

# Pre-Kindergarten



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## Introduction

Thank you for answering the call of God to be a teacher of the Faith, which involves leading children closer to Christ! Catechesis is the art of teaching the Faith in order to facilitate a personal encounter with Jesus Christ. The teaching should lead to understanding who Christ is in light of God's word (what He has revealed to us in Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition) in order to be changed through His grace to become more and more like Him. Transformed by the working of grace, "the Christian thus sets himself to follow Christ and learns more and more within the Church to think like Him, to judge like Him, to act in conformity with His commandments, and to hope as He invites us to" (*On Catechesis in Our Time*, Pope John Paul II, #20. Hereafter CT). "The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ: "only He can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity" (CT, #5).

1. How are catechists to teach in a way that leads children and young people into communion with Jesus Christ? Sacred Scripture is the driving force of all catechesis. The students need to know that the teachings are based upon God's Word. In addition, when the Word of God is spoken, grace is given. We need grace in order to receive Jesus' teaching. The *General Directory for Catechesis* (GDC), (a universal Church document promulgated by Pope John Paul II in 1997) tells us that a primary place to encounter Jesus is through the Sacred Scriptures. The Bible transmits "the very word of God..." [For this reason the Church desires that] "catechesis should be an authentic introduction to *lectio divina* (*Divine Readings*)," which is a way of meditating upon Scripture and applying it to one's life (GDC #127). "*Thy Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.*" (Psalm 119:105).
2. An overview of Salvation History is to be presented at the beginning of each grade. Each and every teaching of the Faith that follows should be presented in light of this Story of God's Plan for us (GDC #128). This gives students the context for all the content of our catechesis. See Overview p. 19-20 and Creed, p. 7, number 1.
3. The doctrinal content of our catechesis is found in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which is the "sure norm for teaching the Faith." (GDC #121) All Catholic School administrators, teachers, DRE's, CRE's, catechists and Youth Ministers should regularly utilize the Catechism when teaching the Faith (GDC, #121).
4. Holiness of life is essential in order for the catechist's teaching to bring others into intimacy with Jesus Christ. Teachers must first and foremost be witnesses. "Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses" (*Evangelization in the Modern World*, Pope Paul VI, #41).

In the Curriculum that follows, please note that a truth of the Faith that is being introduced will be **bolded**.

When introducing a new teaching, present a brief overview of the truth of the Faith, helping the students to simply understand the teaching and to see how it is connected to their life.

All other teachings of the Faith, which are not bolded, were introduced in a previous grade and are to be reinforced, leading to greater understanding and integration into the students' lives.

## ***Profile of a Pre-kindergarten Child***

### **Characteristics**

Three and four-year-olds focus on what they experience through the senses, especially what they can feel and move with their hands. “Hands on” work, with concrete objects, is very important.

Order is essential for these young children. The teachers of the Faith, the routine of the catechetical time, the availability of materials for them to use in the room and the rules for being together should be consistent.

If order and hands on, concrete materials are provided, the children are able to work with concentration.

Children learn language very easily at this time in their lives. They love beautiful words, so this is a good opportunity to introduce

- vocabulary such as “holy water font,” “crucifix,” “chalice,” “tabernacle,” “Stations of the Cross.”
- prayer words and phrases, which they can use to create their own prayers of praise and thanks such as Jesus, will you help me with this? and Jesus, thank you for your love.
- songs of worship related to the themes of catechesis.

Young children have a deep sense of wonder and awe. They are naturally curious and seek to “know” things with their senses. They are open to and drawn by both “physical” and “spiritual” wonders, the natural and supernatural.

### **Faith Development Needs**

Pre-school children’s capacity to receive and return love is immense. The announcement of God’s love for them and respect for their capacity to love God is essential to their program.

