



“*Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*” is the guiding document from the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops on all ministry with youth. The framework provides an outline for comprehensive ministry to, with and for youth and families that ministers to the whole person. This curriculum is intended to be used within that framework, grounding all youth ministry in providing young people with the tools they need to integrate faith and life throughout their journeys.

Current national conversations on the components of youth ministry acknowledge that the focus of all ministry is continuing conversion through ongoing evangelization and catechesis. Each of the remaining components can be viewed through these two lenses. Prayer, Justice & Service, Advocacy, Leadership Development, Pastoral Care, and Community Life provide experiences that draw young people into the life and mystery of God and God’s Church. Providing opportunities in the four settings named in *Renewing the Vision*, i.e. age-specific, family, intergenerational parish wide and the broader community, is an integral part to the success of this curriculum.

Each encounter with young people contains the possibility of helping them to recognize, for the first time or the five-hundredth time, that they are encountering Christ in the world around them and are called to be Christ’s hands and feet in that world, as well. The simplest conversation in a coffee shop can convey an enduring understanding of a truth of our Church, or provide an opportunity to become aware of God’s action in the world in a new way or pass on the tools necessary for a working knowledge of the basics of faith that will assist them as they grow in faith.

This curriculum identifies those tenets of our faith which we must pass on to our youth and families. It reminds us of what is at the heart of each experience of prayer, a newsletter, a mission trip, a lock-in, or a peer-ministry retreat. All are a chance to live the faith in a way which awakens a desire to live in the way of Christ with the promise of the Gospel. This ministry is not confined to a classroom or a church building, it is not bound by the hour of a religion class or formation evening it is the ongoing work of ministry and happens in each meeting with a teen.

As adult catechists and leaders we are called to understand the basic truths we are called to pass on and to live them with a passion and joy that invites others to live in the light of Christ. This curriculum is meant to be far more than words, it is meant to be the reflection of a life lived in faith and that requires living models of that faith to witness to it’s power.

It is hoped that this curriculum to invites you to re-new your parish vision of comprehensive youth ministry, in order that each activity is strengthened by the threads of the truths of scripture, creed, justice & morality, prayer and the very history of our church. May all that you do in your formation programs, homes, church and community reflect the power of faith as the message becomes woven into the manner in which it is shared, and integrated into the lives of those who share it.



High School Theology Curriculum

(Approved September 2005)

For additional information, please contact:

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September 29, 2005

Feast of the Archangels Michael, Gabriel and Raphael

Year of the Eucharist

My Dear Friends in Christ,

It is with great enthusiasm that I offer to you these curriculum guidelines to guide our important ministry with High School Students in our Catholic High Schools and parish formation programs.

Replacing the 1997 *High School Theology Curriculum*, this version offers additional direction and support for the core concepts essential to knowing, understanding and integrating our Catholic faith into the lives of our young people.

Catholic High Schools have considerable familiarity with the 1997 curriculum and will find that this revision will differ only in its identification of the concepts found within. All high schools in the archdiocese of Milwaukee are expected to continue to use this document to guide and develop solid theology classes for their students.

Since this information will be new to parish programs, it is understandable that this curriculum will take time to implement. This curriculum is not something that can or should be implemented without the careful, thoughtful and intentional consideration of the curriculum elements, needs of the students and their families, as well as parish resources. Parishes are encouraged to use the 2005 – 2006 school year to evaluate and determine first steps for incorporating this curriculum into their programs. The initial stages of implementation should be visible in parish programs in the fall of 2006. A plan for a full implementation in programs should be present in each parish by the fall of 2007.

Finally, I extend my heartfelt appreciation to the High School Theology Implementation Committee. They have faithfully and tirelessly guided this curriculum from its earliest stages. Thank you for all you have done to see this project to this next stage.

With gratitude for your work with the young people of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, I am,

Faithfully in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Timothy M. Dolan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'T'.

Most Reverend Timothy M. Dolan
Archbishop of Milwaukee

Introduction

With the completion of this document, the High School Theology Curriculum Project of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee completes its 10th year of work. Over the years, this project has developed in two distinct stages.

