

WHAT
EVERY
CATHOLIC
CHILD
SHOULD
KNOW
ABOUT
THE
FAITH

Daphne McLeod

&

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INTRODUCTION

About two thousand years ago, the Almighty Mysterious God became Man and spent thirty three years living on this planet. The Truths he revealed then about Himself, about ourselves and about how we should live, are the precious treasure, “the pearl of great price” He entrusted to His Church, to be taught to each succeeding generation until the end of time.

Now it is our turn - parents, grandparents, priests, teachers and catechists - to pass on these Truths to today's young people, completely and faithfully. Because this is not easy and because we live in confusing times which make it even more difficult than usual, two Catholic teachers, experienced in teaching the Faith, have compiled this booklet as a guide for those instructing children from five to eleven years of age.

We are following the directive given in the Papal Document *Catechesi Tradendae* (1979) and outlining the structure of the Faith at the beginning in a simple but honest way. Compare it with erecting a building. The foundations, which are of especial importance, must comprise the whole extent of the building. Once they are correctly laid, we can safely build on every part of them, in this case indefinitely.

A short lesson every day should provide enough time to cover the material in this booklet - which is really basic - and still leave time for your own contributions. May we entreat teachers not to spend time on classroom Sex Education at this early age. Human sexual behaviour is essentially private and discussing it in a mixed class is not only unnatural, it is potentially very harmful. If an explicit question about sex is asked, perhaps when you are dealing with the sixth and ninth commandments, suggest the child ask their parents.

This advice is in accordance with all the guidance from Rome, as any study of Vatican documents will confirm. For parents of course it is different, but even they would be wise to confine themselves to the information necessary at the time.

It is important to spend some time on follow-up work. In school this can be in time allotted to handwork, writing, painting, drama etc. Children this age find it difficult to meditate, but if they are drawing a picture of a story, preparing an assembly about it or making a classroom frieze, they are using their minds on what they have been taught and assimilating it.

Religion is not like any other lesson. It is not just a question of acquiring knowledge, but of letting this knowledge lead to a real love of God which will be demonstrated in how we behave towards Him and towards others.

Always refer to the text when telling Bible stories. After checking it, tell it with details, then find it in the child's picture Bible and re-tell or read it with pictures.

Doctrine is not "too difficult for little children". Mysteries they will never understand anyway - nor will adults. But they can still know about them. A formula of words is not going to mean very much, so you must think about the Truth you are imparting yourself. Only when you have assimilated it can you pass it on effectively to your child.

The years from five to eleven are very important. The children are receptive, they are capable of appreciating the great mysteries of the Faith - if intelligently and sensitively taught, and they are not distracted by exams such as G.C.S.E. So it is worthwhile making the effort to give them a well structured conscientious course in the religion they have been baptised into.

Catechism. Use the *Penny Catechism* as a summary of your teaching after you have finished your lesson. Encourage children to learn by heart some key answers. They don't mind learning by heart at this age, especially answers so well written and rhythmical. If you succeed in doing this, you will have given them something that will last all their lives.

As must be clear from its size this booklet is in note form. You will need a text book too. The authors recommend the "Faith and Life Series" which has books suitable for children of every age. It is available from the CTS Bookshop tel: 020 7834 1363.

You will need all the help you can get in this formidable but rewarding work. There is a list of useful books on page eleven which will "fill in the gaps" left by this very brief summary. But your greatest help comes from Almighty God Himself, who will be working in partnership with you.

Ask for His help before you speak - eg. "Lord be in my heart and on my lips", pray with the children you teach and pray afterwards that the seed you have planted may take root and grow. It is only with God's help that you will have any success, but he does expect us to use our talents to the full and make it a working partnership.

The Lord be with you.

FOREWORD

At a time when there are so many Religious Education books on the market, a new one must justify its existence.

This little book is not a primary school syllabus, even though the material is arranged in year sections from first year Infants up to top Juniors.

It is a summary of what Catholic primary school children should know by the end of each school year of their education. The teaching material is arranged into terms, not smaller units (e.g. weeks); but even this rough division need not be strictly adhered to. The principal aim is to cover, as far as possible, **all** the teaching material, i.e. the Catholic doctrine, in each section, matching it with a term's or a year's work in the teaching programme of your choice.

There is a great deal to be taught, and learnt, in the Catholic religion. In this respect it is very different from some forms of fundamentalist Christianity whose beliefs can be expressed - almost - in one or two slogans brief enough for display in a car window, e.g. "I believe in Jesus." Our holy Faith, by contrast, suffers grievously if it is not presented in its entirety. Being a unified and coherent whole, it is incomplete, and quite possibly non-existent if any significant part is left out.

On this vital point of **teaching Revealed Truth** the authors of this booklet differ from most people in the higher echelons of present-day Catholic Religious Education in this country. The policy makers are almost unanimous in advocating classroom methods based mainly on life experience (Infants and Juniors) and, with older pupils, Comparative Religion (study of the main world religions). The pupils don't learn their religion; **they learn about religion(s)**, just as they learn to appreciate Art and Literature during other lessons. The programme makers reject systematic catechesis, i.e. as in the Catechism, instruction on Faith, Hope, Charity (the Commandments), and the Sacraments, insisting that prayers, assemblies, Mass in church and in school, are sufficient and of a specifically Catholic nature to constitute a full and rounded Religious Education. How many Catholic parents agree with this theory of R.E.? Probably very few. And yet if, out of anxiety for a child's religious upbringing, they voiced a contrary opinion to an "expert" they would probably be told that they didn't have the knowledge and experience to make a proper judgment, that things are done differently now, and that the syllabus has official approval.

Nevertheless, at the present time, parental misgivings would in very many cases be well founded. But there is another expert in this field who speaks from a position of much greater authority. In the course of his address to the bishops of the northern province of England on March 26th 1992, Pope John Paul II stated:

“This religious education is broader than catechesis, but it must also include catechesis, since a principal goal of the Catholic school must be to hand on the Faith.”

Critics of direct catechesis condemn it as inevitably boring, and sometimes - rather loftily - make the further point that they will have nothing to do with “indoctrination”, as they choose quite often to call it (thereby using the same derogatory terminology as humanists and secularists). People who take this view would do well to reflect on the words of Pope John Paul II, a little further on in the address quoted above;

“As pastors you are well aware that it is the teacher’s heart and soul which animates any religious text or programme. It is the teacher who transforms the syllabus from a dead letter into a living experience of learning the faith.”

Yes, **learning** the faith, in order firstly to **know** God, then on the basis of this knowledge to **love** Him, and to **serve** Him, as the Catechism teaches us, is the purpose of Religious Instruction.

So what is needed if a school’s R.E. programme seems inadequate?

First, the practice of religion within the family, because belief and practice are inseparable, and example is a powerful factor.

Second, a complete and truly Catholic R.E. Programme (see elsewhere in this booklet for details).

Third, summaries (possibly incorporated into the R.E. Programme) in the form of

(a) a Creed, whether this is the Apostles’ Creed, the basis of the old (“Penny”) Catechism, or the Nicene Creed, or Pope Paul VI’s *Creed of the People of God*;

(b) a Catechism, reserved for its proper use, which is, as the *General Catechetical Directory* states, to provide

“a correct exposition of the Faith, and when committed to memory, help toward the firm possession of truth....Formulas are generally presented and explained when the lesson or inquiry has reached the point of synthesis.” (GCD 73)

So many modern R.E. Programmes are inadequate, much Catholic doctrine being omitted, underplayed, or unclear, that the Catholic parent or teacher needs to look

very carefully at what is being conveyed in the official (i.e. in most cases diocesan) R.E. Programme of the school. Much anxiety and doubt have been expressed in recent months about the content and method of R.E. in Catholic schools, and the appearance of the new national R.E. Programme for Catholic primary schools, *Here I Am* will only serve to heighten parents' fears (see under "Papal Teaching" Section 2 on systematic teaching as opposed to schemes based on life-experience). *What every Catholic child should know about the Faith* is an attempt to enable parents and teachers to supplement, if necessary, the school's R.E. Programme with a course of sound instruction. The inclusion of the Catechism in the work proposed in this book will no doubt surprise most people, and amuse the devotees of modern trends, so some explanation is needed.

