

**PONTIFICAL UNIVERSITY  
ST. PATRICK'S COLLEGE**

**MAYNOOTH**

**A Theological and Pedagogical Analysis of the  
Catechetics Programme for Irish Catholic Primary Schools, 1996-2004**

**ÉANNA JOHNSON**

Under the direction of Reverend Professor Thomas Norris

A Scriptum submitted  
to  
the Faculty of Theology  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the Degree of  
PhD in Theology

**June, 2010**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>5</b>
1.1. Aims	5
1.2. Catechesis in Context	6
1.3. Scope of the study	31
1.4. Methodology	33
1.5. Abbreviations	35
<b>2. ANALYSIS CRITERIA &amp; APPROACH</b>	<b>36</b>
2.1. Catholic Catechesis since the Second Vatican Council	36
2.2. Analysis Criteria – Content & Pedagogy	49
<b>3. PROGRAMME CONTENT</b>	<b>56</b>
3.1. Programme Structure	56
3.2. Revelation	57
3.3. Profession of Faith	86
3.3.1. The Trinity & God the Father	86
3.3.2. Creation	96
3.3.3. Jesus Christ	110
3.3.4. The Holy Spirit	159
3.3.5. The Church	172
3.3.6. Mary and the Saints	192
3.3.7. The Last Things (Eschatology)	208

3.4. Celebration of the Christian Mystery	215
3.4.1. Liturgy & Seasons of the Church	215
3.4.2. Sacraments	224
3.4.3. Baptism	231
3.4.4. Confirmation	239
3.4.5. Eucharist and the Mass	248
3.4.6. Penance	266
3.4.7. Anointing of the Sick	277
3.4.8. Holy Orders	279
3.4.9. Marriage	282
3.5. Life in Christ – Morality	284
3.5.1. Life in the Spirit	284
3.5.2. The Ten Commandments	303
3.6. Prayer	319
<b>4. PEDAGOGICAL ASPECTS</b>	<b>343</b>
4.1. Developments in Pedagogy	343
4.2. Programme Pedagogy	366
4.3. Programme Materials and Methodologies	369
4.4. School, Home and Parish Collaboration	376
<b>5. SUMMMARY &amp; CONCLUSION</b>	<b>379</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>399</b>
<b>APPENDIX A: Programme Structure, by Year and Term</b>	<b>406</b>
<b>APPENDIX B: Programme Structure, by Year and Theme</b>	<b>414</b>

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I wish to acknowledge the direction of my Supervisor, Reverend Professor Thomas Norris, whose advice, guidance and encouragement were invaluable. I also acknowledge the helpful supervisory assistance provided by Professor Pádraig Hogan of the National University of Ireland, Maynooth, and Rev Dr Patrick M Devitt of the Mater Dei Institute of Education, Dublin.

I am particularly grateful for the constant prayer, encouragement and practical assistance given by my wife, Pat. I also wish to acknowledge the support of many friends and all my family, in a special way my grandchildren who provided the principal motivation for undertaking this research project.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Aims

This study seeks to analyse the religious education programme in Ireland's Catholic primary schools, in the light of the vision of the Catholic Church for catechesis in general, and catechetical texts in particular.

The Church attaches particular importance to catechisms in the context of her vision for catechesis<sup>1</sup>, and summarises her requirements in relation to content and pedagogy thus<sup>2</sup>:

‘In drawing up catechisms, the following two criteria must be carefully adhered to:

- a) perfect harmony with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*<sup>3</sup>: a sure and authentic reference particularly for preparing local catechisms;
- b) due consideration for the norms and criteria for the presentation of the Gospel message contained in the *General Directory for Catechesis*, which is also a standard reference for catechesis’.<sup>4</sup>

This analysis takes account of both theological and pedagogical perspectives. The content of a catechetical text clearly requires a theological perspective, because it is essentially the Gospel message<sup>5</sup>. The pedagogy that is proper to a catechetical text must also include a

---

<sup>1</sup> Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis*. Dublin: Veritas Publications, 1997. 284. ‘Among the aids available to catechesis, catechisms excel all others’.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 284.

<sup>3</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1999.

<sup>4</sup> *General Directory for Catechesis*, 10. ‘Not all parts of the Directory have the same importance. Those dealing with Divine Revelation, the nature of catechesis, the criteria governing the proclamation of the Gospel message are universally valid. Those, however, referring to present circumstances, to methodology and to the manner of adapting catechesis to diverse age groups and cultural contexts are to be understood rather as indications or guidelines’.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 93, 119.

theological perspective<sup>6</sup>. Catechesis might be considered to reflect many functional specialties of theology<sup>7</sup>.

The analysis seeks to assess how the religious education programme in Ireland's Catholic primary schools promotes the Church's vision for Catholic catechesis, and also seeks to identify ways in which the programme might be strengthened. A better understanding of the Programme should prove of assistance to all involved in its current application – parents, pupils, teachers, parish clergy and others. The Irish Episcopal Conference has announced its intention to develop a new programme to succeed the current programme; this Analysis should prove helpful to the Bishops, to those tasked with developing the new programme, and to all other interested parties.

## **1.2 Catechesis in Context**

Evangelisation is the primary mission of the Church<sup>8</sup>, and catechesis is an integral element in the process of evangelisation<sup>9</sup>. Catechesis seeks to transmit Revelation, through a comprehensive and systematic formation in the faith, which implies education in both knowledge of the faith and in the life of faith, seeking to put the human person in communion

---

<sup>6</sup> *General Directory for Catechesis*. 8. 'Part Three (of the GDC) has also been revised to formulate the main elements of a pedagogy of the faith inspired by divine pedagogy; while this question is primarily a theological one, it also involves the human sciences'.

<sup>7</sup> Bernard Lonergan (*Method in Theology*, 125-133. London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1972) proposes eight functional specialties in theology: research, interpretation, history, dialectic, conversion, doctrines, systematics, and communication. Catechesis is most particularly concerned with doctrines, communication and conversion.

<sup>8</sup> *General Directory for Catechesis*. 46. Pope Paul VI. *Evangelii Nuntiandi – On Evangelisation in the Modern World*, 14. 'Evangelising is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelise'.

<sup>9</sup> *General Directory for Catechesis*, 48, 63. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 22, 24. John Paul II. *Catechesi Tradendae - On Catechesis in Our Time*. Apostolic Exhortation, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1979. 18.

with Jesus Christ<sup>10</sup>. The section seeks to set Catechesis in context, exploring the vital relationships the Catechesis has with Revelation, Theology and Evangelisation.

## **Revelation**<sup>11</sup>

The desire for God is written in the human heart, because we are created by God and for God, who never ceases to draw us to himself. Only in God can we find the truth and happiness we search for. ‘You have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you’.<sup>12</sup>

The one true God can be known with certainty from the created world by the natural light of human reason. However, there are many obstacles which can hamper our reason from reaching this knowledge, due to the limitations of the human mind and the disordered consequences of original sin. We therefore need God's revelation, not only for truths that exceed our understanding, but also to help us know with certainty those religious and moral truths which are accessible to human reason.

Beyond the power of natural human reason there is another order of knowledge, divine Revelation, through which God reveals himself to us, and gives us the grace to enable us welcome this revelation in faith.

God manifested himself to our first parents, spoke to them and, after the fall, promised them salvation and offered them his covenant. Throughout the time of the Old Testament, God kept the human race in his care. At his appointed time he called Abraham to make of him a great nation. Through the patriarchs, and after them through Moses and the prophets, God

---

<sup>10</sup> *General Directory for Catechesis*, 39, 67, 116.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, 1965. Flannery, Austin, Ed. *Vatican Council II, The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*. Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1975. 2-4, 7-10, 16, 21-26. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 27, 35-38, 50-53, 85-95, 109-118, 132-133. Pontifical Biblical Commission. *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*. Document, London: SCM Press Ltd, 1995. 13-46, 72-81, 88-94.

<sup>12</sup> St. Augustine, *Conf. I, I, I*: PL 32, 659-661.

taught this people to acknowledge him as the one true God, a loving father and just judge, and to wait for the promised Saviour, preparing the way for the Gospel and the coming of Christ.

God the Father sent His Son, Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, to dwell among us and complete the work of our salvation. Jesus perfected and fulfilled Revelation through his words and deeds, his signs and wonders, but especially through his death and glorious resurrection from the dead and final sending of the Spirit of truth. Jesus confirmed that God is with us to free us from the darkness of sin and death, to enable us to share in the divine nature through adoption in his only-begotten Son and to raise us up to life eternal.

Divine Revelation is realized simultaneously by both deeds and words which are bound up with each other and shed light on each another. God has revealed himself fully by sending his own Son, in whom he has established his covenant for ever. No new public revelation is to be expected before the glorious manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Yet even if Revelation is already complete, it has not been made completely explicit; it remains for Christian faith gradually to grasp its full significance over the course of the centuries.

In order that divine Revelation would be handed on to all generations in its full integrity, Christ commissioned the Apostles to preach the Gospel to all. This commission was faithfully fulfilled by the Apostles in their preaching and example, handing on what they had received from Christ, or what they had learned through the prompting of the Holy Spirit – this is called Sacred Tradition. The commission was fulfilled, too, by those Apostles and apostolic men who under the inspiration of the same Holy Spirit committed the message of salvation to writing – this is the New Testament of Sacred Scripture.



In order to keep the Gospel forever whole and alive within the Church, the Apostles left bishops as their successors, handing over to them the authority to teach in their own place. Christ must be proclaimed to all nations and individuals, so that this revelation may reach to the ends of the earth.

Sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture, of both the Old and New Testaments, form one sacred deposit of the word of God, committed to the Church. The task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether in Scripture or Tradition, has been entrusted by Christ to the living teaching office of the Church alone. The Church's Magisterium is not superior to the Word of God, but is its servant, teaching only what has been handed on to it. Tradition, Scripture and the teaching authority of the Church are so linked together that one cannot stand without the others, and together, under the action of the Holy Spirit, contribute effectively to the salvation of souls.

The Tradition which comes from the Apostles develops in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit, leading to a growth in the understanding of what has been handed down. This happens through the contemplation and study made by believers, and through the preaching of those who have received through episcopal succession the sure gift of truth.

Sacred Scripture comprises both Old and New Testaments – the New Testament is hidden in the Old and the Old is made manifest in the New.

Since Sacred Scripture really is the word of God, everything asserted by the inspired authors or sacred writers must be held to be asserted by the Holy Spirit, and the books of Scripture must be acknowledged as teaching solidly, faithfully and without error that truth which God wanted put into sacred writings for the sake of our salvation.