Stage one began in fall 1995 when Archbishop Rembert Weakland and Dr. John Norris commissioned the 13 Catholic high schools of the Milwaukee Archdiocese to develop a comprehensive high school theology curriculum. The committee carrying out this commission was composed of the theology chairs of the 13 high schools and Archdiocesan personnel. The committee met on a monthly basis over the course of a five-year period and succeeded in fulfilling its commission by creating a theology curriculum that was supported by all 13 Catholic high schools. Archbishop Weakland approved the high school theology curriculum in the spring of 1999.

Stage two began in the spring of 2000 when Archbishop Weakland approved the implementation recommendations of the newly formed Archdiocesan Theology Implementation Committee (ATIC) chaired by Dr. John Norris. Committee membership of the ATIC is comprised of leading educators in the Catholic colleges and universities of the Milwaukee Archdiocese and Archdiocesan personnel.

The curriculum that follows is essentially the curriculum approved in 1999 with some minor revisions to the organization of the curriculum such as:

- This theology curriculum is divided into five units that are modeled in large part on the Archdiocese of Milwaukee *Grade Specific 1-8 Religious Education Curriculum*. The primary sources for all deliberations regarding the content of this curriculum were primarily the documents of the Second Vatican Council and the 1994 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.
- Each unit opens with a philosophical statement and a list of content competencies. Direct references to specific Vatican II documents in the philosophical statements and in the content competencies have been included as a means of assuring Catholic theological grounding as well as encouraging further study.
- For instructional and assessment purposes, the terms *enduring understanding*, *working knowledge*, and *reflective awareness* have been applied as the “organizing principle” for the structuring of the content of this curriculum. **The use of these terms is NOT an attempt to impose a hierarchy onto the content material**; rather, the terms are designed to communicate an approach for the purpose of instruction and assessment of the content. The content material presented within the *enduring understanding* provides the ‘larger picture’ or foundation from which the *working knowledge* and *reflective awareness* can be better taught by teachers and better understood by students.
- The target audiences for this curriculum include both high school theology teachers and leaders of parish formation programs. This curriculum therefore facilitates a coordination of the Catholic theology being taught to the youth of Milwaukee Archdiocese in the high schools and parishes.

Scripture

Philosophy Statement

Teachers of Sacred Scripture should have a thorough grounding in the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (*Dei verbum*).

Students should have:

- an enduring understanding of Sacred Scripture as the inspired Word of God—a means of God’s self-revelation, a guide for living, an invitation to conversion, and a resource for personal and communal prayer;
- a working knowledge with the biblical text itself, including the overall organization of the Bible as well as particular stories and passages;
- a reflective awareness of historical, cultural, and literary factors which have shaped the biblical texts and which influence its interpretation today.

This enduring understanding, working knowledge, and reflective awareness will provide students with a growing appreciation of the tradition and role of Scripture in the contemporary Church and in their own lives.

Abbreviations for Vatican II Documents

D.V. = Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (*Dei verbum*)

Content Competencies

The student:

1. has an enduring understanding that Catholics acknowledge and adhere to God’s revelation in Sacred Scripture and Tradition:

- with revelation as handed down through Scripture AND Tradition (D.V. 2.9-10)
- with Scripture as God’s revelation (self-disclosure), complete in Jesus Christ (D.V. 1.2-6)
- as more deeply understood through the work of the Spirit in the life of the Church (D.V. 2.8; 6.23)
- as differentiated from a fundamentalist approach to Scripture through an emphasis on the Bible being grounded in God’s self-disclosure in specific historical circumstances (D.V. 3.12; 5.19)

2. has an enduring understanding of the Bible as God’s gradual self-revelation and the unfolding of God’s plan of salvation:

- beginning with creation and the covenants of the Old Testament (D.V. 4.14)
- fulfilled in Jesus Christ (D.V. 4.15; 5.17)
- with the Church continuing to grow in understanding what God has revealed (D.V. 2.8)

3. has a working knowledge of the interconnected theological ideas and truths which emerge from the unfolding story line of the Bible (D.V. 4.16)