Young children are nourished by the very basic, but rich, teachings of our Faith. These are announcements that can be returned to again and again, constantly enriching the relationship between Jesus and the child. They include:

- the gift of creation
- God saves Noah and his family
- God reveals His Law to His people
- the birth of Jesus
- Jesus as the Good Shepherd
- Jesus’ love for people - Miracles
- the Death and Resurrection of Jesus
- the true Presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist
- Jesus as the light of the world
- Baptism as the gift of our receiving the risen life of Christ

Three and four-year-olds can pray with joy and simplicity. Praise and thanks come naturally to them in short phrases, song, and repetition of words like “Alleluia,” as well as in their art and their work with materials.

Pre-school children, when their relationship with Jesus is both respected and nurtured, experience deep joy. They believe Jesus is their Savior and in knowing that He loves them, they have a sense of great peace.

Children are to be helped to develop the Cardinal Virtues as habit in order to guide their conduct as a follower of Jesus (CCC 1805-1809).

<u>Prudence:</u>	Discovering our true good and choosing the right means of achieving it (Simplified definition) making a right judgment
<u>Justice:</u>	Giving the proper due to God and neighbor Being fair
<u>Fortitude/Courage:</u>	Firmness in the pursuit of good The courage to do what is right
<u>Temperance:</u>	Moderating the attraction of the pleasures of the senses that provides balance in the use of created goods Acting with self discipline or self control (CCC 1803-1809)

Example: The virtue of justice is exercised when children are fair in sharing their toys.  
The virtue of temperance is exercised when children take one cookie instead of five.

### **Implications**

Young children's capacity and need for love is great. Therefore, the catechist will want to announce God's love (in creation, the Incarnation – Jesus becoming Man, etc.) and model God's love through an attitude of respect for and service to the children. The relationship between Jesus and the child should be nurtured and respected.

A prayerful catechist should model this peace and joy, which is the fruit of a relationship with Jesus.

Wonder and awe can be nurtured in teaching the Truths of the Faith and by drawing attention to and teaching about sacred objects. A deep respect can be fostered through a quieter voice and through the way that the Bible or sacred objects are handled.

The catechist will want to keep in mind the ability of young children to learn language by speaking carefully and respectfully. Difficult liturgical and biblical vocabulary **should be used** after brief explanations. Children will remember new words best if they are associated with an experience of the object in question, i.e. "chalice" should be taught when the children can see a real or model chalice or "genuflection" should be taught when the children enter the Church and can see the burning sanctuary candle and know that Jesus is really present in the tabernacle.

Young children learn best by self-directed activity, and so the preparation of the room with materials is very important. The room should have child-sized furniture and shelves and be orderly and beautiful.

The materials should be carefully chosen with the following criteria:

- offer the child the means to meditate on one of the themes of the curriculum
- be used independently after a brief introduction from the catechist
- be sturdy, attractive, and easily moved from shelf to table

In order to foster the prayer life of the child, the catechist needs to have a healthy prayer life. A commitment to daily prayer assures a heart to Heart relationship with Jesus Christ. A catechist is then a witness, who speaks of the Person of Christ that he/she really knows and loves.

## **Curriculum Guidelines**

*Theme:* God is my Father Who knows, loves and cares for me and is always with me.

### **I. Creed - Profession of Faith**

Section one pertains to what God, Our Heavenly Father has revealed about Himself and His Plan for our salvation (saving us from sin) and sanctification (making us holy) through Jesus Christ His Son by the power of the Holy Spirit. God has acted first. Faith is our response to what God has revealed. These truths are gathered together in the Creed.

1. An overview of Salvation History should be presented in simple sentences such as the following:
  - God loves us and created us to be united with Him.
  - Adam and Eve sinned by disobedience and separated themselves from God.
  - God the Father sent His Son, Jesus, to be our Savior and reunite us with God.
  - We become united with God when we are baptized. Through receiving the Sacrament of Baptism, we become a child of God and Jesus comes to dwell in our heart.

(See Overview / Scope p. 19-20 for the complete lesson plan on God's plan of Salvation History).