Firstly, Catechisms have been used successfully for centuries, and are recommended by the Popes of our own time. (See the Section on Papal Teaching: "Integrity of content")

"The catechesis of children is an initial catechesis but not a fragmentary one..." (*Catechesi Tradendae* by Pope John Paul II, Section 37)

"...the goal which catechesis must of necessity have, namely, the presentation of the Christian Faith in its entirety." (General Catechetical Directory, Foreword - Pope Paul VI)

"Catechesis begins, therefore, with a rather simple presentation of the entire structure of the Christian message (using also summary or global formulas)..." (GCD 38). A Catechism and a Creed provide the "summary or global formulas" referred to.

Section 73 of the GCD, quoted above, also makes the point that formulas "make it possible for a uniform way of speaking to be used among the faithful."

Secondly, the *Penny Catechism*, almost forgotten today, is still the only one we have. Slightly old-fashioned wording here and there does not affect its most important feature, which is that it is doctrinally sound, and complete.

Going back to the *Penny Catechism*, the question numbers given in the Basic Knowledge pages are simply suggestions, but we do think that all of them should be at least looked at, studied, and discussed: then some, perhaps all, could be learned by heart. Who could improve on the definition of prayer, for example: "the raising up of the mind and heart to God"? In whole sections it would be difficult to know what to leave out. For example, on the second article of the Creed, "And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, Our Lord," we have fifteen short answers, all of them essential knowledge, all perfectly understandable, and expressed clearly with no outmoded expressions.

Moreover, in this very section on the second article of the Creed, we have an example of the way in which Pope Paul VI's Creed wonderfully supplements the conciseness and accuracy of the Catechism, Pope Paul's aim being not simply to define, but to do this in such a way that the warmth and joy of our Faith shine through.

(See Junior 2 Basic Knowledge: Faith: additional material on Catechism answer 43; also in regard to Catechism answer 46, see Junior 3: the Mass, final paragraphs on the Real Presence of Our Lord In the Blessed Sacrament, taken from Pope Paul's Creed.)

These two sources, then, the *Penny Catechism* and Pope Paul's Creed, can provide a sound basis for instruction, supplemented by a thoroughly orthodox Catholic primary R.E. Programme to fill it out, make it interesting, and, most important of all, to make it a part of the children's lives, a foundation for the practice of their Faith. We earnestly recommend this course of action to Catholic parents and teachers.

RESOURCES THAT WILL HELP YOU

A Catholic Bible

A Catholic Children's Bible *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* contains the teaching of the Church and has an Index useful for reference.

The Compendium to the Catechism a summary of the Catechism and a good teaching tool.

Faith and Life Series an R.E. Programme with a teacher's book and an activity book for every age from 5-14. This programme is fully comprehensive, very clear and contains well planned worksheets for pupils and outlines of lessons for teachers.

The Simple Prayer book has all the prayers you need to teach.

The '*Penny*' *Catechism* gives concise easily remembered answers.

The R.E. textbook *Faith and Life Series* books for ages 5-14.

Bread of Life by Fr Martin Edwards. A beautiful book about first Confession £4.95.

ALL THESE ARE AVAILABLE FROM THE C.T.S. SHOP tel. 020 7834 1363.

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BOOKS FOR TEENAGERS

Sheehan's Apologetics a reprint of the famous religious textbook £13.95.

The Baltimore Catechism books 1, 2 and 3.

THESE ARE AVAILABLE FROM BARONIUS PRESS LTD.

www.baroniuspress.com P O Box 47611, SE4 1WJ

Catechism for Youth by Fr Carlos Buela. Available from www.ivepress.org

Understanding the Scriptures a complete course of Bible Study from Genesis to Revelation, edited by Scott Hahn. 540 A4 pages illustrated with maps, charts and quotations from the saints and *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* £45.

AVAILABLE FROM ST ANTHONY COMMUNICATIONS, tel. 01834 812643.

Wake up to God by John Reid. A book where youngsters will find all the essentials of the faith explained clearly. www.book-disciples.org

AVAILABLE FREE, FOR THREE 1ST CLASS STAMPS TO COVER POSTAGE, FROM BOOK DISCIPLES, 7, BRADBOURNE STREET, LONDON SW6 3TF.

A BOOK FOR THE TEACHER.

We believe by Mgr Gilbey – a beautiful exposition of the Catholic faith. £7.95.
FROM Mr C. V. WALNE, 100, GILBERT ROAD,CAMBRIDGE. CB4 9PB.

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OTHER WEB-SITES WHICH ARE USEFUL.

Vatican [www..vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va)

Catholic Answers www.catholic.com will answer your queries;

M A Associates www.catholicassociates.com devotional and catechetical;

Dennis Barton www.churchinhistory.org corrects misleading myths;

Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice www.proecclesia.com over 200 talks on the faith;

EWTN www.ewtn.com also on satellite TV. SKY 589 and radio

Visit www.ewtn.com/religiouscatalogue to buy DVDs on the Sacraments, lives of saints, and my series *Discovering our Glorious Faith*.

These websites have links to other helpful websites

First Year Infants 4-5 Year Olds.

Autumn Term

Teach Sign of the Cross.

God Creator - ie. made everything out of nothing. Let children suggest things God has made. Correct mistakes sympathetically - eg. man made things.

Prayer Thank you God for making the sun etc.

Follow up Pictures of things God has made. Classroom frieze of God's creation. Children's own thank you prayers written down for them etc.

God Life giver - taught as above.

Prayer Thank you God for giving me life.

Follow up Plant mustard seeds on blotting paper and point out seeds - made by God - have life in them.

Teach about Ourselves

Why God made us. His great love for us; our great destiny to live with him in His home - Heaven. Because we are made to be his close friends God has made us like Him in that we have intelligence and free will - explain terms. Compare us with animals.

Prayer Act of love for God - children's words.

Follow up act children choosing to be good or bad.

God became man for love of us. Chose His mother.

Prayer First part of the Hail Mary carefully explained.

Follow up act, draw the story of the Annunciation.

Nativity The Christmas Story told in detail. Emphasise that the baby in the manger is God.

Prayer Carefully chosen carols. Made up prayers.

Follow up Nativity play. Christmas pictures, cards and crib.

Spring Term.

Epiphany (revising Christmas story) and Flight into Egypt.

Prayer Complete Hail Mary.

Jesus Growing up full of goodness - good example.

Prayer “Dear Jesus, I want to be kind and good like you. Please help me”.
Pray every bedtime.

Jesus’ public life some miracles and parables,

Prayer Teach the first phrase of the “Our Father”. Add Gradually,

Jesus’ Passion, Death on the cross and Resurrection.

Prayer Act of contrition in children’s own words.

Summer Term.

Ascension - Heaven, Jesus is still with us in our hearts and in the Blessed Sacrament in Church - Mass,

Pentecost Start of the Church. Our Bishops and priests are successors of the Apostles. Our Lady, Saints.

Behaviour in Church. Practise reverence in classroom, or with parents in visits, explain genuflection - Real Presence.

Revise year’s work briefly,

Second Year Infants 5-6 Year Olds

Autumn Term GOD - MYSTERY - but some light.

Revise **Creator, Life giver** and Teach that He is different from us.

Eternal - God had no beginning unlike us no change and no end. He is everywhere. Compare with sunlight flooding a room all over the Universe.

Almighty - nothing is hard or impossible with God. Knows everything even our unspoken thoughts. Let children think for a moment and point out that only God knows what they thought. This leads naturally to prayer. We can communicate with God anywhere any time to his delight as He loves us so.

Trinity. Another way God is different from us is that He is three persons in one nature. Father Son and Holy Spirit, equal and divine, each has all the qualities listed above - not a contradiction.

Revise **Sign of the Cross.** Words by Jesus. This starts and ends prayer - can start journeys, work or any other activity. Always make it reverently.

Second person of the Blessed Trinity - God the Son - became man Jesus Christ - to REDEEM and to TEACH us.

