

# TIMELY TOPICS



DIOCESE OF COLUMBUS, OFFICE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND CATECHESIS

## Religion Across the Curriculum

All educators have the privilege of opening new doors and new pathways for learners. Those of us who serve as teachers in Catholic schools or as parish catechists are called to go a step further. We are given a unique opportunity, and a unique responsibility, as we come to the “door”, the “gate”, the “path” that is Jesus and invite the “flock” to enter in, to “have life to the full.” (*John 10: 1-10*)

For the Catholic school teacher (or university professor), the question becomes:

**How do I ‘teach the person of Jesus’ in everything, even and especially in content areas that are not specifically ‘religious’, such as math or geography or physical education?**

For the parish catechist (pre-school or RCIA), the question has a flip-side:

**How do I ‘teach the person of Jesus’ in such a way that every facet of our everyday life has the potential to bring us into relationship with him?**

For us as Catholic Christian educators the door to knowledge, to growth, to wisdom and to life lies in and through the

person of Jesus Christ. “Jesus Christ is at once the message, the messenger, the purpose of the message, and the consummation of the message.” (*NDC, Introduction; also John 14:6*)

If we believe that the person of Jesus is the content, the methodology, the aim and the outcome, then we are faced daily with “Religion Across the Curriculum” in all that we do, whether in a Catholic school (at any level) or in a Parish School of Religion (with any age-group).

### The Challenge

You are invited to share ideas, insights, resources that would further enrich our compendium of interdisciplinary ideas. We welcome your additions!

For the **catechist and the teacher of religion/theology**, what other content-areas help to reveal God’s face and to enrich our understanding in faith?

For **teachers of other content-areas**, what in your subject –matter reveals something of God’s presence and action in our lives and in our world?

Throughout the year we will include your submissions in *Timely Topics*, as further aids to everyone in finding and opening those many “doors” or “gates” that bring us to Christ. He who is “the Way, the Truth and the Life” (Jn 14:6) also is “the gate” to “life to the full” (Jn 10:9, 10); that encompasses all! ✠

*Radical Amazement is the chief characteristic of the religious person’s attitude toward history and nature. It is alien to a religious person’s spirit to take things for granted...Such a person knows, of course, that there are laws that regulate the course of natural processes and is aware of the regularity and pattern of things. However, such knowledge fails to mitigate a sense of perpetual surprise at the fact that there are facts at all. Looking at the world, such a person would say, quoting from the Psalms, “This is Adonai’s doing—it is marvelous in our eyes.”*

—Abraham Joshua Heschel (adapted)

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## Curriculum Suggestions

There are many ways that Catholic beliefs and principles can be integrated into other subjects. Here are just a few ideas. For an even more comprehensive list go to our [Curriculum suggestions page](#) on the OREC website.

### Visual Arts

Depictions from other cultures (e.g., African, Asian), showing the enculturation of belief in portraits of Jesus, Mary; What is *your* image of Jesus?

The cathedrals of Europe and the Mid-East and their religious art: paintings, sculptures, stained glass, architectural styles tell the story of salvation history in art

### Health / Physical Education

Emotions – understanding them, learning how to deal positively with them, e.g. anger management, conflict resolution, peace-making; see [www.wingclips.com](#) for resources in feature films such as “Gandhi” or “The Boy in the Striped Pajamas” or “3:10 to Yuma”

Relationships – issues such as bullying; also the negative images of relationships so common in popular culture; [www.cornerstonemedia.org](#) features resources for helping teens critique popular music/lyrics/videos and offers positive values

### Human Growth and Development

Age-appropriate knowledge and understanding of what constitutes health/unhealthy relationships; issues of child safety, “using” others, etc.

Understanding the nature and meaning of human sexuality, intimacy and love as God’s gifts (new [Document on Catechetical Formation in Chaste Living](#)); meaning of chastity in their lives

### Language Arts

Poetry and fiction that is both good literature and reflects Catholic/Christian values, e.g., Mary Oliver, Gerard Manley Hopkins (poetry); Graham Greene, Brian Moore, Flannery O’Connor (fiction); [listen](#) to the James Earl Jones’ reading of James Weldon Johnson’s poem, “Creation,” and Sr. Thea Bowman’s musical account of Adam and Eve in the Garden

### Math

Design personal “Mandala” (crossover with art; [www.30minutemandalas.com](#) for background and resources ); a challenge: design your mandala using only 33-degree angles (or some other size less than 45 degrees) . . .