**Note:** Sacred Art, the captions that go under the Sacred Art if displayed as a timeline on the wall, and the outline for presenting The Story of the Bible can be downloaded from the Diocesan website: Go to [www.dioceseoflacrosse.com/office&ministries/catechesis/SalvationHistoryinArtwork](http://www.dioceseoflacrosse.com/office&ministries/catechesis/SalvationHistoryinArtwork)

2. There is only one God. There are three Persons in one God: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The three Persons in one God is the Blessed Trinity. God the Father is the first Person, Jesus is the second Person and the Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Blessed Trinity. (CCC 234, 232, 237)

God reveals to us in Sacred Scripture that there is only one God and He is a Trinity of Persons.

**Matthew 28:16-20**

**Jesus said, "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..." (See Prayer Section, Sign of the Cross)**

3. God made the world and everything in it. God is our Creator who created each person to be in friendship (to be united) with Him. God created each person in His image. Human persons have a body and an immortal soul. We are brought into the family of God through the Sacrament of Baptism. (CCC 290, 426, 356-357, 362-364, 759, 375)

Genesis 1:3-31

Creation by God: God created each person out of love. God created the heavens and the earth, animals and plants. . . God created these things to provide for us and He expects us to take care of them.

Genesis 7:11- 8:22

Noah's Ark: God cleansed the earth with the floodwaters and saved Noah and his family by having them build the Ark.

4. God is our Father Who loves us and cares for us. (CCC 305)  
Matthew 6:25-34 "What are we to eat? or What are we to drink?...Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all...All these things will be given you besides."
5. God created angels as spiritual beings. Angels are God's messengers. We all have our own personal guardian angel. Our guardian angel keeps constant, watchful care over us and guides us and protects us on our journey to God in Heaven. (CCC 328-329, 331-333, 336)

Matthew 18:10	Our “angels look upon the face of God.”
Psalms 34:7	“The angel of the Lord delivers all who fear God.”
Psalms 91:10-13	“For God commands the angels to guard you in all your ways.”
Psalms 103:20	Angels are obedient to every command of God.

6. Jesus is God the Son. Jesus was born as man on the first Christmas as our Savior. Jesus loves us. (CCC 464, 461, 463, 443-445)

The Gospels are the most important part of the Bible because they tell us about Jesus’ life, teaching, and how His death and resurrection saved us from sin and re-united us to Himself. (CCC 125)

Luke 1: 26-38	The Annunciation: The Angel Gabriel announces to Mary that she will be the Mother of Jesus. Mary said, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.”
Luke 1:39-45	The Visitation: Mary visits her cousin Elizabeth to serve her in her time of need. Elizabeth was going to have a baby at a very old age.
Luke 2:1-20	The birth of Jesus: The angel said, “For today in the city of David a Savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord.”
Matthew 1:18-2:12	The visit of the Magi: “They prostrated themselves and did Him homage.

Passages that show Jesus’ love for people

John 6: 1-15	Jesus feeds five thousand people
Matthew 19:13-15	Jesus blesses children
Luke 5: 17-26	Jesus heals a crippled man
Luke 7:11-1	Jesus raises a widow’s son
Luke 8: 40-56	Jesus raises the daughter of Jairus

7. Jesus founded the Catholic Church, the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. (CCC 541-542)

Luke 6:12-16	Jesus chooses the twelve Apostles
Matthew 26:26-30	Jesus gives us the Eucharist
Mark 15:33-41	Jesus dies on the cross so that our sins can be forgiven
Mark 16:1-8	Jesus rises from the dead: Jesus overcame death by rising from the dead so that we can live with Him forever in Heaven.
Matthew 28:16-20	Jesus sends the Apostles to continue His mission: 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 the teachings I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.”

## **II. Sacraments – Celebration of the Christian Mystery**

Section two pertains to the way God continues to make available to us His grace won for us by Jesus' saving Death and Resurrection . We receive God's saving grace in the Sacraments which are actions of God to bring us into communion with Him and to strengthen us to remain in communion with Him. He has given us a share in His divine life - for no other reason than He loves us. We need to respond to the grace God gives us in the sacraments.