REDEEM us because our first parents, Adam and Eve, rejected God when they sinned. Intelligent. Knew what they were doing. Free, chose to disobey when tempted. (Chapter 3 Genesis.)

TEACH us truths we need to know. (Chapter 17 verse 37, John.)

Annunciation.(Luke chapter 1, verse 26) and **Visitation.**

Nativity (Luke chapter 2, verse 1 - 20).

Spring Term

Revise Christmas Story.

Presentation in the Temple (Luke Chapter 2 verse 22)

Epiphany and Flight into Egypt. (Matt, Chapter 2).

Return to Nazareth and when Jesus is lost in the Temple.(Luke Chapter 2, 40) Stress that Jesus is God - 'His father's house'. Son of God is God, as child of human is human, or foal from a horse is a horse.

Miracles, parables and teaching as in the Gospels all show his divinity as well as his love.

Palm Sunday, the Last Supper. (Luke, chapter 22)

Agony in the garden, betrayal, trial, passion and death.

Show connections with Holy Week liturgy and Stations of the Cross.

Resurrection - (Luke, chapter 24) Jesus is the only person who ever brought himself back to life because He is God. Stress that He is alive now in Heaven and in Blessed Sacrament and the living Church we belong to now.

Summer Term

Ascension (Luke chapter 14 verse 50). Pentecost (Acts chapter 1).

Early Church, Mass, sacrifice of Calvary 'perpetuated on our altars'. The only way we can give proper worship to God is by uniting with Jesus in His sacrifice. Teach the Real Presence and 'My Lord and God' at Consecration.

Our Lady and stories of the Saints, Heaven Hell, and Purgatory.

Third Year Infants 6-7 Year Olds.

Autumn Term

GOD - revise what has been taught.

SPIRIT - real, powerful, but not material. Compare to a mother's love.

Teach Angels, Guardian Angels, our souls, Holy Souls in Purgatory. Saints. God is intelligent ie. knows everything, thinks. God is free ie. chooses His actions. God is love, pure unmixed love for each of us. He thought of us from all eternity, called us into existence and destines us to live with Him forever.

Ourselves, our souls are made like God a little, ie. in our limited way we are intelligent and free, the only creatures on this planet who can read, play the piano etc who can choose to love, to sin, who can pray. God made us like this as he wants us for companions now and for all eternity. As His friends now we must pray, formally - Our Father, Hail Mary etc. and informally - made up spontaneous prayers any time we talk to God or think of Him, raise our minds and hearts to Him, give Him our attention as He always gives us His. But the discipline of a set time for prayer each day is essential; bed time perhaps but teach the morning offering too.

Baptism. We are destined for Heaven - God's home so we need the equipment necessary to live there, a share of God's life. This is Grace the gift we receive at baptism, making us a child of God and member of His Church. (John 3). It is our most precious possession, strengthened by prayer and good works, weakened by sin, neglect of prayer or Mass and Sacraments.

Retell the Annunciation and Visitation and explain Our Lady's Immaculate Conception: i.e. She had sanctifying grace from the first moment of her existence. St Joseph Jesus' chosen foster father (Matt 1).

The Nativity stories. We welcome Jesus in our hearts with love.

Spring Term

The early life of Jesus. His baptism (Matt 3.13) and His public life after the weeks in the desert.

Miracles, especially the feeding of the 5,000 (John 6).

Remote preparation for Holy Communion, parables, beatitudes (Luke 6.20). Lent. Compare with 40 days in the desert prayer and denial.

Devotions e.g. Rosary, Way of the Cross, all show our love for Jesus.

The first Holy Week (John 12.12), the last Supper (John 13), Agony in the Garden (Luke 22.39), Passion and Death (John 18-20), Resurrection.

Summer Term

Risen Christ, (John 20,21. Luke 24). Ascension. Pentecost.

Teach about Mass in detail, stressing that it is a sacrifice replacing those of the Old Testament, and perpetuating on our altars the Sacrifice of Calvary.

English Martyrs, Our Lady, Saints. Heaven - knowing God as He is (1 Cor. 13.12). Purgatory and Holy Souls. Hell - devils. Pray for sinners - Lourdes - Fatima.

First Year Juniors 7-8 Year Olds.

Autumn Term

Revise all learnt about God.

Teach **Infinite** - no limits to His qualities, compare with us.

Goodness without limit is compelling. We are made to love goodness - good music, good food, good health, good friends, and the infinitely Good God above all.

Trinity - a mystery but we can think about it. Glory be. . . Jesus gave us 'in the name of the Father. . .' when He told the Apostles to baptise and give people His life.'

Sanctifying Grace - the gift which makes it possible to know love and serve God here and be happy with Him in Heaven. Adam and Eve were each given Grace but lost it when they sinned. The Fall, contrition, promise of redemption. Redeemed by Jesus dying on the cross to atone, God/Man. Freely given at baptism it is our most precious possession. It enables us when we die, to know God directly because it is a share in His life. 'When little babies are baptised God's greatest love is shown. For then He gives new life to them. A life that's like His own'. It grows with each prayer, good deed, Confession and Communion and weakens with sin, failure to pray and neglect of sacraments. It is more important than wealth or fame 'what does it profit'. (Matt 16 v26) It is the only thing we take with us when we die. Holy Souls.

Annunciation Visitation Nativity (introduce Rosary). The Christmas Story told, acted, drawn etc.

Spring Term

The Sacrament of Penance - Confession

True love of God is more than just saying words, it means:

Prayer Sunday Mass, Daily Prayers lovingly said;

Keeping the commandments even when it is difficult;

Loving our neighbour as ourselves for God's sake.

These things are not easy so we all fail at times, that is sin.

Conscience - inner judgement - tells us when we sin or when we are considering doing something sinful- We must listen.

The Ten Commandments given by Almighty God to Moses in the Old Testament (Exodus 20 v7 - v17) guide us - Maker's instructions. First three our duty to God, other seven to our neighbour.

The Teaching of Our Divine Lord and His Church complete our guidance.

What to do when you sin: say sorry to God at once, make a good Act of Contrition at Night Prayers, go to Confession.

Why are you sorry?

1. damaged yourself spiritually - painful to put right;
2. sin caused Our Lord to suffer on the Cross;
3. serious sin separates us from God who is Infinite Goodness.

Sin is the worst evil in the world. Adam and Eve's Original Sin caused much misery.

Jesus came to save us from sin. He suffered and died to atone for Original Sin and all sins since, He went about forgiving sins - Paralysed Man (Luke 5 v.17 on) Mary Magdalen (Luke 7 v.37 on) Zacchaeus (Luke 19 v2 on.) He told parables about God's forgiveness. The Good Shepherd, the lost coin, the Prodigal Son (Luke 15 v3 on.) Tell each of these as a separate story, having re-read it first. Story of Jesus's Passion and Death - (Luke 22 v.39 to end of 23.) Resurrection - (John 20 v1-18). On the first Easter Sunday Jesus gave His power to forgive sins to His Apostles (John 20 v19). The Apostles passed it on to the next generation of priests and so it has come down through the ages to our priests today. It is called - Sacrament of Penance or Reconciliation or Going to Confession. We get grace from it as well as forgiveness - it is a Sacrament.

What We Do

Before **Confession** - Ask Jesus for help - then:

1. Find out our sins: i.e. examine our consciences:

*“Think of God, His Name and Day. Parents too who care for you.
Are you kind in every way? Pure and honest, truthful too?”*

2. Say we are sorry - an Act of Contrition:

*“O My God, because you are so good, I am very sorry I have
sinned against you and with the help of your Grace I will try not to
sin again. Amen”*

In **Confession**: kneel down and say:

*Bless me Father for I have sinned,
This is my first Confession, these are my sins,
I have ... I have ... I have ...
That is all I can remember, Father.*

Listen while Father talks to you, and remember the prayer he asks you to say for your penance.

Say an Act of Contrition, and listen while Father says the words of absolution which take away your sins. Say “thank you Father” and go to kneel in Church.

After **Confession**

1. Say your Penance carefully
2. Say thank you to Jesus for forgiving your sins
3. Say a little prayer for the priest.

Parents - don't even suggest to your child he should worry about confession. Most young children actually enjoy it. Show them the confessional about a week before they go so they are at home in it. Go frequently for a while to consolidate their knowledge, then monthly.