- Creation and fall stories
- Patriarchs and Matriarchs, Moses/Exodus and the forming of Israel
- Rise and Fall of the Monarchy, Prophets and the Exile
- Life-death-resurrection, ministry, and message of Jesus from the Gospels
- Birth of the Church in Acts and the Pauline and Catholic Letters
- Culmination of Salvation History in the Book of Revelation

4. has a *working knowledge* of basic biblical themes (e.g., chosen people, reign of God) and basic biblical concepts (e.g., sin, salvation, repentance, redemption) along with the biblical stories that illustrate these themes and concepts (D.V. 3.11-13)

5. has a *reflective awareness* of the literary character and historical context when reading biblical texts:

- major biblical literary forms such as history, saga, poetry, wisdom, letter, parable, apocalyptic (D.V. 3.12)
- historical and cultural contexts such as pre-exilic and post-exilic Judaism, Diaspora and Palestinian Jewish-Christians (D.V. 3.13)
- major divisions of the Bible (including book/chapter/verse) of the Old Testament: Pentateuch, Historical Books, Wisdom Books, Prophets and the New Testament: the Gospels, Acts, Letters, Revelation (D.V. 4.14 – 5.20)

Creedal and Doctrinal Concepts

Philosophy Statement

Teachers of the Church's creeds and doctrines should have a thorough grounding in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen gentium*), the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et spes*), the Decree on Ecumenism (*Unitatis redintegratio*), the Decree on Non-Christian Religions (*Nostra aetate*) and the Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People (*Apostolicam actuositatem*).

Students should have:

- an enduring understanding of the Church's core doctrines as found in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds;
- an enduring understanding of the Church as a sign and instrument of God's love and action in the world;
- a working knowledge of the nature and structure of the Church and the Church's teachings on the nature of human beings, sin/grace, and the reign of God/salvation;
- a reflective awareness of the mission of the Church, the role of the saints, and the Church's relationship with other Christian denominations and the non-Christian religions.

This enduring understanding, working knowledge, and reflective awareness will provide students with a growing appreciation for the central mysteries of our faith.

Abbreviations for Vatican II Documents

L.G. = Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen gentium*)

G.S. = Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et spes*)

U.R. = Decree on Ecumenism (*Unitatis redintegratio*)

N.A. = Decree on Non-Christian Religions (*Nostra aetate*)

A.A. = Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People (*Apostolicam actuositatem*)

Content Competencies

The student:

1. has an enduring understanding of the mystery of the Trinity as One God, three divine persons—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—distinct from one another, yet united to one another (L.G. 1.2-4)

- God the Father
 - Creator of the universe
 - abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness
 - revealed by Jesus as Abba
- Jesus Christ
 - Word made flesh, fully divine and fully human; the Incarnation
 - who redeems us by his death on the cross
 - who opens the way to the fullness of life through his resurrection
- The Holy Spirit
 - Lord and Giver of Life
 - reconciler, unifier, and sanctifier
 - who continues the work of Christ and who build up and animates the Church

2. has an *enduring understanding* of the Church (L.G. 7.48-51) using
 - Vatican II themes such as Mystery, People of God (L.G. 2.9-17)
 - the marks of the Church—one, holy, catholic, and apostolic (L.G. 1.8)
 - traditional biblical images such as Body of Christ, Bride of Christ (L.G. 1.7)

3. has a *working knowledge* of the Church as a community of believers (A.A. 1.2-4; 3.9-14; 5.23-27))
 - local (parish and diocese) and universal
 - unity of faith amidst a diversity of gifts, peoples, cultures, and ways of life
 - hierarchy and laity (L.G. 3.18-29 – 4.38)
 - Mary as the model of the Church (L.G. 8.52-69)