In Sacred Scripture, God speaks to us in a human way, so for correct interpretation, we must be attentive to what the human authors truly wanted to affirm, and to what God wanted to reveal to us by their words. To understand the sacred authors' intention, we must take into account the conditions of their time and culture, the literary genres in use at that time, and the modes of feeling, speaking and narrating then current.

But since Sacred Scripture is inspired, we must also read and interpret Scripture in the light of the same Spirit by whom it was written, otherwise Scripture would remain a dead letter. The Church proposes three criteria for interpreting Scripture in accordance with the Spirit who inspired it: be attentive to the content and unity of the whole Scripture; read Scripture within the living Tradition of the whole Church; be attentive to the analogy of faith, which is the coherence of the truths of faith among themselves and within the whole plan of Revelation.

The Church also recognises literal and spiritual senses of Scripture, the latter being subdivided into the allegorical, moral and anagogical senses; the full richness of Scripture is revealed through all four senses.

The literal sense is the meaning conveyed by the words of Scripture and discovered by sound exegesis: all other senses of Sacred Scripture are based on the literal. As to the spiritual senses: the allegorical sense recognises the significance of events in relation to Christ; the moral sense shows us how to act justly; and the anagogical sense shows the eternal significance of realities and events. A medieval couplet summarizes the significance of the four senses: 'the Letter speaks of deeds; Allegory to faith; the Moral how to act; Anagogy our destiny'.

The Church, especially through the Pontifical Biblical Commission, encourages the most up-to-date methods and approaches for interpretation of the Scriptures. The historical-critical method is the indispensable method for the scientific study of the meaning of ancient texts. The historical-critical method is well developed in the analysis of biblical revelation in its concrete historical development, involving many steps, including: textual criticism, linguistic and semantic analysis, literary criticism, genre criticism, tradition criticism, and redaction criticism. Many newer methods of literary analysis are also encouraged, e.g. rhetorical, narrative, and semiotic. Other approaches are also encouraged: those based on tradition, those that use the human sciences, and contextual approaches.

The task of the Catholic exegete is an ecclesial task, a work of scholarship, including both research and teaching. Catholic exegetes must be conscious that they are interpreting the word of God, and should explain the christological, canonical and ecclesial meanings of the biblical texts. Being itself a theological discipline, exegesis has close and complex relationships with other fields of theological learning. Systematic theology influences the presuppositions with which exegetes approach biblical texts, while exegesis provides the other theological disciplines with data fundamentals for their operation. There is therefore a relationship of dialogue between exegesis and other branches of theology. The Church encourages Catholic exegetes and other students of sacred theology to work diligently together in exploration and exposition of the divine writings. Scriptural exegesis also contributes to the life of the Church in the liturgy, prayer, pastoral ministry, and ecumenism.

The Church has always venerated the divine Scriptures, and strongly exhorts all the Christian faithful to know Jesus Christ through frequent reading of Scripture, ‘for ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.’<sup>13</sup>

Theology rests on the written word of God, together with Tradition, as its primary foundation and through which theology is constantly strengthened and rejuvenated. Theology studies in the light of faith all truth stored up in the mystery of Christ, so the study of Scripture is the very soul of theology. It is in particular theological research which deepens knowledge of revealed truth.

The Church exercises her Magisterial authority most fully when she defines dogmas, that is, truths contained in divine Revelation in a form obliging the Christian people to an irrevocable adherence of faith. The mutual connections between dogmas, and their coherence, can be found in the whole of the Revelation of the mystery of Christ. In Catholic doctrine there exists an order or hierarchy of truths, since they vary in their relation to the foundation of the Christian faith. This hierarchy does not mean that some truths pertain to faith itself less than others, but rather that some truths are based on others as of a higher priority, and are illumined by them.<sup>14</sup>

The ministry of the Word – pastoral preaching, catechetics and all forms of Christian instruction – is nourished and thrives in holiness through the Word of Scripture.

---

<sup>13</sup> St. Jerome, *Commentary on Isaiah*, Prol.: PL 24,17. cf. Benedict XV, encyclical "*Spiritus Paraclitus*." EB 475-480; Pius XII, encyclical "*Divino Afflante Spiritu*." EB 544. DV24

<sup>14</sup> *General Catechetical Directory*, 43.

## Theology

The subsection above on Revelation outlined how theology is dependent on Revelation and how in turn theological research serves the Church by leading to a deeper understanding of the truths of Revelation, which is particularly helpful to catechesis.

Saint Anselm explained theology as, 'Faith seeking understanding'. As believers we desire to know better the One in whom we have put our faith, and to understand better what He has revealed; a more penetrating knowledge will in turn call forth a greater faith, opening the eyes of our hearts to a livelier understanding of the contents of Revelation. In the words of St. Augustine, "I believe, in order to understand; and I understand, the better to believe."<sup>15</sup>

The Fathers of the Church distinguish between theology (*theologia*) and economy (*oikonomia*). "Theology" refers to the mystery of God's inmost life within the Blessed Trinity and "economy" to all the works by which God reveals himself and communicates his life. Through the *oikonomia* the *theologia* is revealed to us; but conversely, the *theologia* illuminates the whole *oikonomia*. God's works reveal who he is in himself; the mystery of his inmost being enlightens our understanding of all his works.<sup>16</sup>

John Henry Newman described theology as a science – an important one – the science of God, or the truths we know about God put into a system; just as we have a science of the stars, and call it astronomy, or the crust of the earth, and call it geology. Religious doctrine is knowledge, in as full sense as Newton's doctrine is knowledge.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 158. St Augustine, *Sermo* 43, 7, 9: PL 38, 257-258.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* 236.

<sup>17</sup> Newman, John Henry Cardinal. *The Idea of a University*. New York: Doubleday & Company Inc. 1959. 62, 80, 96.

Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger proposed two themes in understanding the nature of theology: theology has to do with God, and it conducts its enquiry in the manner of philosophy. Properly speaking, God himself must be the subject of theology. Therefore, Scripture alone is theology in the fullest sense of the word because it truly has God as its subject; it does not just speak of him but *is* his own speech. It lets God himself speak. The normative theologians are the authors of Holy Scripture.

A third theme proposed was that theology is a spiritual science. Theology is a rationality that remains within faith itself and develops the appropriate context of faith. This fact explains also the peculiar phenomenon that the Christian faith, in its early days, found its ally, not in other religions, but in the great rational philosophy of the Greeks.<sup>18</sup>

Theology also serves catechesis in developing formulations of faith, such as the great Creeds, which form the foundation of catechesis on the profession of Christian faith. We do not believe in formulae, but in those realities they express, which faith allows us to touch. We approach these realities with the help of formulations of the faith which permit us to express the faith and to hand it on, to celebrate it in community, to assimilate and live on it more and more.<sup>19</sup>

The creed of the Church is intrinsic to the act of faith and incorporation into the Church. In her catechesis, the Church proclaims and lives a particular creed which, on the one hand, is the essential foundation of her community and, on the other, is sustained by this community. To become a Christian is to enter into this one particular creed, into the communal form of faith. The inner bond between the community itself and this creed is expressed by the fact

---

<sup>18</sup> Ratzinger, Joseph Cardinal. *Principles of Catholic Theology - Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987. 316-327

<sup>19</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 170.

that acceptance into the community has the form of a sacrament: baptism and catechesis are inseparable. As part of the sacrament, this basic catechesis is not subject to the will of the Church. It is a mark of her identity, without which she is nothing, but which can, nevertheless, exist only in her communal life.<sup>20</sup>

Theology is also of special service in catechesis on morality. The theological virtues -- faith, hope, and charity -- are the foundation of Christian moral activity, giving life to all the moral virtues. The Magisterium of the Pastors of the Church in moral matters is ordinarily exercised in catechesis and preaching, with the help of the works of theologians and spiritual authors. Thus from generation to generation, under the aegis and vigilance of the pastors, the "deposit" of Christian moral teaching has been handed on. In the work of teaching and applying Christian morality, the Church needs the dedication of pastors, the knowledge of theologians, and the contribution of all Christians and men of good will.<sup>21</sup>

### **Evangelisation**<sup>22</sup>

Catechesis was clearly established as an integral element of evangelisation by Pope Paul VI in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 1975, a principle the Church has strongly endorsed ever since. *Evangelii Nuntiandi – On Evangelisation in the Modern World* was the Apostolic Exhortation following the Third General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in 1974, devoted

---

<sup>20</sup> Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger. *Principles of Catholic Theology - Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology*. 329.

<sup>21</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1813, 2033, 2038.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi – On Evangelisation in the Modern World*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1975. 5-9, 14-18, 21-24, 27, 41-44, 54, 65, 71, 78.

to the theme of evangelization, which remains an outstanding expression of the Church's vision for Evangelisation.

Pope Paul VI summed up the objectives of the Second Vatican Council as to make the Church of the twentieth century ever better fitted for proclaiming the Gospel to the people of the twentieth century. The presentation of the Gospel message is not an optional contribution for the Church. It is the duty incumbent on her by the command of the Lord Jesus, so that people can believe and be saved. This message is the beauty of the Revelation that it represents.

The witness that the Lord gives of Himself, 'I must proclaim the Good News of the kingdom of God'<sup>23</sup>, sums up the whole mission of Jesus. Christ applied to Himself the words of the prophet Isaiah: 'The Spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for he has anointed me. He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor.'<sup>24</sup>.

As an evangelizer, Christ first of all proclaims a kingdom, the kingdom of God. As the kernel and centre of His Good News, Christ proclaims salvation, this great gift of God which is liberation from everything that oppresses man but which is above all liberation from sin and the Evil One, in the joy of knowing God and being known by Him, of seeing Him, and of being given over to Him. All of this is begun during the life of Christ and definitively accomplished by His death and resurrection. But it must be patiently carried on during the course of history, in order to be realized fully on the day of the final coming of Christ.

The Church is the depositary of the Good News to be proclaimed. It is the content of the Gospel, and therefore of evangelization, that she preserves as a precious living heritage, not

---

<sup>23</sup> Lk.4:43

<sup>24</sup> Lk.4:18; Is.61:1.



in order to keep it hidden but to communicate it. Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize, that is to say, in order to preach and teach, to be the channel of the gift of grace, to reconcile sinners with God, and to perpetuate Christ's sacrifice in the Mass, which is the memorial of His death and glorious resurrection.

The Church evangelizes when she seeks to convert, solely through the divine power of the message she proclaims, both the personal and collective consciences of people, the activities in which they engage, and the lives and concrete milieu which are theirs.