Summer Term

First Holy Communion

Remote Preparation already carried out will have included:

1. Lessons on the Mass, Our Divine Lord's Real Presence in the Blessed Sacrament, reverence when present at Mass, visits etc.

2. The knowledge that being God, Jesus has all power (for instance the miracles and Resurrection) and is perfect Truth - so when He says "This is my Body" - it really is.

3. Development of a devotional love for Our Lord because of His goodness and His love for each of us, expressed in Acts of Love and anticipation in Night Prayers.

Now we can teach:

Manna in the desert (Exodus 16 v.13 on)

The Passover (Exodus 12)

The Marriage Feast at Cana (John 2 1-11)

Feeding the 5,000 (John 6 v1-72)

The Last Supper (Luke 22 -13). Explain this was the First Mass, Jesus instituted the Blessed Sacrament and ordained the Apostles as priests. This priesthood has been passed down continuously ever since to Catholic Priests today. They can offer Mass and consecrate Bread and Wine into Our Lord. Teach your child to say "My Lord and My God" at the Consecration and how to pray the Mass reverently.

The Sacrifice of Calvary always before God as Jesus is always interceding for us. At Mass it breaks through to Earth. Mass is the Sacrifice of Calvary "perpetuated on our altars". It is the best way to worship God as we are united with our Divine Lord in our prayer. Try and realise what a great privilege it is to assist at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, by your appreciation of it.

Holy Communion unites us all as we all receive the living Christ, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity. He feeds our souls with Himself and gives us Grace. Compare with manna, feeding 5,000, Last Supper.

Before **Holy Communion**

1. We fast for one hour - except from water - warn about sweets.
2. We pray the prayers of Mass carefully and say we are sorry for any sins on our consciences. Never receive Holy Communion if in serious sin. Go to confession first, as we must be in a state of Grace to receive Our Lord.
3. Say "Jesus, Thou art coming, Holy as Thou art, Thou the God who made me, to my loving heart."

Receive **Communion**

Walk up slowly, receive on tongue reverently and walk back to place carefully.

After **Communion**

Kneel down remembering Jesus is in you now so you are like an ALTAR

Adore Him - Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts...

Love Him - Jesus, my love, I love You above all things.

Thank Him for all the good things He has given you.

Ask for blessings for others and for yourself.

Resolve to be a better person with Jesus's help.

In the Real Presence Jesus stays with you for about ten minutes.
Spend that time with Him in prayer.

During the day thank Him for coming to you. Go to Holy Communion as often as you can. Every time you receive more Grace and grow a little more like Our Blessed Lord. Also this is one of the best ways to show Him how much you love Him.

Junior Two (8 - 9) BASIC KNOWLEDGE

Autumn and Spring Term - FAITH

The Catechism uses the Apostles' Creed as a sound and convenient basis for the teaching on Faith. However, in addition we have a more expanded summary of belief in the *Creed of the People of God* written by Pope Paul VI, warmly recommended by Pope John Paul II as "a sure point of reference for the content of catechesis." (CT 28) Its brevity - about eight A4-sized pages including the introduction - makes it particularly useful for teachers.

Pope Paul declares it to be a creed which,

"without being strictly speaking a dogmatic definition, repeats in substance, with some developments called for by the spiritual condition of Our time, the Creed of Nicea, the Creed of the immortal Tradition of the Holy Church of God.... We have wished our profession of faith to be to a high degree complete and explicit, in order that it may respond in a fitting way to the need of light felt by so many faithful souls, and by all those in the world, to whatever spiritual family they belong, who are in search of the Truth."

What every Catholic Child

Doctrine

INFANTS 4 -7 yrs

Almighty God - His attributes, Creation, His Love for us who are made in His Image .

Ourselves, Immortal Souls with Intelligence and Free Will, Grace, Heaven. The Devil, Hell, Adam and Eve, the Fall, Original Sin, Promise of Redemption.

The Incarnation, Our Lady, Jesus' Life, Passion, Death, Resurrection and Ascension. The Church Militant, Suffering and Triumphant.

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the Real Presence.

Prayer - formal and informal, the Sacramental System.

JUNIORS

7-8 yrs First Confession and First Holy Communion

8-9 yrs Faith - The Apostle's Creed - Hope

9-10 yrs Charity - The Ten Commandments - The Mass

10-11 yrs The Seven Sacraments - The Church

Pray - before you teach, for help; with

should know about the Faith

Teaching

These five important areas should be covered in each of the three years in greater depth. Also the Liturgical Year should be followed and some Miracles, Parables and Teaching of Our Divine Lord given. Remote preparation for Confession and Holy Communion should be included and some lives of the Saints.

Again follow the Church's Liturgical Year, and include lives of the Saints. A brief résumé of all Doctrine taught should be given at times, e.g. at the end of the school year. Reminder about the teaching on Confession and Communion should be given in the second, third and fourth years, memorising key Catechism answers is important and so is teaching and explaining the correct vocabulary.

the children; and afterwards, for them.

While some of the explanation and theology in Pope Paul's *Creed* is not needed for the primary stage of education, other parts of the text amplify and reinforce the Apostles' Creed and the Catechism; other parts again fill certain gaps very usefully. Moreover, a modest amount of theology is not a bad thing for a Catholic teacher to have at the back of his or her mind, even at primary level, particularly when it comes from one of the Popes.

Catechism: God and Man, our first beginning and last end (1-8), God the Father (16-23), God the Son, Advent, the Annunciation, the Incarnation, St. Joseph (31-49).

Advent - a time of preparation, prayer, joy, for the coming of the Prince of Peace.

References to Gospel story:

Annunciation	Lk 1,26-38
Visitation	Lk 1,39-56
Birth of Our Lord	Lk 2,1-20
The Word made flesh	Jn 1, 1-3; 14

Jesus Christ - true God and true Man, two natures in the one Person. GCD 53:

“Catechesis ought daily to defend and strengthen belief in the divinity of Jesus Christ, in order that he may be accepted not merely for his admirable human life, but that man might recognise him through his words and signs as God’s only-begotten Son.”

Prayers: Hail Mary; the Angelus; Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary

Additional material from the *Creed of the People of God* (CPG) on Catechism answer 43:

“God the Son was made man to redeem us from sin and hell, and to teach us the way to heaven.”

CPG: *“He dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. He proclaimed and established the Kingdom of God, and made us know in Himself the Father. He gave us His new commandment to love one another as He loved us. He taught us the way of the Beatitudes of the Gospel: poverty in spirit, meekness, suffering borne with patience, thirst for justice, mercy, purity of heart, will for peace, persecution suffered for justice’s sake.”*

Catechism: Our Lord’s Passion and death. Redemption. (53-61) the Resurrection (66,67) the Ascension (68,69) the Last Judgment (72, 73)

CPG: *“We believe that Our Lord Jesus Christ, by the sacrifice of the Cross redeemed us from original sin and all the personal sins committed by*

each one of us, so that, in accordance with the word of the Apostle, 'where sin abounded, grace did more abound'."

CPG: on the Resurrection, Ascension, the Second Coming and Last Judgment:

"He was buried, and, of His own power, rose the third day, raising us by His Resurrection to that sharing in the divine life which is the life of grace. He ascended to heaven, and He will come again, this time in glory, to judge the living and the dead: each according to his merits - those who have responded to the Love and Piety of God going to eternal life, those who have refused them to the end going to the fire that is not extinguished."

