrounded by pictures or phrases denoting what the children and youth learned about Mary in the lesson. They also can locate Marian feast dates on a liturgical calendar.

### **Key Concept 3: Moral Formation**

***“Know that modesty, a virtue, shows respect for our own bodies and the bodies of others.”***  
(Gr. 3, 4, 5, 7)

Do a group collage of modest fashions found in magazines and catalogs and have children/youth explain how they made their judgments, based on how one respects one’s own body and others, by wearing such an outfit. Even if you and the children don’t agree on every picture, you’ll have them grappling with the concept very concretely as they decide which pictures should be included. You may want to expand the discussion to clothing appropriate to different circumstances – in church, at the mall, at the beach, etc.



### **Key Concept 4: Teaching to Pray**

***“Learn and review prayers. The Church teaches “the memorization of basic prayers offers an essential support to the life of prayer, but it is important to help learners savor their meaning.” (Prayers differ per grade level.)***  
(K-8)



Display the prayer, adding one phrase at a time, as it is being learned and recited. Send a copy of the prayer home for practice. Use lots of positive feedback. Use a chart to track progress. Once it is learned, use the prayer frequently in a real context, such as a prayer service.

### **Key Concept 5: Education for Community Life**

***“Know that with others in our family, parish, school we practice the charity of the Lord in good works and love for all.”***  
(K-4)

***“Explain the manner in which charity is practiced in our parish, our family, our school.”***  
(Gr. 5-8)

After inviting in speakers from the parish who do social outreach to the needy, have the children and youth summarize what they learned by doing a chart or mural of the works of charity offered by their parish. Display the students’ work in a parish building, so parishioners can learn about this, too! Your class may very well want to commit to a particular work of charity. Through personal involvement, understanding happens at an even deeper level. Be sure children and youth are given lots of preparation and a chance to pray with and ponder their charitable experiences together.



## **Key Concept 6: Missionary Initiation**

***“Realize that Jesus wants us to share the Good News of the Gospel and our Catholic faith with our relatives and friends.”***

***(K, 1, 2)***

Children can brainstorm and list ways they can share their faith with others. They can then be given a “Weekly Planner” page that lists the seven days of the week. Have them write one name of a family member or friend on each of the days, then tell or write how they will share their faith with that person in an appropriate way. Put religious stickers on their weekly planner pages the following week as the students describe the ways they shared the Good News.

***“Realize that our love for the Word of God and the Body and Blood of Christ strengthens us to share our Catholic faith with others. Powerful examples are great Catholic missionary saints e.g., St. Patrick, St. Francis Xavier.”***

***(Gr. 3-7)***

Around All Saints Day, have children and youth research great missionary saints, with a particular focus on how the saint was strengthened by the Word of God and the Eucharist. Have the children and youth dress as particular saints and tell their first-person story to younger children, parish groups, nearby homebound parishioners etc. This allows the children and youth to do their own missionary outreach.

## ***Family Prayer***

*“Formal catechesis in a religious education class is only one aspect of a child/youth’s life-long journey of faith.*

*This life is influenced by the faith life, commitments and decisions of his or her parents.”*

*(Introduction to Becoming Disciples, An Outcome-Based Curriculum, p. 5)*

*“Family catechesis precedes, accompanies and enriches all other forms of catechesis.”*

*(Catechesi Tradendae 68, Pope John Paul II)*

Despite the fact that we are all busy and distracted by many things, one thing is a definite given: parents care deeply for their children. All of us, both in the parish and at home, want our children to be happy, wholesome, and successful in life. More than this, as Catholics, we believe that our children’s lives will be deeply enhanced by an on-going relationship with God throughout



their lives. We believe also that children need structure and the guidance of the Christian tradition, if they are to become the best persons they can be.

Parents rightfully look to the church, especially formal religious education, to teach the basics of the faith in a consistent fashion. Though some parents may be unsure of themselves in terms of practicing or explaining the Catholic faith to their children, be assured that parents can be

tremendous examples of God's age-old command: to live justly, love compassionately and walk humbly, day by day, with their God.

Parents have the first and irreplaceable opportunity to provide strong faith foundations at home with their children. The Church is there to support them, so that they can "Preach the Gospel at all times. If necessary, use words." (St. Francis of Assisi)

***"Prayer is a Way of Life,  
a gift from God,  
the habit of being in God's presence  
and in communion with him,  
the raising of our hearts and minds to  
God at all different times of the day  
e.g., before and after meals, before bed-  
time, before an automobile trip.  
Prayer is a way of life for Christians."  
(1,2,3)***

It is essential that parents be informed of what the children and youth are focusing on at each grade level. Parents are grateful to know how they can reinforce what the children are learning in the classroom, and it gives the family concrete opportunities to pray together in different ways.

Copies of the prayers being learned in class are found in the back of the children's textbooks and in Appendix I of the Curriculum Guide. Parents should have a copy of all these prayers.



## **K**indergarten

Children are learning in class that prayer is talking with God and remembering that God is always with us.

They are also learning that prayer involves an attitude of gratitude, that prayer can be in our own words or in prayers that all Catholics learn to say, and that prayers may be said at anytime or in any place. One special place for prayer is in the home.