In Pre-school and Kindergarten, students should be introduced to the following Articles of Faith.

1. A Sacrament is a sacred sign, instituted by Christ, to give grace. We are very close to Jesus when we receive the Sacraments. We need the Sacraments.  
(CCC 1114-117, 1131, 1129, 1210-1212, 1263-1264)
2. In Baptism we become children of God and members of God's Family, the Church.  
(CCC 1212, 1233)
3. Our families, the class, and the parish are part of God's Family, the Church.
4. It is very important that we go to Mass every Sunday. At Mass, we pray to Jesus and He blesses us.  
(CCC 2176)
5. The bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Jesus when the priest prays Jesus' words, "This is My Body. . . This is My Blood. . . Do this in remembrance of Me." The Eucharist (Holy Communion) is no longer ordinary bread. (CCC 1352, 1353)
6. Students should know the names and meanings of the following sacred vessels and sacramentals: tabernacle, holy water, chalice, paten, candle, altar, and crucifix.  
(CCC 1145-1148, 1182, 1383, 1668)
7. The following liturgical gestures are signs in which we show our love and respect for God: genuflection, kneeling, bowing, Sign of the Cross, folding hands for prayer. For example, we genuflect before entering a pew in a Catholic Church as a sign of adoration because Jesus is truly present in the tabernacle. It is always proper to genuflect before a tabernacle and to make a profound bow before the altar of sacrifice if the tabernacle is not directly behind the altar. The Sign of Peace is a sign of love and respect toward our neighbor.  
(CCC 1153-1155, 1208)
8. Students should know the name(s) of the parish priest(s), the bishop and the Pope.

### **III. Life In Christ**

Section three is about how we should respond to Jesus' love by the way we live. As His children, we should live as He has asked. The moral life is not an arbitrary list of rules, but laws of love that help us to know how to live to stay close to Jesus. Living life as Jesus asks us to live leads to true joy and peace.

In Pre-school and Kindergarten, students should be introduced to the following Articles of Faith.

1. God is love. God reveals His love through creation. God created each person with a body and a soul and loves each individual completely. We are children of God, Who is our loving Father. We are to love with our heart. (CCC 219-221, 2083-2086, 363-366)
2. Since we are created in the image of God and He loves us, He wills that we love ourselves. We show love for our soul by praying to Jesus and trying to be good. We show love for our body by proper hygiene, by protecting it from harm, by modesty (dressing properly) and purity (not watching bad programs in which people break the Ten Commandments). (CCC 356-357, 1700-1703)
3. Since all people are created in the image of God and He loves each person, He wills that we love all people. To love means to choose to be kind and respectful and to will the good of another person. This includes being selfless instead of being selfish. Jesus wants us to treat others with kindness, to help those in need and to respect each person and their belongings. (CCC 357, 225, 1766, 2447, 2408, 2262)
4. God gave Moses the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments are for each person to know how to live as a child of God. We are to show our love for God by choosing to follow the Ten Commandments that He gave us. The Ten Commandments are not rules or laws forced on us, but rather the way a child of God motivated by His love chooses to act. (Deuteronomy 5:6-21 Ten Commandments)

The Ten Commandments are like these rules:

- Go to Mass
- Pray your prayers
- Do not tell lies
- Obey your parents
- Do not hurt anyone
- Choose only good programs: TV shows and videos that show us how to love and respect others (CCC 2056-2057, 2060-2063)

Genesis 2:1-3

God's resting and the Sabbath: "God's action is the model for human action. If God 'rested and was refreshed' on the seventh day, we too ought to 'rest' and should let others, especially the poor...The Sabbath brings everyday work to a halt and provides a respite" (CCC 2172).