Catechism: The Holy Spirit, Pentecost (78-82)

CPG: *"We believe in the Holy Spirit, Who is Lord and Giver of Life, Who is adored and glorified together with the Father and the Son. He spoke to us by the prophets; He was sent by Christ after His Resurrection and His Ascension to the Father; He illuminates, vivifies, protects and guides the Church; He purifies the Church's members if they do not shun His grace. His action, which penetrates to the inmost of the soul, enables man to respond to the call of Jesus: be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect."*

Catechism: The Communion of saints, Purgatory (102-107) Sin, original and actual, results of sin (110-127)

CPG on the Kingdom of God: *"The deep solicitude of the Church, the Spouse of Christ, for the needs of men, for their joys and hopes, their griefs and efforts, is nothing other than her great desire to be present to them, in order to illuminate them with the light of Christ and to gather them all in Him, their only Saviour. This solicitude can never mean that the Church conform herself to the things of this world, or that she lessens the ardour of her expectation of her Lord and of the eternal Kingdom."*

CPG on Sin and its consequences: *"We believe that in Adam all have sinned, which means that the original offence committed by him caused human nature, common to all men, to fall to a state in which it bears the consequences of that offence, and which is not the state in which it was at first in our first parents, established as they were in holiness and justice, and in which man knew neither evil nor death. It is human nature so fallen, stripped of the grace that clothed it, injured in its own natural powers and subjected to the dominion of death, that is transmitted to all men, and it is in this sense that every man is born*

in sin. We therefore hold, with the Council of Trent, that original sin is transmitted with human nature, 'not by imitation, but by propagation' and that it is thus 'proper to everyone'."

Catechism: The Immaculate Conception (117, 118)

CPG: *"...(The Blessed Virgin) was, in consideration of the merits of her Son, redeemed in a more eminent manner, preserved from all stain of original sin, and filled with the gift of grace more than all other creatures."*

Catechism: The Resurrection of the Body (129) Life everlasting (131-134)

CPG: *The Assumption of Our Lady. "Joined by a close and indissoluble bond to the Mysteries of the Incarnation and Redemption, the Blessed Virgin, the Immaculate, was at the end of her earthly life raised body and soul to heavenly glory, and likened to her risen Son in anticipation of the future lot of all the just; and we believe that the Blessed Mother of God, the New Eve, Mother of the Church, continues in heaven her maternal role with regard to Christ's members co-operating with the birth and growth of divine life in the souls of the redeemed."*

(The subject of the Church, using Catechism questions 83-101, and other material, is studied in Junior 4 year.)

In every aspect of faith, our prayers and worship go hand in hand with our beliefs. Advent, Christmas, Lent, Holy Week, Pentecost, and the great feast days of the Church naturally form an integral part of instruction in each school year.

The Our Father, the Hail Mary, the mysteries of the holy Rosary, are likewise part of our catechesis. The prayer normally said at the end of the Rosary, "O God, Whose only begotten son...." is a particularly good example of instructive prayer: Our Lord's work of Redemption through His life, death, and Resurrection; and our response to it by following in His footsteps.

The same can be said of many hymns. For example, "Soul of my Saviour", short and easily memorised, makes a good thanksgiving after Holy Communion. "O Godhead hid" (original words by St. Thomas Aquinas) is excellent material for teaching the Blessed Sacrament of the altar.

Note on Memorisation. Archbishop McNamara, in his *Talk to Primary School Teachers*, quotes Pope John Paul II in support of memorisation of key texts and formulas as well as prayers.

The *General Catechetical Directory* also makes the following point in regard to formulas:

“Formulas permit the thoughts of the mind to be expressed accurately, are appropriate for a correct exposition of the faith, and, when committed to memory, help toward the firm possession of truth. Finally, they make it possible for a uniform way of speaking to be used among the faithful. Formulas are generally presented and explained when the lesson or inquiry has reached the point of synthesis.” (GCD 73)

Junior Two

Summer Term - HOPE

Definition: (Catechism No. 136) *“Hope is a supernatural gift of God, by which we firmly trust that God will give us eternal life and all the means necessary to obtain it, if we do what He requires of us.”*

A very important definition, well worth learning by heart, because the last phrase, “if we do what He requires of us”, is an example of the kind of orthodox traditional Catholic teaching that is rejected by some modern theologians and their followers, who have been commissioned to compile diocesan R.E. schemes. To quote from one of them: “I try to be good, not so as to earn my place in heaven (being good doesn’t earn heaven) but as a ‘Thank you to my generous Father.’ And a few pages further on: “We go to God because we are God’s children, not because we are good children.”

Here we are presented with the serious error that our salvation is assured. This is the sin of Presumption (complacency) at the opposite extreme from the sin of Despair.

*“Presumption is a rash expectation of salvation and the graces necessary to lead us to it, without taking the means thereto.”
(Hart’s Catholic Doctrine - Imprimatur 1916)*

To get things in the right perspective, on the one hand we must not fall into the error of thinking that we can attain salvation by our own efforts alone. We need the help of God’s grace. On the other hand we must not think God will save us irrespective of any effort or lack of effort on our part.

The GCD (69) states: *“It is not right to minimise the grave responsibility which everyone has regarding his future destiny. Catechesis cannot pass over in silence the judgment after death of each man or the expiatory punishments of Purgatory, or the sad and*

lamentable reality of eternal death, or the final judgment.”

Hart’s Doctrine gives clear guidelines: “Hope, then, or true confidence in God, requires that we should not be excessively uneasy about our salvation - which may mean despair....and that we should not throw off all sense of fear and anxiety in regard to it - which may mean presumption.”

Catechism: 135-143, 179: the Our Father and Hail Mary 144, 145, 162, 163, 167
“Our Father” - we are accustomed to addressing God this way in prayer, following Our Lord’s teaching, but it was startlingly new to His hearers, a new way of looking at God. This is the basis of our **hope** of salvation. “We pray **with confidence** in the words our Saviour gave us, as we say, Our Father.....”

We must pray daily also to Our Blessed Lady, Mother of God, and our Mother also.

Parables: “The Prodigal Son, “The Lost Sheep”

Our salvation depends **on God** - sanctifying grace, freely given, and also **on ourselves** - prayer, good works, the sacraments.

One of the saints summed it up in a famous and memorable phrase: “Work as if everything depended on you, and pray as if everything depended on God.”

Junior Three (9 - 10)

BASIC KNOWLEDGE Autumn & Spring Terms - CHARITY

Definition: (Catechism No. 169)

Conscience: We keep rules at home, at school, with those we play with - a sign of our care for others. We keep God’s rules too, to show our love for Him. This is the “voice of conscience”. The Holy Spirit helps us to do more than keep the rules. (169-171)

The Old Covenant and the Old Law. The giving of the Ten Commandments (172-174)

The New Law “living by the Spirit”, imitating Our Lord. “Be perfect” - through prayer and the sacraments we strive to live an ever more perfect Christian life.

The two great precepts of Charity 320. Works of mercy and the Beatitudes (321-323), all needing copious examples.

The last two chapters of the Catechism, The Christian’s Rule of Life, and the Christian’s Daily Exercise, should logically slot in here, but these are probably the sections where the Catechism’s outmoded approach and phraseology are most

glaringly apparent. (N.B. The doctrine is perfectly sound.) While some questions and answers are acceptable enough, notably 340-342, others are stilted, intimidating, or quite frankly bizarre to modern taste. In fact the question-and-answer approach is hardly appropriate to discussion of prayer, devotions, avoidance of sin, and growth in holiness. A good R.E. Programme, wide reading, and lots of personal encouragement are needed here in preference to formulas.

Original Sin. (115-117) Revision of last years work on the Creed. Consequences of Original Sin: revise last year's work using the section of the CPG on the Fall of Man.

GCD: Section 63: *“Christ commissioned His Apostles to teach the observance of everything that He had commanded (cf. Matt 28,20). Catechesis, therefore, must include not only those things which are to be believed, but also those things which are to be done.... ..Further, the conscience itself of Christians must be taught that there are norms which are absolute, that is, which bind in every case and on all people.”*

1st, 2nd, and 3rd Commandments of God - reverence for God, Putting Him first (175, 176, 188, 189, 192-194).

4th Commandment (196-203). Answer 197: “By the fourth Commandment we are commanded to love, reverence, and obey our parents in all that is not sin.” In Answer 201 on the duty of parents toward their children, the word “love” is not included: “The duty of parents towards their children is to provide for them, to instruct and correct them, and to give them a good Catholic education.” (In Hart’s Catholic Doctrine in the commentary on this Catechism question, the word “love” is included.)