To understand the Church's evangelizing activity one must keep in view all its essential elements. Evangelization can be defined in terms of: proclaiming Christ to those who do not know Him, witness, preaching, catechesis, inner adherence, conferring Baptism and the other sacraments, entry into the community, apostolic initiative and the renewal of humanity. Any partial and fragmentary definition which attempts to render the reality of evangelization in all its richness, complexity and dynamism does so only at the risk of impoverishing it and even of distorting it.

The Gospel must be proclaimed by witness of authentically Christian life, through which Christians stir up irresistible questions in the hearts of those who see how they live. This witness – involving presence, sharing, solidarity, and fidelity to the Lord Jesus – is an essential element, and generally the first one, in evangelization. ‘Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are

witnesses.<sup>25</sup> All Christians are called to this witness, and in this way they can be real evangelizers.

Nevertheless, even the finest witness will prove ineffective in the long run if it is not explained, justified - what Peter called always having 'your answer ready for people who ask you the reason for the hope that you all have'<sup>26</sup> - and made explicit by a clear and unequivocal proclamation of the Lord Jesus. There is no true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God are not proclaimed. 'And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher?... So faith comes from what is heard and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ.'<sup>27</sup> This law once laid down by the Apostle Paul maintains its full force today. This proclamation - kerygma, preaching or catechesis - occupies such an important place in evangelization that it has often become synonymous with it; and yet it is only one aspect of evangelization.

Evangelization will always contain - as the foundation, centre, and at the same time, summit of its dynamism - a clear proclamation that, in Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man, who died and rose from the dead, salvation is offered to all men, as a gift of God's grace and mercy. This salvation is not limited to temporal existence, meeting material or even spiritual needs, but a transcendent and eschatological salvation, beginning in this life but which is fulfilled in eternity in a communion with God.

---

<sup>25</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Address to the Members of the Consilium de Laicis* (2 October 1974): AAS 66 (1974), p. 568.

<sup>26</sup> 1 Peter 3:15

<sup>27</sup> Romans 10:14, 17

The Gospel is also the word of truth, which liberates and alone gives peace of heart; the truth about God, about man and his mysterious destiny, about the world. This truth is none other than revealed truth and hence, a sharing in the first truth which is God Himself.

The Church has a grave responsibility of preserving unaltered the content of the Catholic faith which the Lord entrusted to the apostles. While being made explicit by theological expression which takes account of differing cultural, social and racial milieu, it must remain the content of the Catholic faith just exactly as the ecclesial magisterium has received it and transmits it.

An important means of evangelization is that of catechetical instruction, especially for children and young people, who need to learn through systematic religious instruction the fundamental teachings, the living content of the truth which God has wished to convey to us and which the Church has sought to express in an ever richer fashion during the course of her long history. Catechetical instruction will profit greatly – at church, in the schools, and in Christian homes – by provision of suitable texts, updated with wisdom and competence, under the authority of the bishops. The methods must be adapted to the age, culture and aptitude of the persons concerned, they must seek always to fix in the memory, intelligence and heart the essential truths that must impregnate all of life. It is vital to prepare good instructors: parochial catechists, teachers, and parents. Catechetical instruction, under the form of the catechumenate, is also required for young people and adults who seek to become Christians.

An important agent in evangelisation is the family, which well deserves the beautiful name of ‘domestic Church.’<sup>28</sup> The family, like the Church, ought to be a place where the Gospel is transmitted and from which the Gospel radiates, and where all the members evangelize and are evangelized. The parents not only communicate the Gospel to their children, but from their children they can themselves receive the same Gospel as deeply lived by them.

The Church also seeks to deepen, consolidate, nourish and make ever more mature the faith of those who are already believers, in order that they may be so still more. Their faith today is exposed to trials and threats, and runs the risk of perishing from suffocation or starvation if it is not fed and sustained each day through a catechesis full of Gospel vitality and in a language suited to people and circumstances.

The proclamation of the Gospel only reaches full development when it is listened to, accepted and assimilated, and leads to a life henceforth transformed, as proposed by Jesus, revealed concretely by a visible entry into a community of believers. The person who has been evangelized then goes on to evangelize others. In its totality, evangelization - over and above the preaching of a message - consists in the implantation of the Church.

## **Catechesis**

### Nature of Catechesis

The *General Catechetical Directory 1971*<sup>29</sup> presents catechesis as one of the forms of the ministry of the word. These forms include: evangelisation, or missionary preaching, which

---

<sup>28</sup> Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 11: AAS 57 (1965), p. 16; Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 11, AAS 58 (1966), p. 848; Saint John Chrysostom, *In Genesis Serm.* VI, 2; VII, 1: PG 54, 607-68.

<sup>29</sup> Congregation for the Clergy. *General Catechetical Directory*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1971.

aims to arouse the beginnings of faith; the catechetical form, which is intended to make people's faith become living, conscious, and active, through the light of instruction; the liturgical form, within liturgical celebration, especially that of the Eucharist; the theological form, that is, the systematic treatment and the scientific investigation of the truths of faith. These forms are distinct, but are closely bound together. Catechesis proper presupposes a commitment to the Gospel of Christ, but in practice catechesis may be directed to some members of the Church who have in fact never fully made that commitment. Therefore evangelisation can precede or accompany the work of catechesis proper, and catechesis normally participates in evangelisation.<sup>30</sup>

The *General Catechetical Directory* also proposes that under varied circumstances and needs, catechetical activity itself takes various forms, which include: religious instruction given to children and adolescents in or outside schools; catechetical programmes for adults; catechumenate programmes for those who are preparing themselves for the reception of baptism, or for those who have been baptised but lack a proper Christian initiation. Catechesis for adults must be considered the chief form of catechesis; all the other forms are in some way oriented to it.<sup>31</sup>

The *General Catechetical Directory* emphasises the principal function of catechesis as leading to maturity of faith, through acquiring a more profound living knowledge of God and of his plan of salvation centred in Christ. This maturity of faith will lead Christians to understand the message of the Gospel for themselves and for all people, and will help them share their faith with others.

---

<sup>30</sup> *General Catechetical Directory*, 17, 18.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* 19, 20.

Specific functions of catechesis include: opening people to the grace of conversion and renewal; helping them in performance of duties of faith; growth in knowledge of the faith; promoting the life of liturgical and private prayer; giving a Christian light on human existence; fostering the unity of Christians; helping to spread the Gospel in the world; preparing for eternal life in heaven, while also working for the improvement of human society.<sup>32</sup>

*Evangelii Nuntiandi 1975*, as has been noted above in the subsection on Evangelisation, emphasised catechesis as an integral element of evangelisation. The elements of evangelization are initially given as: proclaiming Christ to those who do not know Him, preaching, catechesis, conferring Baptism and the other sacraments, and then expanded to include the renewal of humanity, witness, inner adherence, entry into the community, and apostolic initiative. Systematic catechetical instruction is an important means of evangelization, helping people to learn truths of God, fixing in the memory, intelligence and heart the essential truths that must impregnate all of life.<sup>33</sup>

*Catechesi Tradendae 1979*, reiterated that catechesis is a vital element in evangelisation, the other elements being: the initial proclamation of the Gospel or missionary preaching through the *kerygma* to arouse faith, apologetics or examination of the reasons for belief, experience of Christian living, celebration of the sacraments, integration into the ecclesial community, and apostolic and missionary witness. Within the whole process of evangelization, the aim of catechesis is to be the teaching and maturation stage, educating the disciple of Christ by means of an organic and systematic teaching of Christian doctrine, the knowledge of the person and the message of our Lord Jesus Christ.

---

<sup>32</sup> *General Catechetical Directory*, 21-30.

<sup>33</sup> *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 24, 44.

However, in catechetical practice, this model order may not always apply because initial evangelization has often not taken place, at least not adequately. This may be the case for children, pre-adolescents, adolescents or adults. This means that ‘catechesis’ must often be evangelistic, concerned not only with teaching the faith, but also with conversion to Jesus Christ of those who are still on the threshold of faith.<sup>34</sup>

The *General Directory for Catechesis 1997* further confirms the principle of catechesis as an essential and vital element in evangelization. The GDC distinguishes between initiatory catechesis and catechesis for ongoing formation in faith.

Initiatory catechesis matures initial conversion, educates the convert in the faith and incorporates him into the Christian community. However, in pastoral practice it is not always easy to define the boundaries of these activities, because many who present themselves for catechesis may still require genuine conversion. The first stage in the catechetical process may therefore be dedicated to ensuring conversion, sometimes called ‘kerygmatic catechesis’. Initiatory catechesis should be: a comprehensive and systematic formation in the faith; education in both knowledge of the faith and in the life of faith, like an apprenticeship of the entire Christian life; and centred on the most fundamental and essential truths, laying the foundation for further growth in the faith and life of the Christian community.<sup>35</sup>

Catechesis for ongoing formation deepens knowledge of the faith, and may include study of Sacred Scripture, the social teaching of the Church, liturgical catechesis, spiritual formation

---

<sup>34</sup> *Catechesi Tradendae*, 18-20.

<sup>35</sup> *General Directory for Catechesis*, 61-68.

and theological instruction. An essential dimension is integration into the Christian community.<sup>36</sup>

The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch, but also in communion and intimacy, with Jesus Christ, which is expressed in profession of faith in the one God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The fundamental tasks of catechesis are: Promoting knowledge of the faith; Liturgical education; Moral formation; Teaching to pray; Education for Community Life; and Missionary initiation. To fulfil its tasks, catechesis avails of two principal means: transmission of the Gospel message and experience of the Christian life.<sup>37</sup>

### Sources of Catechesis

The primary source for the content of catechesis is the Good News of salvation, found in God's word, written or handed down, under the guidance of the Church's Magisterium. Other sources are how God's word is more deeply understood and developed by the people of faith, celebrated in the liturgy, shines out in the life of the Church, especially in the just and in the saints, and in some ways is reflected in those genuine moral values which are found in human society.<sup>38</sup>

Particularly important sources for catechesis are the great Creeds that have summed up the Church's faith over the centuries, and the Lord's Prayer. The Credo of the People of God, proclaimed by Pope Paul VI in 1968, brought together the essential elements of the Catholic

---

<sup>36</sup> *General Directory for Catechesis*, 69-72.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* 85-87.

<sup>38</sup> *General Catechetical Directory*, 45; *General Directory for Catechesis*, 94-96.