4. has a *working knowledge* of church teaching on the human person, sin/grace, and the reign of God/salvation (G.S. I.12-22; L.G.2.9-17))
 - the nature of human persons
 - created in the image and likeness of God
 - with a natural desire/longing for God
 - intended for union with God yet with an inclination toward sin
 - the nature of sin and grace of forgiveness
 - grace as God's free, forgiving and transforming self-communication
 - grace as the gift by which humans participate in the life of the Trinity
 - sin as a failure to love whether by action or by inaction
 - sin as rooted in Original Sin (i.e., the human condition of alienation from God)
 - sin as both social and personal
 - the reign of God/salvation
 - the fulfillment of God's plan for humanity and for all creation including heaven
 - already present in the appearance of Jesus, awaiting completion when he returns
 - Christians are motivated by, pray for, proclaim and give witness to God's reign

5. has a *reflective awareness* of the mission of the Church (G.S. I.4.40-45) as
 - continuing the mission of Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit
 - proclaiming and giving witness to the reign of God
 - calling to ministry in all its forms
 - office of the successor of St. Peter

6. has a *reflective awareness* of the universal call to holiness and the saints as models of holiness (L.G. 5.39-42)
 - the saints contributions to the life of the Church in the past
 - the example of their lives
 - their communion with us today
 - the assistance they give by their prayers

7. has a *reflective awareness* of how other Christian churches and non-Christian religions differ from the Catholic Church
 - appreciation also for how much is held in common (N.A. 1-5)
 - Catholic teaching regarding ecumenism (U.R. 1.2 – 2.12) and interfaith dialogue (N.A. 2)

Justice and Morality

Philosophy Statement

Teachers of justice and morality should have a thorough grounding in the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et spes*) and the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen gentium*).

Students should have:

- an enduring understanding of the Catholic Christian faith with its implications for daily living, for decision-making, and for relationships with family, friends, society, and God;
- a working knowledge of the reality of sin—personal and social—and the role of grace, reconciliation, and forgiveness in Christian life;
- a working knowledge of Catholic teaching related to personal morality and the principles of Catholic Social Teaching;
- a reflective awareness of the Church’s rationale behind a consistent life ethic in dealing with contemporary personal and social problems.

This enduring understanding, working knowledge, and reflective awareness will provide students with the proper guidelines for living the Christian moral life.

Abbreviations for Vatican II Documents

L.G. = Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen gentium*)

G.S. = Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et spes*)

Content Competencies

The student:

1. has an enduring understanding of concepts related to Catholic teaching regarding the Christian moral life (G.S. I.1.12-18; L.G.5.39-42)
 - the inherent dignity of the human person, created in the image and likeness of God
 - human freedom and responsibility
 - the role of conscience
 - guidance of the natural moral law
 - universal call to holiness and discipleship
 - example set by holy men and women
2. has a working knowledge of the traditional guidelines for the Christian moral life (G.S. II.1.47-52)
 - Jesus’ Great Commandment
 - the Ten Commandments
 - the Sermon on the Mount, especially the beatitudes
 - the corporal and spiritual works of mercy
 - the cardinal and theological virtues
 - the gift of sexuality
 - the Catholic vision of chastity as the successful integration of one’s sexuality based on God’s design
 - discernment of appropriate behaviors
 - responsible family planning and parenthood
 - the model of faithful, fruitful, forever marriage

3. has a working knowledge of the social dimension of Christian living and understands basic principles of Catholic Social Teaching (G.S. I.2.23-32; II.3.63-72) including
- basic human rights and responsibilities
 - the call to family and community
 - the dignity of work and the rights of workers
 - the option for the poor
 - stewardship of the environment
4. has a reflective awareness of the rationale behind a consistent life ethic (G.S.I.12-39)
- euthanasia
 - abortion
 - capital punishment
 - suicide
 - war

Liturgy, Sacrament and Prayer

Philosophy Statement

Teachers of liturgy, sacraments, and prayer should have a thorough grounding in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum concilium*).

Students should have:

- an enduring understanding of the effects, symbols and meanings of the seven sacraments, especially the Eucharist as a unifying and central experience in the life of the Church, and see the value and necessity of weekly participation in the Sunday Eucharist;
- a working knowledge of the role of prayer and worship in the life of the Christian;
- a reflective awareness of the various styles of prayer, both personal and communal.