It can be argued that the duty of loving our children is fulfilled by providing for them, and by instructing, correcting, and educating them, but the authors believe that catechetical brevity is overdone here. Parental love should not merely take the form of duty; it should constantly be assured and expressed by word and gesture. In a book of instruction, as in real life, this important point should be spelled out clearly, not merely implied.

5th Commandment (205-208)

6th and 9th commandments (209-211, 223). At the primary stage it is probably best to leave sex instruction, and the moral education stemming from it, to parents, to be provided at the times when it is evidently needed, eg. when questions are asked, and at certain stages of physical development.

7th Commandment (214-217)

8th Commandment (219-222)

10th Commandment (226, 227)

Many examples need to be found, and discussed, to illustrate not only the ways in which the Commandments may be broken, particularly by children, but also the ways in which we can be positively good, especially if we have recently offended someone.

Negative Aspect

disobedience to parents and teachers, and others in charge of us; sulkiness, slowness to obey

fighting, quarrelling, name-calling

stealing, cheating, vandalism

Positive Aspect

cheerful obedience, readiness to help, even without being asked

friendliness, invitation to join in playground games, etc.

respect for what belongs to others; private property, School property, public property.

Commandments of the Church.

Various changes in the Church's rules over recent years have rendered some answers only partly accurate. Restrict Catechism answers to be learned to 228, 229, 230.

Junior Three

Summer Term - THE MASS

From Archbishop McNamara's *Talk Given to Primary School Teachers*, Dublin 1985: -

"Clear instruction on the Mass as Sacrifice is one of the major criteria of good catechesis today: it is important not only because of the intrinsic importance of the doctrine itself, but also because of the central position the Mass holds in the whole economy of salvation."

Sacrifice under the Old Law - offering of something set aside for God.

Altar. Priest. Victim offered up to God alone (275)

The Passover Feast

The Mass, the Sacrifice of the New Law

Liturgy of the Word The Eucharistic Liturgy

The Sacrifice of the Mass one and the same as the Sacrifice of Calvary:

Calvary > Jesus Christ both Priest and Victim on the < altar of the Cross
The Mass altar in Church

Our Lord's mystical death - separate consecrations of the bread and the wine.
Our Lord Himself acts through the ministry of His priests.(278)

We offer this perfect gift, and are offered "through Him, with Him, in Him." Holy Communion - not only a sign of renewed life, but Christ Himself.

Encourage respect for the Blessed Sacrament - state of grace for Holy Communion, respect in church, genuflection, no unnecessary conversation.

Additional material:

CPG: *"We believe that the Mass, celebrated by the priest representing the person of Christ by virtue of the power received through the Sacrament of Orders, and offered by him in the name of Christ and the members of His Mystical Body, is the Sacrifice of Calvary rendered sacramentally present on our altars."*

In the **CPG** section on Transubstantiation, Pope Paul gives us as good a description of this sacred Mystery as we are likely to find anywhere. While it would probably not be appropriate to read the whole of it to Junior children, or to direct them to copy it out, the complete text - not very long - presents profound theology with such clarity and simplicity that it is invaluable as background material for teachers of pupils of any age.

Here are the first and last parts of this section of the Creed of the People of God.

"We believe that as the bread and wine consecrated by the Lord at the Last Supper were changed into His Body and His Blood which were to be offered for us on the Cross, likewise the bread and wine consecrated by the priest are changed into the Body and Blood of Christ enthroned gloriously in Heaven, and We believe that the mysterious presence of the Lord, under what continues to appear to our senses as before, is a true, real, and substantial presence...."

The unique and indivisible existence of the Lord glorious in Heaven is not multiplied, but is rendered present by the Sacrament in the many places on earth where Mass is celebrated; and this existence remains present, after the Sacrifice, in the Blessed Sacrament

which is, in the tabernacle, the living heart in each of our churches.

And it is our very delightful duty to honour and adore in the Blessed Host which our eyes see, the Incarnate Word Whom they cannot see, and Who, without leaving Heaven, is made present before us.” (cf. Catechism Q. 46: Where is Jesus Christ?)

Junior Four (10 - 11) BASIC KNOWLEDGE

Autumn and Spring Terms - THE SACRAMENTS

Grace Revision of Catechism Questions under Hope from the previous year (138-140). State of grace (272). the Life of grace.

The Sacraments in general (249-255)

On Calvary Our Lord won for us all possible graces. Through His Church He applies them to our souls in the Sacraments.

GCD 57: *“In catechesis on the sacraments, much importance should be placed on the explanation of the signs. Catechesis should lead the faithful through the visible signs to ponder God’s invisible mysteries of salvation.”*

Baptism. The birth of the soul to the life of grace. The Catechism answer on the effects of Baptism is very important in view of :-

- (a) widespread false teaching today on the nature of original sin;
- (b) the elimination of grace from some R.E. Programmes; and
- (c) the tendency in many quarters to present Baptism as no more than a celebration of our initiation into the Church, God’s Family.

Confirmation. The remarks under (c) above apply also to Confirmation which likewise may be presented simply as a ‘coming of age’ ceremony, a kind of Christian ‘bar mitzvah’.

GCD 57: *“Confirmation binds the Christian more perfectly to the Church, and enriches him with a special strength of the Holy Spirit, that he may live in the world as a witness of Christ.”*

Holy Eucharist. For positive teaching revise work on the Mass and the Holy

Eucharist covered in Junior 3. Stress the special importance of frequent Holy Communion.

It is also very necessary these days when the doctrine of Grace - and hence the concept of a state of grace - has been eliminated from many (perhaps most) modern R.E. Programmes, to point out the necessity of being in a state of grace to receive Holy Communion.

Avoid a negative view. The idea of the rule is not to make us over-fearful or to set up an obstacle, but to ensure that we treat Our Lord with the utmost respect.

Sacrament of Reconciliation. conditions for forgiveness; the special value of perfect contrition

Frequent Confession - not only when we fall into serious sin, but also at regular intervals to obtain an increase of grace in our souls, and to conquer our faults.

Vatican II *Lumen Gentium II* (last paragraph): *“Strengthened by so many and such great means of salvation, all the faithful, whatever their condition or state - though each in his own way - are called by the Lord to that perfection of sanctity by which the Father Himself is perfect.”*

Summer Term - THE CHURCH

Catechism: 83-101

Families. Love for one another. The head of a family.

The People of God in the Old Testament. Stories of God's dealings with His people.

GCD 65: *“The Church, instituted by Christ, had its origin in His death and Resurrection. She is the new People of God, prepared for in the course of the history of Israel; a People to which Christ gives life and growth through the outpouring of the Spirit and which He perpetually renews and directs by His hierarchical and charismatic gifts; ‘a People made one with the unity of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit’.” (Lumen Gentium 4).....
.....The Church, therefore, inasmuch as she is the People of God, the society of the faithful, and the communion of men in Christ, is the work of God's saving love in Christ. And the principles which gave birth to Christians, form them, and establish them as a community, (namely, the deposit of faith,*

the sacraments, and the apostolic ministries) are found in the Catholic Church. To her they have been entrusted, and from them spring the ecclesial activities.....”

Union of all the faithful under one Head, Jesus Christ. (84,85)

The Pope, the visible head of the Church on earth, the Vicar of Christ. (86)

The Petrine texts, "Thou art Peter", and "Feed my lambs".