### Music

Influence of music from other cultures:

- ⊗ Latino “Mariachi” music
- ⊗ African-American:
  - Spirituals,
  - “The Blues”
  - Gospel music
- ⊗ Pop culture:
  - “Godspell” and “Jesus Christ Superstar,”
  - Groups like Green Day, U2, Mercy Me

### Science

Theory of Evolution (Teaching of the Church); the amazing variety of God’s creativity – what would it be like if God had made one generic tree/flower/person?

Issues in bioethics, e.g., euthanasia, stem-cell research, cloning and chimeras, eugenics, abortion, etc. What is the teaching of the Church?

### Social Studies

Recall primary responsibility (in the Old Testament) of kings to care for widows and children, the poor and strangers (Lev 19:9-10, 34; Lev 23:22; Deut10:17-20; Deut 24:19)

Read and discuss the contemporary novels of Jodi Picoult; although in fictional form, they are very well-researched social commentary; most recent (2010) is *House Rules* (ISBN 978-0-7432-9643-4)

### Speaking/Writing Skills

Interview family, friends on religious topics and report orally in class, as if doing a TV newscast (protect your “sources”!)

Watch for religious topics in news stories and write critiques or reviews from a Catholic perspective

## In-service suggestion

**Supplies** prayer-center with cloth (color appropriate to liturgical season), candle, Bible; copies of sheet with prayer and reflection; CD player, quiet music for reflection. \**Optional: download video, "Creation Is Calling", available on [OREC website](#).* Have music playing softly as group gathers.

**Invite** them to listen to God's word and, as they listen, to be aware of any image that catches their attention.  
Read aloud **Psalm 148**, a "cosmic hymn of praise"; *or use option of video\**

**Ask** them to reflect briefly on the imagery; then ask them quietly to bring to mind the place/situation in which they most experience a closeness to God.

Invite them to share those moments with the person to their left (or persons at their table, in a large group).

After 3-5+ minutes, depending on size of the group, distribute the copies of "[Radical Amazement](#)" from page one.

Ask them to read this to themselves, and consider (aloud or in silence) how they might use this with their learners.

**Close** by praying together the Sign of the Cross. ✠

## Correlation to Certification Standards, the Course of Study, & the Six Tasks of Catechesis

### National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers

**1.9 PCL** Recognize God's activity in personal life experiences and articulate this understanding with others

**3.17 PCL** Interpret life in the light of theology

**4.19 PCL** Promote media literacy and the use of media

### Religion Graded Course of Study

All **four** Standards are addressed by this topic

### Six Tasks of Catechesis

All **six** Tasks of Catechesis are addressed by this topic:

Knowledge of Faith, Liturgical Life, Moral Formation, Prayer, Communal Life and Missionary Spirit

## Resources

USCCB. *National Directory for Catechesis*. Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005 (esp. "Introduction, 1: A Vision for the NDC")

Bettigole, Michael, OSF and James D. Childs. *The Catholic Spirit: An Anthology for Discovering Faith through Literature, Art, Film, and Music*. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2010

Daily, Eileen M. *Beyond the Written Word: Exploring Faith Through Christian Art*. Winona, MN: St. Mary's Press, 2005

Emoto, Masaru. *The Secret of Water: For the Children of the World*. New York, NY: Atria Books, 2001

Glavich, Sr. Mary Kathleen. *Prayer First: A New Agenda for Catholic Schools*. Twenty-Third Publications, 2008.

Hamma, Robert M. *Earth's Echo: Sacred Encounters with Nature*. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2002.

Holland, Leo. *Images of God: Finding the Lord in Ordinary Objects and Everyday Events*. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1984

Pungente, John, SJ and Monty Williams, SJ. *Finding God in the Dark: Taking the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius to the Movies*. Ottawa, ON Canada: Novalis, 2004

**DVD** 1110 *Creation Chronicles on Stage*, with Ted & Lee. St. Mary's Press

**DVD** 1123 *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, an opera in one act by Gian Carlo Menotti

**DVD** 1027 *God's Trombones* (claymation), poetry of James Weldon Johnson

**VTE** 2302 *The Little Prince* (claymation), by Antoine de St. Exupery