Faith, especially those that presented greater difficulty or risked being ignored; this Credo is also a sure point of reference for the content of catechesis.<sup>39</sup>

In our time a central source for catechesis is the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, promulgated by Pope John Paul II in 1992, a comprehensive presentation of the faith to serve as a reference point for catechesis throughout the Church. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is a statement of the Church's faith and of Catholic doctrine, attested to or illuminated by Sacred Scripture, the Apostolic Tradition and the Church's Magisterium.<sup>40</sup>

Theology provides another vital source for catechesis. Theology has an irreplaceable mission in the service of Faith, not excluding catechesis. Theologians' research and statements can quickly influence catechetical instruction. Theologians have a duty to take care that people do not take for a certainty what on the contrary belongs to the area of questions of opinion or of discussion among experts. Teachers of religion and catechists should take advantage of every opportunity to profit from the fruits of theological research in their own reflections and teaching.<sup>41</sup>

### *Catechetical terminology*

Over the period since the Second Vatican Council there has been some evolution in the use and meaning of terms relating to catechesis in Magisterial documents, as set out below:

---

<sup>39</sup> *Catechesi Tradendae*, 28.

<sup>40</sup> *General Directory for Catechesis*, 119-120.

<sup>41</sup> *Catechesi Tradendae*, 61.

The meaning of the term ‘catechesis’ has remained substantially constant as described above under the subheading on the *Nature of Catechesis*.

*Gravissimum Educationis* 1965 uses two terms in ways which are virtually synonymous with ‘catechesis’: ‘Christian education’ in a general sense, and ‘moral and religious education’ in relation to schools. Catholic teachers are to be trained in ‘religious knowledge’.<sup>42</sup>

*The General Catechetical Directory* 1971 introduces the term ‘religious instruction’ for the form of catechesis given to children and adolescents in the school or outside it.<sup>43</sup>

*Evangelii Nuntiandi* 1975 uses the terms ‘catechetical instruction’ and ‘religious instruction’ in reference to catechesis for children and young people, whether given in church, school or home. ‘Catechetical instruction’ is also used in reference to catechesis in the form of the catechumenate for both young people and adults. The term ‘education in the faith’ is used as synonymous with ‘catechesis’.<sup>44</sup>

*The Catholic School* 1977 uses the term ‘education in the faith’ as synonymous with ‘catechesis’. The term ‘Christian education’ refers to the total education given in a Catholic school, which includes the religious dimension, aiming to develop the complete Christian formation of pupils and their total commitment to Christ. The terms ‘catechetical instruction’ and ‘religious instruction’ refer specifically to the teaching of religion in the school, which is expected to supplement catechesis in home and church.<sup>45</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup> Declaration on Education, *Gravissimum Educationis*, 1965. Flannery, Austin. Ed. *Vatican Council II, The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*. Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1975. 7-8.

<sup>43</sup> *General Catechetical Directory* 1971, 19.

<sup>44</sup> *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 47.

<sup>45</sup> Congregation for Catholic Education. *The Catholic School*. Document, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1977. 19, 51, 73, 84.

*Catechesi Tradendae 1979* uses the terms ‘religious education’, ‘religious instruction’, ‘education in the faith’, and ‘Christian education’ as virtually synonymous with ‘catechesis’. In relation to ecumenical collaboration *Catechesi Tradendae* uses the term ‘common instruction in Christian religion’, which must be supplemented by full catechesis for Catholics. In relation to Catholic schools the terms ‘education in the faith’ and ‘religious education’ appear synonymous with full ‘catechesis’, while the terms ‘religious instruction’ and ‘religious training’ apply to the teaching of religion in the classroom; this teaching may be differentiated in response to the needs of non-Catholic pupils in the school.<sup>46</sup>

*Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith 1982* uses the term ‘education in the faith’ as virtually synonymous with catechesis, to describe the religious vocation of the Catholic school. The terms ‘religious education’, ‘religious instruction’, and ‘teaching of the Catholic religion’ are applied to the religious teaching as part of the curriculum in the school, and are seen as distinct from and complementary to catechesis properly so-called. ‘Religious formation’ refers to the full preparation of Catholic teachers, including ‘religious knowledge’ with appropriate certification and religious pedagogy; this religious formation should be on a par with a teacher’s professional formation.<sup>47</sup>

*The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School 1988* uses the term ‘religious instruction’ to mean the classroom teaching on religion, which is presumed to be Catholic in a Catholic school. The terms ‘religious education’, ‘religious formation’ and ‘Christian formation’ imply the total education in faith given by the Catholic school (seen as a participation in evangelization), in which ‘religious instruction’ forms a part. ‘Religious

---

<sup>46</sup> *Catechesi Tradendae*, 33, 38, 62, 65, 69, 70.

<sup>47</sup> Congregation for Catholic Education. *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith*. Document, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1982. 38, 43, 56-58, 60-66.

instruction’ in the school is seen as distinct from but complementary to ‘catechesis’, whose natural location is in the Christian community – especially home and parish.<sup>48</sup>

*The General Directory for Catechesis 1997* uses the term ‘religious instruction’ for the teaching of religion within the curriculum of a school, whether or not it is a Catholic school. The character of this ‘religious instruction’ will depend very much on the nature of the school. In a Catholic school the ‘religious instruction’ will be entirely from a Catholic perspective, but distinct from and complementary to other forms of the ministry of the word in the school (primary proclamation, catechesis, homilies, liturgical celebrations, etc.). In non-confessional or state schools the ‘religious instruction’ may include other religions, but it is presumed that the aspects dealing with the Catholic faith will be authentically Catholic.<sup>49</sup>

*The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium 1997* focuses on the terms ‘Christian formation’ and ‘Christian education’, implying the complete education in the faith to be imparted to pupils by the Catholic school, participating in the Church’s essential mission of evangelization.<sup>50</sup>

*Congregation for Catholic Education – Letter on Religious Education in Schools, 2009.*<sup>51</sup> This Letter uses the term ‘religious education’ to refer to the teaching of religion within the academic curriculum of the school, whether or not the school is a Catholic school. In any event, Catholic pupils should receive authentic Catholic ‘religious education’ in school. This use of the term ‘religious education’ replaces the term ‘religious instruction’ in some earlier

---

<sup>48</sup> Congregation for Catholic Education. *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School - Guidelines for Reflection and Renewal*. Vatican City : Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1988. 19, 44, 66-70, 73, 98-99, 107.

<sup>49</sup> *General Directory for Catechesis*, 73-76, 259-260.

<sup>50</sup> Congregation for Catholic Education. *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*. Document, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997. 11, 12, 21.

<sup>51</sup> Congregation for Catholic Education. *Religious Education in Schools Fits into the Evangelising Mission of the Church*. Zenit.org. 8 September 2009.

Magisterial documents. The only time that the Letter uses the term ‘religious instruction’ is when quoting earlier documents <sup>52</sup>. The Letter says that ‘religious education’ in schools is different from, and complementary to, ‘catechesis’, as it is school education that does not require the assent of faith <sup>53</sup>. ‘Religious education’ for Catholic pupils should be authentically Catholic whatever the school setting, while respecting the religious freedom of non-Catholic pupils. The Letter specifically rejects the kind of ‘religious education’ that teaches about the religious phenomenon in a multi-denominational sense, about religious ethics and culture, or is limited to a presentation of the different religions in a comparative and ‘neutral’ way, which would create confusion or generate religious relativism or indifferentism. The Letter also uses the terms ‘Catholic formation’, ‘Christian education’ and ‘Catholic education’ which appear to imply the total education of pupils in a Catholic perspective.

The term ‘religious education’ is used in Ireland in general education and Catholic catechetical circles.

---

<sup>52</sup> *Catechesi Tradendae* 69; *General Directory for Catechesis*, 73; *Code of Canon Law 1983*, 804§1.

<sup>53</sup> It may not always be relevant to consider ‘religious education/religious instruction’ in the school as distinct from catechesis, but rather as a particular form of catechesis. In the Irish tradition (at least up to the mid-1970s) school, home and parish were closely linked and the teaching of religion in the school was definitely catechesis in its fullest sense, participating in evangelisation. Catholic schools were extensively established by Irish missionaries in the fruitful service of catechesis and evangelization. The leading role played by Catholic schools in some missions, where evangelisation started (and continued) with schools, while only later was the Church able to construct churches and to establish a new Christian community, is noted in *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* 41, referring to an address given by Pope Paul VI in 1963. (Cf Address of Pope Paul VI to the National Congress of Diocesan Directors of the Teachers’ Organizations of Catholic Action, *Insegnamenti*, I, 1963, p. 594). Paul VI may well have been influenced by a visit he made (as Cardinal Montini) the previous year to the area in south-east Nigeria which had been evangelized by Bishop Joseph Shanahan and the Irish Holy Ghost missionaries. The Catholic school played a key role in Bishop Shanahan’s strategy of evangelization, which was outstandingly effective, as was witnessed by this author who was serving as a volunteer teacher there and met with Cardinal Montini during his visit.

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment of the Government Department of Education and Science published in 2000 a syllabus for Religious Education as a public examination subject at Junior Certificate level.<sup>54</sup> A syllabus for Leaving Certificate level was published in 2003.<sup>55</sup> The Syllabi do not offer an exact definition of ‘religious education’, but the meaning can be inferred from the Aims and Rationale. ‘Religious Education’ exposes students to a broad range of religious traditions and the non-religious interpretation of life, and to a variety of ethical codes and norms for behaviour. ‘Religious Education’ explores the human search for meaning, and how this search has found expression in religion, and contributes to the spiritual and moral development of students. Particular reference is made to the Christian tradition, because of its contribution to the culture of Irish life, but the Catholic Church is not mentioned anywhere in the Syllabi, not even in the Section – ‘Religion: the Irish experience’. The Syllabi could be considered to give a very broad and religiously relativist understanding of ‘religious education’.

The understanding of ‘religious education’ above as presented by the State’s Department of Education and Science seems to be generally accepted in Catholic catechetical circles in Ireland.<sup>56</sup> However, this approach, which is religiously relativist, is not favoured by Catholic Magisterial sources, as indicated above in the 2009 Letter of the Congregation for Catholic Education.

---

<sup>54</sup> National Council for Curriculum & Assessment. *Religious Education Syllabus – Junior Certificate*. Dublin: The Stationery Office, 2000.

<sup>55</sup> National Council for Curriculum & Assessment. *Religious Education Syllabus – Leaving Certificate*. Dublin: The Stationery Office, 2003.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Gareth Byrne. *Religious Education Renewed – An Overview of Developments in Post-Primary Religious Education*. Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2005. 5-9. Oliver Brennan - Editor. *Critical Issues in Religious Education*. Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2005. Finola Cunnane. *New Directions in Religious Education*. Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2004.