Papal Infallibility. GCD 65: *“The Church, however, is essentially a hierarchical society; it is a people guided by its shepherds, who are in union with the Supreme Pontiff, the Vicar of Christ, and who are under his direction. (Cf. Lumen Gentium 22)”*

CPG: *“We believe in the infallibility enjoyed by the Successor of Peter when he teaches ex cathedra as Pastor and Teacher of all the Faithful, and which is assured also to the Episcopal Body when it exercises with him the supreme magisterium.” (Cf. Lumen Gentium 25)*

Marks of the Church. (94-99)

One. CPG: *“We believe that the Church founded by Jesus Christ and for which He prayed is indefectibly (i.e. not subject to failure or decay) one in faith, worship, and the bond of hierarchical communion.”*

Holy . CPG: *“She (the Church) is therefore holy, though she has sinners in her bosom, because she herself has no other life but that of grace: it is by living by her life that her members are sanctified; it is by removing themselves from her life that they fall into sins and disorders that prevent the radiation of her sanctity.”*

Catholic. CPG: *”....the Church on earth, the pilgrim People of God here below, and the Church filled with heavenly blessings; the germ and the first fruits of the Kingdom of God, through which the work and the sufferings of Redemption are continued throughout human history, and which looks for its perfect accomplishment beyond time in glory.” (Cf. Lumen Gentium 5, 8)*

GCD 67: *“For this reason the Church is shown by the Second Vatican Council as a reality that embraces all history, accepts all its different cultures, and directs them to God; and by virtue of the action of Christ’s Spirit is constituted ‘the universal Sacrament of Salvation’.”*

Apostolic. CPG: *”....founded upon the Apostles and handing on from*

century to century their ever-living word and their powers as pastors in the Successor of Peter and the Bishops in communion with him; perpetually assisted by the Holy Spirit, she has the charge of guarding, teaching, explaining and spreading the Truth which God revealed in a then veiled manner by the Prophets, and fully by the Lord Jesus.”

The Final Word

Don't worry if sometimes all your efforts seem to be achieving little. Children often listen and remember what you say without seeming to respond much at the time. Your words may come back to them long after you have gone to your reward. Be assured if you have not spoken to them about the Faith while they are still young, those words will not be there to remember. So take heart and remember G.K. Chesterton's dictum "If a thing is really worth doing, it is worth doing even badly."

Finally, remember that Almighty God does not let Himself be outdone in generosity. Any effort you make will be more than repaid by Him.

Appendix One

1. Papal Teaching on the Place of Catechesis in Catholic Schools

Part of today's confusion about Religious Education is the result of disagreement about how it should be organised within schools. The Catholic teachers who have compiled this booklet believe that systematic direct instruction (catechesis) should take place in the classroom during the timetabled R.E. lesson.

This rather obvious-sounding statement is by no means superfluous. There are theorists and teachers who question the validity of classroom catechesis, but the authors of this booklet have no doubt as to its rightful place in the curriculum of a Catholic school. In this we are following not only the time-honoured practice of past ages, but also the teaching of the Church our own time, particularly as expressed in *Catechesi Tradendae* (1979) by Pope John Paul II, and in the *General Catechetical Directory* (1971), a document compiled by the Sacred Congregation for the Clergy and approved by Pope Paul VI. The following points are made:-

1. Catechesis is for all. "Let us first of all recall that there is no separation or opposition between catechesis and evangelisation. Nor can the two be simply identified with each other. Instead they have close links whereby they integrate and complement each other." (CT 18) "...But in catechetical practice, this model order must allow for the fact that the initial evangelisation has often not taken place. A certain number of children baptised in infancy come for catechesis in the parish without receiving any other initiation into the faith and still without any explicit Personal attachment to Jesus Christ; they have only the capacity to believe placed within them by Baptism and the presence of the Holy Spirit....for practical reasons, the catechumenal stage of these children will often be carried out largely in the course of the ordinary catechesis." (CT 19)

"The difficulty of giving catechesis to children living in families who do not practise their religion at all or do so in an entirely inadequate way is becoming more and more marked. Sometimes questions are raised about the very possibility and appropriateness of giving them a catechesis. Catechesis is certainly not to be omitted for such children; rather, it is to be planned and carried out in a way that fits in with actual circumstances and conditions. In these cases there is need to establish contact with the families and to study their mental attitudes and styles of life, so that some means can be found to open a dialogue with them. It is also necessary that catechesis presents its material in a way that really responds to the actual possibilities of these children." (GCD 81)

2. Catechesis must be systematic. Pope John Paul II quotes his predecessor Pope Paul VI who, “in his closing speech at the fourth general assembly of the Synod (1977), rejoiced ‘to see how everyone drew attention to the absolute need for systematic catechesis...’ I am not forgetting the interest of the many different occasions for catechesis connected with personal’ family, social and ecclesial life.....but I am stressing the need for organic and systematic Christian instruction, because of the tendency in various quarters to minimise its importance.” (CT 21)

“It is also quite useless to campaign for the abandonment of serious and orderly study of the message of Christ in the name of a method concentrating on life experience. ‘No one can arrive at the whole truth on the basis solely of some simple private experience, that is to say without an adequate explanation of the message of Christ, who is “the way and the truth, and the life” (Jn 14,6).’” Here Pope John Paul is again quoting his predecessor.

He goes further: “Nor is any opposition to be set up between a catechesis taking life as its point of departure and a traditional doctrinal and systematic catechesis. Authentic catechesis is always an orderly and systematic initiation into the revelation that God has given of Himself to humanity in Christ Jesus.....This revelation is not, however, isolated from life or artificially juxtaposed to it. It is concerned with the ultimate meaning of life, and it illumines the whole of life with the light of the Gospel, to inspire it or to question it.” (CT 22)

3. Catechesis and the Sacraments. Catechesis is intrinsically linked with the whole of liturgical and sacramental activity, for it is in the sacraments, especially in the Eucharist, that Christ Jesus works in fullness for the transformation of human beings..... catechesis always has reference to the sacraments. On the one hand, the catechesis that prepares for the sacraments is an eminent kind, and every form of catechesis necessarily leads to the sacraments of faith. On the other hand, authentic practice of the sacraments is bound to have a catechetical aspect. In other words, sacramental life is impoverished, and very soon turns into hollow ritualism if it is not based on serious knowledge of the meaning of the sacraments; and catechesis becomes intellectualised if it fails to come alive in sacramental practice.” (CT 23)

4 Integrity of content of Catechesis at all stages. “...The person who becomes a disciple of Christ has the right to receive ‘the word of faith’ not in mutilated, falsified, or diminished form, but whole and entire, in all its rigour and vigour.” (GCD 30)

“What kind of catechesis would it be that failed to give their full place to man’s creation and sin; to God’s plan of redemption and its long loving preparation and realisation; to the incarnation of the Son of God; to Mary, the Immaculate One, the Mother of God, ever Virgin, raised body and soul to the glory of heaven, and to her role in the mystery of salvation; to the mystery of lawlessness present in our lives and the power of God freeing us from it; to the need for penance and asceticism; to the sacramental and liturgical actions - to the reality of the Eucharistic Presence; to participation in divine life here and hereafter, and so on? Thus, no true catechist can lawfully on his own initiative, make a selection of what he considers important in the deposit of faith as opposed to what he considers unimportant, so as to teach the one and reject the other.” (CT 30)

The catechesis of children “is an initial catechesis but not a fragmentary one, since it will have to reveal, although in an elementary way, all the principal mysteries of faith and their effects on the child’s moral and religious life....” (CT 37)

“...the goal which catechesis must of necessity have, namely, the presentation of the Christian Faith in its entirety.” (GCD Foreword)

“Catechesis begins, therefore, with a rather simple presentation of the entire structure of the Christian message (using also summary or global formulas)....By no means, however, can it stop with this first presentation, but it must be interested in presenting the content in an always more detailed and developed manner, so that individuals among the faithful and the Christian community may arrive at an always more profound and vital acceptance of the Christian message, and may judge the concrete conditions and practices of Christian life by the light of revelation. ” (GCD 38)

The “summary or global formulas” mentioned above are referred to again in GCD 119: “The greatest importance must be attached to catechisms published by ecclesiastical authority. Their purpose is to provide, under a form that is condensed and practical, the witnesses of revelation and of Christian tradition as well as the chief principles which ought to be useful for catechetical activity, that is, for personal education in faith. ”

Appendix Two

EXTRACTS FROM A TALK GIVEN TO PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

BY ARCHBISHOP McNAMARA, DUBLIN. APRIL 1985

The primary school is a privileged place of growth, where the riches of the personality are called forth and where directions are taken that can be decisive for life: life on earth and also for life after death.

Nevertheless, there are some disquieting signs concerning the actual knowledge of the Faith our young people possess as they leave the Catholic school system as a whole.

IMPORTANCE OF VOCABULARY.