### How parents can pray with the child:

1. Practice one the following prayers each day, beginning with just a few phrases and then adding on: The Sign of the Cross, the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Glory Be, Grace before and after meals, Morning Prayer.
2. Model short spontaneous prayers of gratitude and praise and the asking of blessings for ourselves and others.
3. Help your child associate set times of day with prayer, i.e. bedtime, meals, before an automobile trip.
4. Bless your child on the forehead with the Sign of the Cross (as was done at her or his Baptism) when the child leaves for school or at bedtime.

## **G**rade One

Children are being introduced in class to prayers of sorrow for hurting others. They are also learning that many of our prayers come from the Bible.

### How parents can pray with the child:

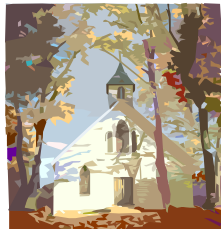
1. Model the steps of repentance and asking for forgiveness in everyday ways. Include prayers for forgiveness and asking God for help in making good choices.
2. Pray with the Bible. (for example, Lk. 11:2-4 and Mt. 6:9-13 for the Our Father, Lk. 1:26-33 for the Hail Mary, The Good Shepherd Psalm 23:1-4)

## Grade Two

Children are being taught about the important place of the Our Father in the Mass. New prayers, the Act of Contrition and the Angel of God prayer are being taught. Children are also being introduced in a preliminary way to the rosary and the Stations of the Cross.

### How parents can pray with the child:

1. Give children oral opportunities to review previously learned prayers and practice new ones, repeating after you, line by line, until the prayer is learned.
2. Encourage your child to pray the Our Father with the community during Mass.
3. Walk your child around the Stations of the Cross in church, offering to answer any questions.
4. You may want to pray a decade of the rosary at bedtime.



## Grade Three

Third graders learn about prayers of the church and prayers that saints wrote. Children learn to say the Apostles Creed. And children pray more extensively with words from their own hearts.

### How parents can pray with the child:

1. Pray the Apostles Creed, as well as liturgical prayers such as the Sign of the Cross, the Holy, Holy, the Our Father, and the Lamb of God, both at home and in church.
2. Model and encourage conversational prayer with God about the child's day.
3. Talk about the prayers that were said during Sunday Mass – one of the prayers repeated weekly, a particular intercession that was prayed for, or special prayers related to the liturgical season or a particular saint.

## Grade Four

Prayer as a relationship with God is emphasized. It is described as a habit of being in conscious awareness of God's presence and an intention to live in communion with God. Mary is offered as an example of a prayerful life of faith, especially in her "yes" to God at the Annunciation and in her special prayer the Magnificat (Lk. 1:46-55). Brief Acts of Faith, Hope and Love are taught.

### How parents can pray with the child:

1. During bedtime prayers, discuss how the child's choices during the day reflect a remembrance of God's presence and a desire to live in communion (friendship) with God.
2. Sometime during the day, read with your child the Acts of Faith, Hope and Love.
3. Give your child a statue or picture of Mary for his or her room. Together pray the Hail Mary. On different Marian feasts, discuss how Mary cooperated lovingly and prayerfully with God.

## Grade Five

The Our Father is the Church's most important prayer because Jesus gave it to us. The Our Father holds a central place in all of our sacramental celebrations.

### How parents can pray with the child:

1. Tell your child the story of his or her Baptism and share your feelings about that day. End by praying the Our Father together.
2. Tell your child what the Our Father means to you.





## **G**rade Six

Prayer is defined as “the raising of one’s mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God.” Youth are reminded that it is God’s love that initiates any movement within us to pray, for God calls and first desires a relationship with us. Jesus is held up as a model for prayer. Youth also look at how people in the Old Testament prayed, particularly Abraham, Moses, David, and the prophets. They examine prayer in the daily life of the Jewish people in the time of Jesus.

### How parents can pray with the child:

1. At family prayer, pray for world peace and people’s needs from around the world..
2. Adopt a serviceman or woman to write to and pray for.

## **G**rade Seven

Lectio Divina or Holy Reading of Scripture is taught as a prayer form.

### How parents can pray with the child:

Try Lectio Divina - Use the Sunday Gospel as the basis for family prayer during the week. Read the Scripture aloud, each person listening for the phrase that has most meaning for them as they listen. Try to remember this phrase throughout the day. Consider: how is God speaking to you in your life through this text? Pray quietly, pondering and conversing with God. What is your response to God’s Word to you? Share with other family members what insight you received. (7,8)

## **G**rade Eight

Various prayer traditions and practices are explored, particularly those of St. Benedict, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Dominic, and St. Ignatius.

### How parents can pray with the child:

1. Pray the Prayer of St. Francis.
2. Pray a family rosary.
3. Read aloud the Sunday Gospel. Have family members in quiet prayer imagine themselves in the scene, interacting with Jesus. Share with one another what each person senses about Jesus in that scene and how each person’s heart was stirred. (The practice of Ignatian contemplation)



**Don't forget to check out  
terrific field trips  
and website resources  
on page II of the Introduction to  
this Curriculum Guide!**