The term ‘Religious Studies’ has been used in some circles, but does not appear in Magisterial sources, nor in current Irish practice.

### 1.3 Scope of the Study

The programme in use through all eight years in Irish Catholic primary schools is the *Alive-O Programme*<sup>57</sup>, which is published by Veritas Publications, with copyright held by the Irish Episcopal Commission on Catechetics. The *Alive-O Programme* is the most recent development in Religious Education in Catholic primary schools.<sup>58</sup>

The *Alive-O Programme* (hereinafter referred to as ‘the Programme’) was progressively introduced over the years 1996 to 2004. The Programme replaced, and is described as a ‘re-presentation’ of, the *Children of God*<sup>59</sup> religious education series for primary schools. The term ‘re-presentation’ may suggest that *Alive-O* is little changed from the *Children of God*, but there is significant change. The *Children of God* series, also published by Veritas Publications for the Irish Episcopal Commission on Catechetics, was originally introduced from 1976 to 1978; a ‘re-presentation’, or new edition, was introduced over the years 1983 to 1987. There is no statement in the *Alive-O Programme* as to why the earlier *Children of*

---

<sup>57</sup> Irish Episcopal Commission on Catechetics. *Alive-O series*. Dublin: Veritas Publications, 1996-2004.

<sup>58</sup> For a summary of past developments in RE in Catholic schools see, *A Brief History of Religious Education in the Irish Primary School*, in *Children, Catholicism, and Religious Education*, p.66-113. Patricia Kieran & Anne Hession. Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2005.

<sup>59</sup> Irish Episcopal Commission on Catechetics. *Children of God series*. Dublin: Veritas Publications, 1984-1987.

*God series* needed to be replaced, and what changes were made in the *Alive-O* 're-presentation'.

The *Alive-O Programme* was first introduced into Catholic primary schools in 1996 with *Alive-O 1* for Junior Infants (4/5 year-olds). Subsequent volumes of the Programme were introduced year by year, with a gap in the year 2000, culminating with *Alive-O 8* for Sixth Class (11/12 year-olds), introduced in 2004.

The scope of the study is limited to the published materials of the Programme. Contacts with pupils, teachers, Diocesan Advisers, priests, bishops, Programme writers and advisors, parents, religious educators, and others have been helpful to the author in providing background information, but are not explicitly reported on in this study.

The Programme's published materials include: for each year a Pupil's Book, a Workbook with exercises and drawings to colour, tape and CD of Programme songs, and a Video for classroom use. For each year there is also a substantial Teacher's Book, which contains a significant amount of information for teachers only, along with extensive lesson material for use with pupils for each weekly lesson of the school year.



## 1.4 Methodology

The Programme published materials were studied in depth – Pupil’s Books, Teacher’s Books, Workbooks, and Videos. This was a significant task due to the extent of Programme materials – approximately 1.6 million words of text (mostly in the Teachers Books), over six hundred illustrations (Pupils Books and Workbooks), and some twelve hours of video material.

The relevant teachings of the Catholic Church were studied, most particularly: Sacred Scripture, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, *General Directory for Catechesis*, *General Catechetical Directory*<sup>60</sup>, the Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae*<sup>61</sup>, pertinent documents of the Second Vatican Council<sup>62</sup>, and other relevant documentation; the principal sources studied are listed in Section 2.1 below. There is an extensive range of Magisterial documents available: comprehensive, inspiring, practical and authoritative.

Other publications that impinge on catechesis and education have also been studied (listed in the Bibliography and referenced as appropriate in the text). Section 4.1: Developments in Pedagogy, draws attention to the diversity of educational methods that can be employed in Catholic catechesis.

While the range of relevant Church teaching on catechesis is excellent, a particular issue arose in relation to the appropriate content for the period of primary school. Church documents give general principles and guidelines, but do not recommend a particular Syllabus for primary school Catholic catechesis. For this reason the author studied a number

---

<sup>60</sup> Congregation for the Clergy. *General Catechetical Directory*, 1971; [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).

<sup>61</sup> John Paul II. *Catechesi Tradendae – On Catechesis in Our Time*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1979.

<sup>62</sup> In particular *Gravissimum Educationis* – Declaration on Education; *Dei Verbum* – Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation.

of good primary level Catholic catechetical programmes and syllabi from other countries <sup>63</sup>, to arrive at an appropriate content and sense of the faith for a primary school catechetical programme.

Criteria were developed for analysis and assessment of Programme materials, drawing as far as possible on Magisterial sources; the Criteria selected are outlined in Section 2.2 below.

The Programme materials were then compared with the relevant teachings of the Catholic Church, in relation to both content and pedagogy. These comparisons sought to assess the extent to which the Programme provides religious education in harmony with the teaching of the Catholic Church, and to identify possible ways of strengthening the Programme.

---

<sup>63</sup> These sources included the following: Catholics United for the Faith, *Faith and Life series*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987. Image of God, Inc. *Image of God Series*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994. Confraternity of Christian Doctrine. *Baltimore Catechism, Nos 1&2*. New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co. 1964. Diocese of Wagga Wagga. *We Belong to the Lord – Religious Education Syllabus for Primary Children*. Diocese of Wagga Wagga, 1994.

## 1.5 Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used for documents referenced in this thesis:

- CCC            *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Dublin: Veritas Publications, 1994.
- CCCC          *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, London: Catholic Truth Society, 2006.
- CIC            *Codex Juris Canonici*, Code of Canon Law, London: Collins Liturgical Publications, 1983.
- CT             John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, *Catechesi Tradendae*, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1979; [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).
- DV             Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, 1965. Flannery, Austin, Ed. *Vatican Council II, The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*. Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1975.
- EV             Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 1975; [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va)
- GCD            Congregation for the Clergy, *General Catechetical Directory*, 1971; [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).
- GDC            Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis*, Dublin: Veritas Publications, 1997.
- TMHS          Pontifical Council for the Family, *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, Oxford: Family Publications, 1996.
- UR             Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 1964. Flannery, Austin. Ed. *Vatican Council II, The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*. Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1975.

## 2. ANALYSIS CRITERIA AND APPROACH

### 2.1 Catholic Catechesis since the Second Vatican Council

#### Progress since Vatican II

‘The Church has always considered catechesis one of her primary tasks, for, before Christ ascended to His Father after His resurrection, He gave the apostles a final command – to make disciples of all nations and to teach them to observe all that He had commanded. ....He also entrusted them with the mission and power to explain with authority what He had taught them, His words and actions, His signs and commandments. And He gave them the Spirit to fulfil this mission. Very soon the name of catechesis was given to the whole of the efforts within the Church to make disciples, to help people to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, so that believing they may have life in the His name, and to educate and instruct them in this life and thus build up the Body of Christ. The Church has not ceased to devote her energy to this task’<sup>64</sup>.

Catholics are particularly fortunate at this time in having a comprehensive, inspiring and authoritative range of documents setting out the Church’s vision for catechesis, drawn from the living source of the Word of God transmitted in Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture.

Pope John XXIII entrusted the Second Vatican Council with the task to guard the precious deposit of Christian doctrine and present it better so as to make it more accessible to all<sup>65</sup>.

The Council was considered by Pope Paul VI to be the great catechism of modern times<sup>66</sup>.

---

<sup>64</sup> John Paul II. *Catechesi Tradendae - On Catechesis in Our Time*. Apostolic Exhortation, 1. (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1979).

<sup>65</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution, *Fidei Depositum*, 1992.

<sup>66</sup> *Catechesi Tradendae*, 2. ‘The most recent Popes gave catechesis a place of eminence in their pastoral solicitude. Through his gestures, his preaching, his authoritative interpretation of the Second Vatican Council (considered by him the great catechism of modern times), and through the whole of

The Council prescribed that a ‘Directory should be composed with respect to the catechetical instruction of the Christian people, and should deal with the fundamental principles of such instruction, its arrangement, and the composition of books on the subject’<sup>67</sup>. This was realized in 1971 when Paul VI approved and promulgated the *General Catechetical Directory*<sup>68</sup>.

Decisive milestones for catechesis were the General Assemblies of the Synod of Bishops in 1974 and 1977. In 1974 the representatives of the world’s bishops considered the theme of ‘Evangelisation in the Modern World’; the Synod deliberations were presented by Pope Paul VI in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*<sup>69</sup>, which set out a particularly important principle, that of catechesis as an integral component of evangelisation in the mission of the Church<sup>70</sup>. Pope Paul proposed catechesis as the theme of the 1977 Synod; it fell to John Paul II to issue in 1979 the post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae*, ‘On Catechesis in our Time’, giving the Church an inspiring and practical vision across the varied dimensions of catechesis.

The Synod of Bishops made another decisive contribution to catechesis at its 1985 assembly by calling for the composition of a catechism of Catholic doctrine concerning faith and

---

his life, my venerated predecessor Paul VI served the Church’s catechesis in a particularly exemplary fashion’.

<sup>67</sup> Second Vatican Council, Decree on the Bishops’ Pastoral Office in the Church, *Christus Dominus*, 1965, 44

<sup>68</sup> Congregation for the Clergy. *General Catechetical Directory*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1971; [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).

<sup>69</sup> Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 1975; [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.* 44. ‘A means of evangelisation that must not be neglected is that of catechetical instruction. The intelligence, especially that of children and young people, needs to learn through systematic religious instruction the fundamental teachings, the living content of the truth which God has wished to convey to us and which the Church has sought to express in an ever richer fashion during the course of her long history’.

morals<sup>71</sup>. Pope John Paul II took up this call, and commissioned the preparation of the catechism, which involved consultation with theologians, exegetes and catechists, and especially the Bishops of the whole world. With the Apostolic Constitution *Fidei Depositum* Pope John Paul promulgated in 1992 the *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)*<sup>72</sup>, as a sure and authentic reference text for teaching Catholic doctrine and for preparing local catechisms. The CCC is also offered to all the faithful who wish to deepen their knowledge of the unfathomable riches of salvation, and to every individual who wants to know what the Catholic Church believes. The Church wishes all to come to a knowledge of the truth, in its fullness and purity<sup>73</sup>, which must encompass ‘the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth’<sup>74</sup>

The *General Directory for Catechesis (GDC)*, published in 1997 by the Vatican Congregation for the Clergy, is a comprehensive revision and updating of the 1971 *General Catechetical Directory*. The GDC provides guidelines and advice on catechetics, acting as a point of reference for content, pedagogy (teaching approach & strategy) and methodology. The GDC is founded and structured on the principle set out by Pope Paul VI in *Evangelii*

---

<sup>71</sup> Ratzinger, Joseph Cardinal, and Christoph Schönborn. *Introduction to the Catechism of the Catholic Church*. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994) p.11-12. ‘The idea of a catechism of the Second Vatican Council had already been put forward at the Council by Cardinal Jäger. This would be analogous to the Roman Catechism of 1566, which renewed catechesis in the spirit of the Council of Trent. Motivated by similar considerations the Dutch Bishops’ conference had published its catechism in 1966. While some felt that the decision for a new catechism in 1985 had come too late and should have been prepared immediately after the Council, others, including Cardinal Ratzinger, felt that the time was not yet ripe just after the close of the Council, and that a process of fermentation was needed leading to the necessary clarifications in order to best express the *aggiornamento* of the Second Vatican Council’.