It is particularly important to introduce the children at an early age to what I might describe as the central code-words of the Christian faith. Certainly the meaning behind these words must, as far as possible, be explained in a way suited to the mental capacity of the children. It would be wrong, however, to pass over these key terms in silence, or to reserve them for quite a late stage of development, on the grounds that their content is what really counts and that this can be better explained to the children in other words that are more within their grasp.

The following are just some examples of terms that there may be a temptation to avoid or unduly postpone: creation; salvation; grace; everlasting life; body and soul as distinct but united components of the human person, and the destiny of each; sin and its consequences, occasions of sin, the different forms of sin: original, mortal, venial; merit, atonement, indulgences; the communion of saints; judgment; purgatory; heaven; hell.

It is not sufficient to paraphrase the traditional terms of the faith. The terms themselves must be imparted, repeated and explained. As in other subjects, technical terms are also essential in religion. A whole world of meaning is concentrated in them. They are also the necessary means of communication - a kind of indispensable shorthand if you will - between different generations and indeed, in any common discourse about the faith within the Christian community.

USE THE WORD 'CATHOLIC'.

It is also important that from the beginning the pupils be strengthened and affirmed in their identity as Catholics. They are, after all, Catholic Christians and not merely Christians of some indeterminate and unspecified variety. They must not be left with the impression that there is little in the way of a specifically

Catholic identity as distinct from the Christian identity in general.

ANGELS.

Also important for the Catholic child is the doctrine of the angels, whose existence as spiritual beings created by God is part of the faith of the Church. At a time when science is discovering more and more of the amazing complexity of the created universe, it is more than ever appropriate that we be conscious of those exalted creatures who far surpass anything that science can discover, and who are intimately associated with God's plan for the salvation of the world.

GUARDIAN ANGELS.

In particular the traditional doctrine and devotion of the guardian angels must be held in high esteem. The prayer to the guardian angel is a precious part of the heritage of the Catholic child. Its daily recitation is one of those devotional practices which help to develop a sense of the supernatural and of our need for heavenly assistance. In the heavily secularised culture of today such helps are more than ever necessary.

DEVOTIONS.

In this context certain aspects of the faith need be stressed: for example devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, including a more central role for prayer before the Blessed Sacrament in the total relationship of the child to Christ and to God; the regular practice of individual confession in the Sacrament of Penance, for which the child must be helped by school and parents to assume personal responsibility from the beginning; the role of Mary not only as Mother of Jesus, but as Mother of the Church and of each individual Christian, and the all-important part she plays in the life and destiny of each one; devotion to the saints as special friends of Christ, to whose example the children should look for inspiration and to whose intercession they should have habitual recourse a pre-requisite here, of course, is greater familiarity with the lives of the saints, especially those whose influence on the life of the Church, both the Church as a whole and the Irish Church in particular, has been of special importance.

THE MASS.

A topic of quite central importance in this whole context is the Mass as the Sacrifice of the Cross perpetuated through history. In the many visits I have paid to primary schools as Bishop, I have often found the children quite vague on this central doctrine of the faith, even though its meaning is in essence well within their capacity.

While the Eucharist undoubtedly has elements of a sacred meal, these have their place within the overall context of sacrifices: they are not the primary

feature. It is specially important that their significance should not merge in the minds of children with that of a secular celebration or party.

To say that the Mass is a Sacrifice means, of course, that it perpetuates on our altars the Sacrifice of Christ on the Cross. The significance of this for the worshippers is that their participation in the Mass is primarily the offering up of Christ to God. It is in this sense that we enter into Christ's self-offering and that we offer ourselves and our whole lives in union with His offering of Himself.

Clear instruction on the Mass as Sacrifice is one of the major criteria of good catechesis today: it is important not only because of the intrinsic importance of the doctrine itself, but also because of the central position the Mass holds in the whole economy of salvation.

The Mass is closely linked, for example, to the way in which children come to understand God's love for us, of which they rightly hear so much, and by the way in which they express their love for God in turn. It is in the giving up of His Divine Son to suffering and death on the Cross that God's love has found its supreme expression, and it is in union with the love Jesus showed for the Father in humbly accepting the Cross that we can make a return of love to God. Our love for God must pass through the Heart of the crucified Lord. Union with that Heart, expiring through love on the Cross, must always be its characteristic mark.

REDEMPTION.

We touch here on the whole question of God's plan of redemption, an understanding of which is so important to convey to children, also at primary school level. The significance of the Cross does not lie primarily in the unequalled example of patience in suffering and forgiveness of enemies displayed by Jesus on Calvary. It consists rather in the supreme act of love for His Heavenly Father by which Christ accepted death without complaint. In so doing he atoned for the universal mass of human sin and entered into the glory of His risen life, thus restoring mankind as a whole to God's favour and giving them a share in the Resurrection.

ORIGINAL SIN.

In the background here lies the fundamental doctrine of original sin, which is the counterpart of the Redemption. It is an essential element of any true understanding of God's plan of salvation and also of the human condition. It is important that it be presented in its authentic meaning: as the primal sin at the beginning of human history as a result of which we all come into the world deprived of God's grace and favour and with a strong tendency towards sin. This is a different understanding of original sin from that which sees it as the

accumulated sins of successive generations, or exclusively as the pressures that drive us towards sin, whether coming from within ourselves or from the sin-laden human situation in which we find ourselves.

The parallelism between Adam and Christ must be maintained, with all it implies in terms of our original solidarity in sin with Adam and, on the other hand, the infinite love of Christ on the Cross which reaches out to embrace the entire human race and reconciles it to God. “As one man’s trespass led to condemnation for all men,” says St Paul, “so one man’s act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men”. (Rom.5:18).

MEMORISATION.

From what I have said it will be clear to you that I attach great importance to memorisation in the process of learning. Fortunately, I am not relying here simply on my own convictions. May I quote for you from Pope John Paul 11, who speaks as follows about the faculty of memory:

“Should we not attempt to put this faculty back into use in an intelligent and even an original way in catechesis, all the more since the celebration or ‘memorial’ of the great events of the history of salvation requires a precise knowledge of them?”.

One thing at any rate is clear. Young children in general have a great gift for memorisation and this should be used to the full in religious education. We must do our best to help them to take in what they memorise and make it a source of inspiration for their lives. We should not be afraid, however, to ask them to memorise what they do not yet fully understand. To question this would logically entail not asking them to learn something so basic as the Apostles Creed, and much more besides. As time goes on they will grow in understanding of what they have learned. It is essential, that memorisation be prepared for by appropriate introductory matter and accompanied by commentary and illustration. A danger to be avoided, however, is that commentary and introduction loom so large as to put memorisation into the shade and that they come to occupy too large a proportion of the time available for the teaching of the programme. Memorisation must not be seen simply as a minor appendage to the lesson, but as a central part of it.

May Mary, the Mother of the Child Jesus, be your model and inspiration! Like her, may you have the additional blessing of learning from the ones you teach!

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Here is a booklet which contains just what its title indicates, namely a necessary basic minimum of Catholic doctrine which must be taught and learned in the vitally important task of handing on the Faith to our younger generation during their years in the primary school.

Intended as a help towards filling in the gap in direct religious instruction until such time as the new Catechism for the Universal Church is available and in general use, the booklet is soundly based on the *Catechism of Christian Doctrine*, approved by the Archbishops and Bishops of England and Wales and directed to be used in all their dioceses (the traditional "Penny" Catechism) and on Pope Paul VI's *Creed of the People of God*. Viewing the sad state of mankind to-day that courageous Pontiff considered it necessary to proclaim formally the body of truths that the Catholic Church has taken centuries to clarify.

Pope John Paul II, in response to the request of the bishops at the 1977 Synod, gave us his own charter for teaching the faith to-day in the Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae*. "I ardently desire," he wrote, "that this Apostolic Exhortation should strengthen the solidity of the faith and of Christian living, should give fresh vigour to the initiatives in hand, should stimulate creativity - with the required vigilance - and should help to spread....the joy of bringing the mystery of Christ to the world." This booklet fulfils the wishes of the Vicar of Christ regarding content and method in Catholic catechesis. I warmly recommend it to parents, teachers and priests.

Very Rev Canon Francis J Ripley