This enduring understanding, working knowledge, and reflective awareness will provide students with a Catholic Christian approach to the sacred.

Abbreviations for Vatican II Documents

S.C. = Constitution on Sacred Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum concilium*)

Content Competencies

The student:

1. has an enduring understanding of the central role of the Eucharist in the life of the Church (S.C. 1.5-13), and the efficacy of the other sacraments, especially the primacy of Baptism and the value of Penance
2. has an enduring understanding of 7 sacraments, identify their primary symbols, and explain their meaning (S.C. 3.59-82)
 - sacraments of Christian Initiation—Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist
 - sacraments of Healing—Penance and Anointing of the Sick
 - sacraments at the Service of Community—Holy Orders and Matrimony
3. has a working knowledge of the cycle of the Liturgical Year (S.C. 5.102-111)
 - as the unfolding celebration of the Paschal Mystery and incarnation/life of Christ
 - the liturgical seasons and major feasts
 - the annual cycle of feast days commemorating the saints
4. has a working knowledge of the role of signs, symbols, and rituals:
 - in natural human experience
 - in their families and individual experiences
 - in various faith traditions
5. has a working knowledge of the Eucharistic Liturgy (S.C. 2.7-57)
 - the link between liturgy and justice and charity
 - the role of ministers and the assembly
 - the parts of the liturgy, and the prayers and actions of the Mass
 - the Eucharist as meal, sacrifice and real presence

6. has a *reflective awareness* of the universal call to prayer
 - as expressed in the human desire to communicate with God
 - as God's gift
 - as covenant and communication

7. has a *reflective awareness* of the various styles of prayer and worship (S.C.3.21-46)
 - private expressions of spirituality (vocal prayer, meditation, contemplative prayer)
 - public and communal elements of various prayer styles (Eucharist, devotions, prayer services)
 - the assistance of Mary and the Communion of Saints in prayer
 - the necessity of penance and almsgiving as pillars to prayer and growth in holiness

Church History

Philosophy Statement

Teachers of Church history should have a thorough grounding in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen gentium*), the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et spes*) the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum concilium*), and the Declaration on Religious Freedom (*Dignitatis humanae*).

Students should have:

- an enduring understanding the Church's history being directed by divine providence;
- a working knowledge of the remarkable men and women of the past and their contributions to the Church as well as the events that have challenged the Church throughout history;
- a reflective awareness of the spiritual, cultural, and intellectual heritage of the Catholic Church.

This enduring understanding, working knowledge, and reflective awareness of the Church's history will provide students with the ability to reflect critically on contemporary beliefs and practices.

Abbreviations for Vatican II Documents

L.G. = Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen gentium*)

G.S. = Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et spes*)

S.C. = Constitution on Sacred Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum concilium*)

D.H.= Declaration on Religious Freedom (*Dignitatis humanae*)

Content Competencies

The student:

1. has an enduring understanding of a "theology" of Church history that flows from salvation history, a history marked by change, continuity, and development: God's providence is directing history (L.G. 1.1-8; 7.48-51)
2. has a working knowledge of formative events and people (turning points) in Church history:
 - the mission and ministry of Jesus and the sending of the Spirit
 - the growth of Christianity in the Roman Empire by the apostles and martyrs
 - the creeds by the 4th and 5th century church councils: Nicea and Chalcedon
 - the break of church into East and West in 1054
 - the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century
 - the Enlightenment of the 18th century
 - the modern period including the Second Vatican Council
 - the development of the Catholic Church in the United States
3. has a working knowledge of the challenge posed by the intellectual, political, and social changes encountered by the Church (G.S.II.4.73 – 5.90; D.H. 1.2 – 2.15), including:
 - persecutions, wars and political revolutions
 - encounters with other religions and cultures
 - philosophical and scientific developments

4. has a reflective awareness of the rich spiritual, cultural, and intellectual heritage of the Catholic Church (G.S.II.2.53-62; S.C.6.112 7.130), marked by:

- the writings of theologians
- the devotions of various peoples
- the diversity of religious art, architecture and music

Acknowledgements

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This document is dedicated to the memory of the late Dr. John Norris.