<sup>72</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1999.

<sup>73</sup> ‘One of the greatest rights of the faithful is to receive the Word of God in all its purity and integrity’. Pope John Paul I. Address (on the last day of his life) to the Bishops of the Philippines on the occasion of their *ad limina* visit, September 28, 1979. As reported in *The Right of the Catechised to the Truth*, p.28. Boston: Daughters of St Paul, 1984.

<sup>74</sup> Silvio Cardinal Oddi, *The Right of the Catechised to the Truth*, p.21-35. Boston: Daughters of St Paul, 1984.

*Nuntiandi*, the principle of catechesis as an integral component of evangelisation, which in turn is the fundamental mission of the Church<sup>75</sup>.

In 2005 Pope Benedict XVI approved the publication of the *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*<sup>76</sup>, a summary which faithfully reflects the CCC.

Much progress in Catholic catechesis had already been achieved prior to the Second Vatican Council<sup>77</sup>. In the years since the Council there have been many excellent developments in the Universal Church, as noted by Pope John Paul II in 1979<sup>78</sup>, and by the Congregation for the Clergy in 1997<sup>79</sup>. Out of many examples of excellent post-Vatican II catechetical publications one might note two series, *Faith and Life*<sup>80</sup> and the *Image of God*<sup>81</sup>, both of which have been judged by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops to be in conformance with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, along with many other catechetical

---

<sup>75</sup> 'Evangelising is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize'. Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 1975, 14.

<sup>76</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana, *The Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*. London: Catholic Truth Society, 2006.

<sup>77</sup> *General Catechetical Directory*, 70. 'Within our present century, catechists have thoroughly investigated questions raised by the psychological, educational, and pedagogical sciences. Indeed, studies have been undertaken with regard to the method to be used in the catechism lesson; the role of activity methods in the teaching of catechesis has been pointed out; the act of catechesis has been investigated in all its parts according to the principles which govern the art of teaching (experience, imagination, memory, intelligence); and finally, a differential methodology has been worked out, that is, a methodology which varies according to the age, social conditions, and degree of psychological maturity of those who are to be taught'.

<sup>78</sup> 'One of the major features of the renewal of catechetics today is the rewriting and multiplication of catechetical books taking place in many parts of the Church. Numerous very successful works have been produced and are a real treasure in the service of catechetical instruction'. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae*, 1971, 49.

<sup>79</sup> 'The 30-year period between the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council and the threshold of the third millennium is without doubt most providential for the orientation and promotion of catechesis. .... The course of catechesis during this time has been characterised everywhere by generous dedication, worthy initiatives and by positive results for the education and growth in the faith of children, young people and adults'. Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis*, 1997, 2.

<sup>80</sup> Catholics United for the Faith, *Faith and Life series*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987.

<sup>81</sup> Image of God, Inc. *Image of God Series*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994.

texts<sup>82</sup>. It is also true that many catechetical texts prepared before the Second Vatican Council are still of value, for example, the *Baltimore Catechism* in the United States.<sup>83</sup>

*A New Catechism; Catholic Faith for Adults*<sup>84</sup> (generally known as the ‘Dutch Catechism’), issued by the Bishops of the Netherlands in 1966, sought to present Christian faith in a new way in harmony with the Second Vatican Council and with the times<sup>85</sup>. The Dutch Catechism broke new ground in its mode of presentation, relying heavily on description and narrative with a deliberate anthropocentric approach. It marked the first change in literary form of Christian catechisms since Luther’s Catechism of 1529<sup>86</sup>. The Dutch Catechism was favourably received by many, especially in the time of enthusiastic optimism immediately following the Second Vatican Council, and has had significant and continuing international influence on Catholic catechesis<sup>87</sup>.

---

<sup>82</sup> Secretariat of Evangelisation and Catechesis, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, [www.usccb.org/catechism/](http://www.usccb.org/catechism/), July 11 2008.

<sup>83</sup> ‘Your remarkable Baltimore Catechism, published originally over a century ago, and responsible in no small part for theological formation, the fidelity and sanctity of the Church in this country.’ Silvio Cardinal Oddi, *The Right of the Catechized to the Truth*, p.22. Boston: Daughters of St Paul, 1984.

<sup>84</sup> Higher Catechetical Institute, Nijmegen. *A New Catechism - Catholic Faith for Adults*. New York: Herder and Herder, 1967.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid. From the Forward by the Bishops of the Netherlands, V-VI: ‘In the following pages we hope to present anew to adults the message which Jesus of Nazareth brought into the world, to make it sound as new as it is. As such this book is an attempt to render faithfully the renewal which found expression in the Second Vatican Council. .... The message of Christ is a living thing, and hence this new type of catechism tries to present the faith of our fathers in a form suitable to the present day’.

<sup>86</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, Professor of Theology, University of Regensburg, Germany. ‘*The Dutch Catechism: A Theological Appreciation*’, *The Furrow*, July 1970, 740-743.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid. 744-745. Ratzinger considered the Dutch Catechism to be of ‘very great importance’ and commended its achievements: ‘Its importance lies mainly in the fact that it addresses itself to people; it does not teach an abstract system but takes up human problems and shows the place that faith has in relation to these problems. It is in its refreshing humanity that I see the real strength and greatness of the Catechism.. .... The picture of the life of Jesus, which forms the core of the work, is also drawn with the same joyously simple humanity and faith’. Ratzinger also refers to the Dutch Catechism’s ‘meteoric brilliance’. *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 386. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987. However, in addition to its positive features, the Dutch Catechism was also found to have problems, see pages 47-48 below.



Progress in catechesis has been served by growth in the number of journals which are either dedicated to catechesis or include catechetical-related articles<sup>88</sup>.

### Sources for Catholic Catechesis

Significant Magisterial sources relative to Catholic Catechesis include the following:

*The Bible*, in reputable translations, e.g. Jerusalem Bible, Revised Standard Version.

*Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Dublin: Veritas Publications, 1994.

*Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, London, Catholic Truth Society, 2006.

Congregation for Catholic Education. *Consecrated Persons and Their Mission in Schools* . Reflections and Guidelines, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana; [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).

Congregation for Catholic Education. *Educational Guidance in Human Love -- Outlines for Sex Education*. Document, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1983; [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).

Congregation for Catholic Education. *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith*. Document, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1982; [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).

Congregation for Catholic Education. *The Catholic School*. Document, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1977; [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).

Congregation for Catholic Education. *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*. Document, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997; [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).

---

<sup>88</sup> A selection of such journals might include the following: Catechist; The Sower; The Furrow; the British Journal of Religious Education; Religious Education; The Living Light; Revue Lumen Vitae; RTJ – The Magazine for Catechist Formation; Journal of Religious Education; Religious Studies Review

—. *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School - Guidelines for Reflection and Renewal*. Vatican City : Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1988; [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).

Congregation for the Clergy. *General Catechetical Directory*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1971; [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).

—. *General Directory for Catechesis*. Dublin: Veritas Publications, 1997.

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Dominus Jesus - On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church*. Declaration, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2000; [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).

Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples. *Guide for Catechists -- Vocational, Formative and Promotional Orientation of Catechists*. Document, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1993; [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).

John Paul II. *Catechesi Tradendae - On Catechesis in Our Time*. Apostolic Exhortation, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1979; [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).

John Paul II. *Ex Corde Ecclesiae - On Catholic Universities*. Apostolic Constitution, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1990; [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).

John Paul II . *Redemptoris Missio*. Encyclical, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1990; [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).

Paul VI. *Evangelii Nuntiandi - On Evangelisation in the Modern World*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1975; [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).

Pius XI. *Divini Illius Magistri - On Christian Education*. Encyclical, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1929; [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).

Pontifical Biblical Commission. *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*. Document, London: SCM Press Ltd, 1995.

Pontifical Biblical Commission. *The Jewish People and Their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible*. Document, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2001; www.vatican.va.

Pontifical Councils for Culture & Interreligious Dialogue. *Jesus Christ, the Bearer of the Water of Life - A Christian Reflection on the "New Age"*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2003; www.vatican.va.

Pontifical Council for the Family. *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*. Document, Oxford: Family Publications, 1996.

Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, 1965.

Second Vatican Council, Declaration on Education, *Gravissimum Educationis*, 1965.

*The Code of Canon Law*. London: Collins Liturgical Publications, 1983.

### Importance of Catechesis

The importance of good catechesis for the life of the Church has been stressed in many Magisterial documents and Papal statements, for example:

Canon Law assigns teaching the Faith as first of the three great tasks of bishops and their priests: teaching, sanctifying, governing<sup>89</sup>.

In addressing Bishops in 1979 Pope John Paul II wrote, "Dearly beloved brothers, ..... You are beyond all others the ones primarily responsible for catechesis, the catechists par

---

<sup>89</sup> *The Code of Canon Law*. London: Collins Liturgical Publications, 1983. 375§1, 519.

excellence. . . . Let the concern to foster active and effective catechesis yield to no other care whatever in any way. . . . . You can be sure that if catechesis is done well in your local Churches, everything else will be easier to do. . . (You will have) the joy and consolation of seeing your Churches flourishing because catechesis is given in them as the Lord wishes”<sup>90</sup>.

The *General Directory for Catechesis* stresses the importance of good initiatory catechesis, which is particularly relevant to catechesis at primary school level, stating, ‘In discharging in different ways the initiatory function of the ministry of the word, catechesis lays the foundation for the building of the faith. . . Without it, missionary activity lacks continuity and is sterile, while pastoral activity lacks roots and becomes superficial and confused: any misfortune could cause the collapse of the entire building. . . . The inner growth of the Church and her correspondence with God’s plan depend essentially on catechesis’.<sup>91</sup>

The importance of catechesis was emphasised by Pope Benedict XVI in his address to the Irish Bishops on the occasion of their 2006 *ad limina* visit: ‘Sound catechesis and careful “formation of the heart” are needed; . . . . . Ensure that catechetical programmes are based on *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, as well as the new *Compendium*. Superficial presentations of Catholic teaching must be avoided, because only the fullness of the faith can communicate the liberating power of the Gospel. By exercising vigilance over the quality of the syllabuses and the course-books used and by proclaiming the Church's doctrine in its entirety, you are carrying out your responsibility to “preach the word . . . in season and out of season . . . unfailing in patience and in teaching” (2 Tim 4:2)’<sup>92</sup>.