5. We need to show obedience and honor for our mother and father and those in rightful authority over us. However, no one has the right to assault a child's innocence. Please instruct the children: If something is being done to you or said to you that makes you feel unsafe because boundaries are being crossed (the child's inner modesty is being violated), a child needs to know he has the permission and should go immediately to parents and/or another trusted adult. (CCC 2214-2215, 2218)
6. There are right (good) and wrong (sinful) choices. Right choices are the way we love God, others and ourselves. This is how we grow in holiness. Sinful (selfish) choices are acts of selfishness. Sins hurt us personally as well as our relationship with God and others. When we do something

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wrong, we ask God and the person we have hurt or disobeyed to forgive us. If we are sorry for our sins, God will always forgive us. We should also forgive others as God forgives us. (CCC 2082-2083, 2087, 277)

7. We develop our friendship with Jesus through: daily prayer, Bible stories, reading the lives of the saints, and hymns and songs. (CCC 214, 218-221)
8. Our greatest desire is to stay close to Jesus. We stay close to Him by praying to Him each day, by following His teachings and commandments, which includes going to Mass every Sunday. (CCC 27, 2560, 2565)
9. God knows and loves each person. God has a special plan for each person. (CCC 898, 873, 934-935, 938-945, 953)
10. When we die, if we have lived as a friend of Jesus by living according to the Ten Commandments, it will be the beginning of new life with God in Heaven. (CCC 1023-1026)
11. God desires that we share what we have been given with others, especially those in need:
  - the gift of faith - what we know about God and
  - the gifts of our material possessions - that He has given us

The missionary nature of the Church flows from our obligation to share the gifts God has given us with the world through the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy. With our families, we should look for opportunities to serve those in need and to share the Good News about Jesus. (CCC 849, 913, 2447 – the works of mercy, 2443-2446)

The Diocese of La Crosse is committed, in particular, to the orphanage Casa Hogar Juan Pablo II in Lurin, Peru and to the care of the Holy Cross Parish in Santa Cruz, Bolivia. Project Milk and the Lenten Mite Boxes are an especially important means of providing assistance to the Casa Hogar Juan Pablo II and Holy Cross Parish and are to be faithfully promoted.

12. God has given us everything. We need to show our gratitude to God by respecting and taking care of all His gifts. This is what we call stewardship. (CCC 2402, 2408, 2404)

## **IV. Christian Prayer**

Prayer is an essential way we respond to God who loved us first. Prayer is necessary if we are to know God personally and to do His will. Living the Christian life is almost impossible without prayer.

In Pre-K and Kindergarten, students should be introduced to the following Articles of Faith.

1. Prayer is talking with and listening to Jesus. Friendship with Jesus depends upon a daily commitment to prayer. Prayer can be in the silence of our heart or out loud, alone or with others. In the Bible, Jesus teaches us how to pray, i.e. the Our Father. (CCC 2565, 2607, 2615)
2. Prayer is a gift from God. Jesus calls us to pray everyday and gives us the strength (grace) to respond to that call. (CCC 2567, 2559)
3. God hears every prayer that we make and answers every prayer in a way that is best for us. (CCC 2610, 2616)
4. The Mass is the most important prayer. (CCC 1324-1325, 1074, 1118)
5. We need to attend Mass on Sunday and holy days of obligation. We want to participate fully in mind and heart in the prayers and songs of the Sunday Mass. (CCC 2181-2183, 1325-1327, 1407)

6. The memorization of basic prayers offers an essential support to the life of prayer. It is also important to help students savor their meaning. (CCC 2688)

Students should memorize the following prayers:

