



Diocese of Columbus
Office of Religious Education and Catechesis
Purpose and Philosophy of the Religion Course of Study 2015

The purpose of the *Religion Course of Study* (RCOS) is to present the Catholic faith in a systematic, comprehensive and age-appropriate way from preschool through high school in both school and parish programs.

As the *General Directory for Catechesis* (GDC) states, “The definitive aim of catechesis is to put persons not only in touch but also in communion and intimacy with Jesus Christ.” (GDC, no. 80) The GDC also identifies for us a number of methods for communicating the truths of the faith and the Christian life. In paragraphs 84, 85 and 87 the GDC provides six interrelated dimensions or tasks that are essential for the effective formation of lifelong disciples: knowledge of the faith, liturgy and sacraments, moral formation, prayer, community life and missionary spirit.

In subsequent documents such as the *National Directory for Catechesis* (NDC) and the pastoral letter, *Our Hearts Where Burning Within Us*, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has identified these Six Tasks of Catechesis as key characteristics of an active, faithful, adult disciple. Thus they have given us a plan for the formation of young people so that they might develop into those active, faithful adult disciples.

The first four tasks correlate with the four “pillars” of the Catechism and outline what a disciple of Jesus Christ needs to know. The fifth and sixth tasks help us to understand how the disciple lives out those aspects of faith in daily life.

Task I

Knowledge of the faith addresses formal knowledge about the person of Jesus Christ and about his Church. It provides the intellectual foundation for growth in one’s relationship with God, and the overall principles and facts of our faith that enable one to engage in intelligent discussion of it. By engaging in Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition the learner is planted firmly within the ongoing story of God’s self-revelation through Christ and his Church.

Task II

Knowledge of the liturgical life and the sacraments is key to communal expression of our Catholic faith, and is vital to sustaining intimate union and communion with God and with his people. Liturgy forms and transforms the faithful as the People of God and enables us to participate in the very life of God through worship and the graces of the sacraments.

Task III

Knowledge of moral formation imbues learners with the wisdom to recognize the loving presence of God in every aspect of life. Learners are formed in the skills that help us to discern those ways of living in the world around us that either enhance or destroy our relationships with God and with each other. They are empowered by well-formed consciences to make good moral decisions based in careful, loving discernment.

Task IV

Knowledge of Prayer is the language of love spoken between God and his people, both personally and communally. The Catholic faith has a long, deep-rooted history of varied traditions of prayer. The purpose of this task is not only to introduce learners to the many facets of prayer, but also to enable them to live lives of prayer.

Task V

Knowledge of Community life cultivates the human values and Christian virtues that contribute to growth in both interpersonal relationships and civic responsibilities. A faith-filled understanding of marriage and family life, the life of the parish, the nature and mission of the Church, and both ecclesial and civic authority and structures are integral to formation in, and to living out, the Christian life as members of the Body of Christ.

Task VI

Knowledge of the Missionary Spirit is the measure of our fruitfulness as persons who, by our baptism, are called to witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ, whether as a layperson, an ordained minister, or a vowed religious. We respond to that baptismal call to worship and service of others through the promotion and application of the Church's moral and social teachings in our personal, family, professional, social and cultural lives.

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The *Religion Course of Study 2015* is presented in two versions:

- By **grade-levels**—shows how each grade-level encompasses all six tasks
- By **task**—shows the progression of each task through all grade-levels

These Six Tasks of Catechesis provide the framework for the *Religion Course of Study 2015*. The **tasks** are broken down into **topics** of content relevant to that task. Each topic in turn is comprised of age-appropriate **standards**, which provide brief statements of specific content for the particular grade-level, indicating what concepts must be mastered by each student. * The standards, while specific and detailed, are not intended to be all-inclusive, but to represent the minimum expectations of what each learner will come to know and live during a given academic year.

For example, under **Task I**, Knowledge of the Faith, the first **Topic**, the Person of Jesus Christ, is followed by several **Standards** which indicate specific content at a particular grade-level.

- I. Knowledge of the Faith
 - A. The Person of Jesus Christ
 - I.A.1. Know that Jesus is the Son of God and the son of Mary (CCC 495)
 - I.A.2. Know that Jesus died on the cross to show God's love for all people (CCC 609)

The above pattern continues through each Topic under the particular Task; *e.g.*, the remaining Topics under Task I are

- B. Scripture
- C. Creeds and Doctrines of the Church

- D. The Church's History and Relevance
- E. Christian Thought and Culture

Each successive **Task** has its own series of **Topics**, each with its relevant **Standards**. Citations from *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) and from the Bible follow many of the standards, indicating the source of the content and providing a guide for the teacher.

Growth as a person—be it physical, intellectual or emotional-- seldom proceeds in a strictly linear fashion, wherein one stage ends and a new stage begins without reference to what went before. In faith formation and spiritual/moral growth, we also develop in an expanding spiral rather than in a perfectly straight line. In the same manner, the *Religion Course of Study 2015* does not consist of a strictly linear arrangement of discrete blocks of knowledge, but rather in an ever-expanding and overlapping organic form that continues to unfold as the learner grows and develops as a maturing person capable of responsible choices.

Throughout this course of study, the focus is Christological, just as in our life and faith the person of Jesus Christ is at the center. Our relationships with other persons, with our Church and society, and with our world are shaped by that Christ-centered quality of our lives. This course of study, rooted firmly in the Church's *magisterium* (Scripture and Tradition), aims to empower all learners to see and hear, to know and to love, with the eyes and ears, the mind and heart, of Jesus Christ.

*During initial implementation, the changes in terminology might require some time for adjustment. The chart below should help to clarify these changes.

RGCS 2006		RCOS 2015
Standards	<i>changes to</i>	Tasks (<i>based on the Six Tasks</i>)
Objectives	<i>changes to</i>	Topics (<i>broad content</i>)
Indicators/Benchmarks	<i>changes to</i>	Standards (<i>specific content</i>)