---

<sup>90</sup> *Catechesi Tradendae*, 1979, 63.

<sup>91</sup> *General Directory for Catechesis*. 64.

<sup>92</sup> Address of Pope Benedict XVI to the Irish Bishops on their *Ad Limina* Visit, 28 October 2006. Irish Catholic Bishops Conference, [www.catholicbishops.ie](http://www.catholicbishops.ie).

Pope Benedict emphasised the importance of catechesis to the Bishops of Taiwan on the occasion of their *ad limina* visit in 2008, asserting that ‘effective catechesis inevitably builds stronger families, which in turn give birth to new priestly vocations’<sup>93</sup>, and again to the Bishops of Romania and Moldova on the occasion of their *ad limina* visit in 2010.<sup>94</sup>

Pope Benedict also emphasised catechesis in an address related to the Year for Priests, when referring to the three ‘munera’ received by all priests, that is, the three offices of teaching, sanctifying and governing.<sup>95</sup>

#### Limitations, as well as progress, in Catholic catechesis

In addition to excellent developments in Catholic catechesis since the Second Vatican Council (as noted above), there have also been problems, to which the Church has drawn attention.

---

<sup>93</sup> Pope Benedict XVI. *Pope Urges Taiwan Bishops to Focus on Catechesis*. Zenit.org. Vatican City, 12 December 2008.

<sup>94</sup> ‘To keep and transmit the patrimony of faith is a task of the whole Church, but particularly of bishops (cf. “Lumen Gentium,” 25). The field of your ministry is vast and exacting; in fact, it is about proposing to the faithful an itinerary of mature and responsible Christian faith, especially through the teaching of religion, catechesis -- also for adults -- and the preparation of the sacraments. In this realm it is appropriate to promote a greater knowledge of sacred Scripture, of the Catechism of the Catholic Church and of the documents of the magisterium, in particular, of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council and of papal encyclicals.’ Pope Benedict XVI. *God Does Not Cease to Call Men and Women to His Service*. Zenit.org. Vatican City, 12 February 2010.

<sup>95</sup> ‘The first task of which I wish to speak today is the “munus docendi”, namely, that of teaching. Today, at the height of the educational emergency, the “munus docendi” of the Church, exercised concretely through the ministry of each priest, is particularly important... This is the function in persona Christi of the priest: to render present, in the confusion and disorientation of our times, the light of the Word of God. .... In the careful preparation of his preaching, in the effort of catechetical formation, in schools, in academic institutions and, in a special way, through that unwritten book that is his own life, the priest is always “docent,” he teaches. .... The Christian people ask to hear from our teachings the genuine ecclesial doctrine, by which to be able to renew the encounter with Christ who gives joy, peace, salvation. Sacred Scripture, the writings of the Fathers and doctors of the Church, the Catechism of the Catholic Church constitute, in this regard, indispensable points of reference in the exercise of the munus docendi’. Pope Benedict XVI, Zenit.org. *On the Priest’s Mission as Teacher*. Vatican City. April 14 2010.

After the Council, in 1968, Pope Paul VI issued his *Credo of the People of God*<sup>96</sup>, which was a restatement of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, with some expansions to speak into certain problematic developments he discerned in the Church at that time.

In *Catechesi Tradendae* – On Catechesis in Our Time, Pope John Paul II noted ‘not only an undeniable advance in the vitality of catechetical activity and promising initiatives, but also the limitations or even “deficiencies” in what has been achieved to date. These limitations are particularly serious when they endanger integrity of content<sup>97</sup>. ‘But it must be humbly recognised that this rich flowering has brought with it articles and publications which are ambiguous and harmful to young people and to the life of the Church. .... catechetical works which bewilder the young and even adults, either by deliberately or unconsciously omitting elements essential to the Church's faith, or by attributing excessive importance to certain themes at the expense of others, or, chiefly, by a rather horizontalist overall view out of keeping with the teaching of the Church's magisterium’<sup>98</sup>.

Pope Benedict XVI (then Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger) in 1983 outlined what he saw as a crisis in Catholic catechesis, the causes and the way forward.<sup>99</sup>

A less than satisfactory situation in the United States has been well researched and documented<sup>100</sup>, with some influential catechetical publications not in harmony with the teaching of the Church<sup>101</sup>. Some observers have noted similar problems in the Irish Church

---

<sup>96</sup> Paul VI, *Credo of the People of God*, Motu Proprio, 1968.

<sup>97</sup> *Catechesi Tradendae* 17.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.* 49.

<sup>99</sup> Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger. ‘Handing on the Faith and Sources of the Faith’. In *Handing on the Faith in an Age of Disbelief*, p.13-40. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006.

<sup>100</sup> See Bishop Anthony J Bevilacqua, *A Pastoral View of Catechetics*, in *Catechetical Instruction and the Catholic Faithful*, George A Kelly – Editor, p.37-88. Boston: St Paul Editions, 1982.

<sup>101</sup> For example, influential catechetical author Gabriel Moran proposes views not in harmony with Church teaching: on divine Revelation, redemption, baptism, and the Church’s magisterium (cf. Gabriel Moran, *Theology of Revelation*, London: Burns & Oates Ltd, 1966), and also on morality,

too<sup>102</sup>, which is supported by surveys showing unsatisfactory levels of religious knowledge among Catholics, in particular the young<sup>103</sup>. Some religious educators, while accepting the importance of Church catechesis, tend to see therein a danger of indoctrination, and therefore favour a less specific ‘religious education’, which would encompass all religions and the non-religious way of life.<sup>104</sup>

It has been noted above that the influential ‘Dutch Catechism’ (*A New Catechism; Catholic Faith for Adults*)<sup>105</sup>, had many commendable features, but also significant problems. Shortly after its publication in 1966 a group of laity in Holland petitioned Pope Paul VI, who set up first a team of theologians and later a Commission of Cardinals to examine and report on the Dutch Catechism. The Commission reported in 1968, noting positive elements, but also ordered doctrinal corrections listed under ten subject headings; the corrections were never made to the text of the Catechism, though some later editions included the corrections as an

---

religious relativism, the pedagogy proper to Catholic catechesis, the spiritual, the Eucharist and the nature of the Church (cf. Finola Cunnane, *New Directions in Religious Education*, Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2004).

<sup>102</sup> Priest-author J. Anthony Gaughan, says in relation to the lessening of faith among the Irish people, ‘Three factors seem to be paramount: affluence, the influence of the media, and the unsatisfactory nature of catechetical programmes in the pulpit and the school. .... There is clear evidence that a generation of Irish people today are far less informed on the tenets of their faith than their predecessors. This must call into question the methodology used in presenting the faith in pulpit and in school over the past 30 years. For far too long the homily / sermon devoid of doctrine and the religious knowledge period in school with an inadequate treatment of the teaching of Christ have been the norm’. *At the Coalface – Recollections of a City and Country Priest 1950-2000*. Dublin: Columba Press, 2000, p.183.

<sup>103</sup> Surveys carried out by The Iona Institute and the Evangelical Alliance, April 9 and December 10 2007, in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. [www.ionainstitute.ie](http://www.ionainstitute.ie)

<sup>104</sup> See Finola Cunnane, *Issues of Identity in Religious Education*, In *Critical Issues in Religious Education*, by Oliver Brennan – Editor. Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2005, 35-60.

<sup>105</sup> Higher Catechetical Institute, Nijmegen. *A New Catechism - Catholic Faith for Adults*. New York: Herder and Herder, 1967.

appendix<sup>106</sup>. Along with recognition of positive dimensions in the Dutch Catechism, Cardinal Ratzinger also noted several limitations<sup>107</sup>.

The 1997 *General Directory for Catechesis* acknowledged much good progress in Catholic catechesis, but also drew attention to deficiencies<sup>108</sup>. In 1995 the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops set up a special Committee to examine catechetical texts to assess their conformance with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The Committee issued Progress Reports in 1997<sup>109</sup> and 2003<sup>110</sup>, which identified certain deficiencies common to most texts examined<sup>111</sup>.

A noticeable measure of commonality could be seen in the specific catechetical limitations identified by the Commission of Cardinals who examined the Dutch Catechism in 1968, *General Directory for Catechesis* in 1997, and by the USCCB Committee in 1997 and 2003.

In summary, these three sources identified deficiencies in the following areas:

- ❖ The Blessed Trinity, especially divinity of Jesus and Holy Spirit.
- ❖ Revelation: truth of Scripture, role of Tradition & Church's Magisterium.
- ❖ God's invisible creation – the human soul and angels.
- ❖ The Fall and Original Sin.
- ❖ Virginity of Mary.

---

<sup>106</sup> Michael D Wrenn, *Catechisms and Controversies*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991. p142-147.

<sup>107</sup> Problems related to the Incarnation of Jesus. (*Introduction to Christianity*, 1968. p.279); undue reliance on anthropocentrism, a phenomenological mode of thought and a narrative approach; limitations in treatment of Original Sin, Redemption, the Trinity, Jesus, the Eucharist, eschatology and Church history. (*The Dutch Catechism: A Theological Appreciation*. In *The Furrow*, July 1970, p.745-754); the elimination of all 'dualisms'. (*Principles of Catholic Theology*, 1987. p.383).

<sup>108</sup> Congregation for the Clergy. *General Directory for Catechesis*. 2, 30.

<sup>109</sup> Michael D Wrenn & Kenneth D Whitehead, *Teaching a Different Faith*, Catholic World Report, October, 1997, p.37-43.

<sup>110</sup> Archbishop Alfred Hughes, *Progress Report of USCCB Standing Committee on Catechesis*, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, November 2003 Meeting.

<sup>111</sup> Zenit.org. *When Catholic Catechetical Works Don't Teach the Faith*, Interview with Archbishop Alfred Hughes, New Orleans, 24 December 2003.