- Sign of the Cross
  - Our Father
  - Hail Mary
  - Grace Before Meals
  - Prayer to my Guardian Angel
  - Glory Be
  - Grace before and after Meals
7. The Our Father is the prayer that Jesus taught us. (CCC 2765)
  8. The Bible is God's Word. God reveals His love through the Bible. Children need to hear Bible stories often and should be encouraged to tell the stories themselves. When reading a Bible story, the catechist will want to help the children to visualize the scene, to pick a word or phrase that stands out for each child, and to see how this story can be related to their own life. (CCC 101-104, 105-108)
  9. We can participate in spontaneous and silent prayer. Ex. Prayers of adoration, love, thanksgiving, and petition, I love you God, Thank-you God, Jesus bless my family, Jesus, help me to be good.
  10. We need to express gratitude to Jesus for all the beautiful gifts that He has given us. We can pray before the image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus that is displayed in the classroom. (CCC 2637-2638, 478)
  11. It is appropriate to be quiet when visiting a Catholic Church because Jesus is present in the tabernacle and we want to stay focused on Him. We also want to show respect for those who are praying in church by maintaining an atmosphere of prayerful silence.
  12. The priest is a man who has been called by God to represent Jesus in giving us the seven Sacraments and leading us in prayer. (CCC 1536, 1591-1592, 1598, 1581, 1552)

## **Prayer themes**

Our Father - Mt. 6:9  
Let the children come to Me - Mk. 10:14  
I am always with you - Mt. 28:20  
Always be thankful - Col. 3:16b-17  
Make ready the way of the Lord - Lk. 3:4

## **Recommended Bible Stories, Prayer Books, and other Spiritual Reading**

*My First Prayer Book*, Sr. Karen Cavanaugh C.S.J.  
*A Child's Book of Prayers*, Michael Hague, illustrated  
*Saint Joseph First Children's Bible* (Catholic Book Publishing Co.)  
*The Children's Bible* (Golden Press)  
*The Story of Jesus*, Lawrence G. Lovasik, S.V.D.  
(Catholic Book Publishing Co.)  
*Little Acts of Grace*, Rosemarie Gortler & Donna Piscitelli (Our Sunday Visitor)  
*Everyday Graces, A Child's Book of Good Manners*, Karen Santorum (ISA Books)  
*The Angels: God's Messengers and Our Helpers*, Rev. Lawrence G. Lovasik, S.V.D.  
(Catholic Book Publishing Co.)  
*Catholic Bible Stories for Children*, Ann Ball with Julianne M. Will (Our Sunday Visitor)

## **Prayers**

### **The Sign of the Cross**

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

### **Our Father**

Our Father, Who art in Heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name; Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

### **Hail Mary**

Hail Mary, full of grace! The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

### **Prayer To My Guardian Angel**

Angel of God, my guardian dear, To whom God's love commits me here, Ever this day be at my side, to light and guard, to rule and guide. Amen.

### **Glory Be**

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

### **Grace before Meals**

Bless us O Lord and these Thy gifts which we are about to receive from Thy bounty through Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **Grace after Meals**

We give You thanks, Almighty God, for all Your benefits Who lives and reigns forever, and may the souls of the faithful departed through the mercy of God rest in peace. Amen.

### ***Saints***

In Pre-Kindergarten, students should be introduced to the following Articles of Faith.

1. Mary is the Mother of Jesus. Mary watches over us from Heaven with much love. She is a special friend of children. Mary leads us to Jesus. In the Hail Mary, she is called Mary the Mother of God. (CCC 495)
2. A saint is a person who came to know and love God, lived a life close to Jesus and is united forever with Him in Heaven. (CCC See glossary for the definition of a saint)
3. God wants everyone to be a saint. Our greatest joy and peace are achieved in becoming a saint. (CCC 27, 2013-2016, 867)

### ***Recommended Saints' Lives***

*Saints for Children*, (Daughters of St. Paul)

*Miniature Stories of the Saints*, Daniel A. Lord, S.J. (W. H. Litho Co.)

*The Children's Book of Saints*, Louis M. Savary S.T.D. (Regina Press Malhame & Company)

*Mary my Mother*, Rev. Lawrence G. Lovasik S.V.D. (Catholic Book Publishing Co)

*Book of Saints*, Amy Welborn, (Loyola Press)