- ❖ Redemption from sin through Christ's death.
- ❖ Morality, sin, connection with eternal life, Church's moral teaching.
- ❖ Grace.
- ❖ Sacraments in general, especially Eucharist & Mass, priesthood.
- ❖ Nature of the Church, her call to evangelisation, and truth of her teaching.
- ❖ Eschatology – the Last Things.
- ❖ The pedagogy that is proper to the Faith.

## 2.2 Analysis Criteria – Content & Pedagogy

The fundamental point of reference in this analysis of the Programme has been the teaching of the Catholic Church, in relation to both doctrinal content and pedagogical aspects (educational strategy, methodologies, materials, techniques, etc.). An appropriate content for a primary school catechetical programme was arrived at in comparison with a number of good primary level Catholic catechetical programmes and syllabi from other countries <sup>112</sup>.

Pope John Paul II pointed out that the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 'is meant to encourage and assist in the writing of new local catechisms, which take into account various situations and cultures, while carefully preserving the unity of faith and fidelity to Catholic doctrine' <sup>113</sup>.

---

<sup>112</sup> These sources included the following: Catholics United for the Faith, *Faith and Life series*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987. Image of God, Inc. *Image of God Series*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994. Confraternity of Christian Doctrine. *Baltimore Catechism, Nos 1&2*. New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co. 1964. Diocese of Wagga Wagga. *We Belong to the Lord – Religious Education Syllabus for Primary Children*. Diocese of Wagga Wagga, 1994.

<sup>113</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution, *Fidei Depositum*, Dublin: Veritas Publications, 1994. 3.

As has been noted in Section 1 above, the *General Directory for Catechesis* gives two principal criteria for local catechisms: perfect harmony with the CCC, and due consideration for the norms and criteria in the GDC itself.<sup>114</sup>

The *General Directory for Catechesis* further recommends that the basic criterion for all texts and aids for catechesis should be ‘twofold fidelity to God and to man, a fundamental principle for the whole Church. This implies an ability to marry perfect doctrinal fidelity with a profound adaptation to man’s needs. . . . . Catechetical aids must really aim to give to those who use them a better knowledge of the mysteries of Christ, aimed at true conversion and a life more in conformity with God’s will’<sup>115</sup>. Pope John Paul II says, ‘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. Unfaithfulness on some point to the integrity of the message means a dangerous weakening of catechesis and putting at risk results that Christ and the ecclesial community have a right to expect from it.’

<sup>116</sup>

In harmony with the principles above, the following criteria<sup>117</sup> have been used in this analysis in relation to Content of the Faith, and Pedagogy. (The *Protocol for Assessing the Conformity of Catechetical Materials with the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, drawn up by the Office

---

<sup>114</sup> *General Directory for Catechesis*. 284.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.* 283.

<sup>116</sup> *Catechesi Tradendae*. 30.

<sup>117</sup> While selecting these criteria as most appropriate for the nature and scope of this Analysis, the author is aware of many other valid criteria for analysis and evaluation of catechetical texts. Three such criteria (‘grids’ or indicators) are proposed by Henri Deroitte in ‘Grilles pour évaluer la qualité théologique et pédagogique des productions catéchétiques’, *Revue Lumen Vitae*, 2002, 259-270. The first grid proposed by Deroitte seeks through textual analysis to clarify the ideological position of the author(s); the second identifies the nature and style of communication between teacher and pupil; the third focuses on the essentially catechetical characteristics of the text in comparison with an accepted definition of catechesis.

for the Catechism of the US National Conference of Catholic Bishops<sup>118</sup>, has been a helpful reference in developing these criteria).

In relation to Content the key criteria are:

- ✓ Authenticity
- ✓ Completeness

### **Authenticity**

The following specific elements are relevant to *authenticity*:

- The content should be in perfect harmony with the CCC, and there should be nothing contradictory to Church teaching as expressed in the CCC.
- The presentation should be clear and straightforward, avoiding ambiguity, confusion, evasion, and obfuscation.
- While using language that is understandable by the pupils at the different age-levels, priority should be given as far as possible to expression of a common language of faith within the Church, in preference to using ‘language’ (to include songs, images, prayers, devotional practices) that is alien to the wider Church, especially the pupils’ parents, grandparents and parish clergy.
- Sometimes it is appropriate to re-word Scripture and Church teaching in order to make it more readily understandable to young pupils. However, great care must be taken that any re-wording does not change, distort or confuse key truths of faith, or compromise the integrity of Scripture.

---

<sup>118</sup> Office for the Catechism, *The Protocol for Assessing the Conformity of Catechetical Materials with the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, US Conference of Catholic Bishops, [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org). 8.2.2002.

- Promotion of a healthy and vital Catholic identity in such a way that pupils are encouraged to hear the message clearly, live it with conviction and share it courageously with others.
- The structure of the Programme should reflect salvation history, and the ‘four pillars’ of the CCC – creed, liturgy/sacrament, life in Christ/morality, and prayer.<sup>119</sup>
- A Trinitarian and Christological framework should permeate the entire programme, expressing the creative and saving initiative of God the Father, the salvific mission of God the Son and the sanctifying role of God the Holy Spirit.
- The Programme should present the Christian mystery in an organic way, respecting the *hierarchy of truths of the faith*.<sup>120</sup>
- Manifestly rooted in Sacred Scripture, because ‘ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ’<sup>121</sup>.

## Completeness

The following specific elements are relevant to the criterion of *completeness*:

- The doctrines of the Church should be presented as an integrated whole and there should be an intrinsic cohesiveness to the presentation of the faith, eschewing omissions and imbalances.

---

<sup>119</sup> *General Directory for Catechesis*, 16, 108, 115.

<sup>120</sup> Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 1964. Flannery, Austin. Ed. *Vatican Council II, The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*. Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1975. 11. 'In Catholic doctrine there exists an order or "hierarchy" of truth, since they vary in their relation to the foundation of the Christian faith'. *General Catechetical Directory*, 43; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 234; *General Directory for Catechesis*, 114-115.

<sup>121</sup> *Dei Verbum*, 25; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 133; St Jerome, *Commentary on Isaiah xviii*, prol.: PL 24, 17B.

- All four pillars of the CCC, including the articles of the Creed, the sacraments, the Commandments and the petitions of the Lord's Prayer, should be embraced and presented clearly.
- The history of salvation should be presented without omission of key elements, unfolding in depth as the programme progresses through its eight years. Pupils should always be able to see the truths of the faith in such a way as to fit into the framework of the history of salvation in a coherent manner.
- The criterion of *completeness* must be related to the age of the pupils and stage of the programme. The truths of the Faith are to be unfolded progressively in an age-appropriate manner, each year building on and reinforcing what went before. Certain aspects may be legitimately deferred from earlier to later years, or indeed omitted altogether as more appropriate for secondary school or adulthood. Even though some aspects may be deferred to later years there must be an inherent completeness and coherence in whatever is presented to a particular age-group.
- The criterion of *completeness* is closely related to sacramental preparation. During primary School the pupils are prepared for the sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation. The programme must present sufficient material for the pupils to understand the basics of these three sacraments, as well as teaching on all seven sacraments in general, and in particular the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Orders.

In relation to Pedagogical Aspects the key criteria are:

- ✓ Faithfulness to the Church's pedagogy
- ✓ Educational effectiveness

The following elements are relevant to these criteria:

- Due consideration for the norms and criteria for presenting the Gospel message as given in the *General Directory for Catechesis, 1997*.
- Draw on the insights, wisdom and practical guidance in other relevant Magisterial documents; particularly helpful are the *General Catechetical Directory, 1971*, and *Catechesi Tradendae, 1979*.
- Reflect the context of evangelisation, the Church's primary mission, seeking to evangelise pupils while catechising them, bringing them into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and a committed Christian faith, which will empower and motivate them to evangelise others.
- The GDC encourages a diversity of educational methodologies and techniques, but mandates one, and only one, 'pedagogy' or overall teaching strategy. This pedagogy is the 'pedagogy of God', which is the pedagogy of Christ and pedagogy of the Church; the transmission of the deposit of Faith, of the Gospel, which is above all made manifest in the person of Jesus Christ. The pedagogy of an authentically Catholic catechetical programme must reflect the 'pedagogy of God'<sup>122</sup>.
- Make appropriate use of available educational methodologies and techniques, drawing on the vast catechetical experience of the Universal Church, using the best of

---

<sup>122</sup> *General Directory for Catechesis*, 137, 284.

modern technology and also, with due prudence and discretion, learning from educational advances in the secular world<sup>123</sup>. Methodologies and techniques should be age-appropriate, and should be attractive, engage attention and interest, while transmitting the essential deposit of Faith.

- The appropriate use of human experience forms an essential methodology in Catholic catechesis (as developed in the GDC). However, human experience should not be the foundation, source or chief focus of catechesis, becoming effectively the ‘pedagogy’, instead of, or on a par with, the ‘pedagogy of God’.
- Presentation of the Faith should be age-appropriate across the range 4-12 years covered in the eight years of primary school. Particular attention should be paid to the change that occurs at about age 7/8 – the age of discretion – coinciding with reception of the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist. Attention should also be paid to the subsequent four years, termed as the phase of pre-adolescence, which the GDC identifies as of crucial importance in catechesis of young people and formation of their faith.<sup>124</sup>
- Care should be taken to avoid those limitations which have appeared in Catholic catechesis, as noted above in Section 2.1.

---

<sup>123</sup> See Section 4.1 – Developments in Pedagogy, for a review of pedagogical developments both in the secular world and in relation to Catholic catechesis.

<sup>124</sup> *General Directory for Catechesis*, 181.

### **3. PROGRAMME CONTENT**

#### **3.1 Programme Structure**

The basic unit in the Programme is the lesson, which normally covers one week's work. There are from 28 to 35 lessons in each year, which are structured in three terms (252 lessons in total in the Programme). The structure of lessons by year and term is given in Appendix A.

The Programme does not present an overall plan or structure by theme or topic; such a presentation could be helpful to teachers and others, especially in the absence of a Syllabus.

The author's enquiries indicated that no syllabus had been prepared for the Programme; a syllabus prepared originally for the first *Children of God* series may have been used, but that syllabus is unobtainable. If a Syllabus had been prepared for the Programme and were available, it probably would have been helpful in indicating an overall plan or structure.

While the Programme does not present an overall plan or structure, it does indicate themes for most of the years. Generally a lead theme is presented, followed by one or more other themes.

Year 1 does not present a theme.

In Year 2 the theme is 'Alive-O', which is explained to mean that children are full of life, which is a gift from God for which we give thanks.

In Year 3 the lead theme is 'Alive-O', and the other theme is Jesus.

In Year 4 the lead theme is 'Alive-O', and the other main themes are 'interconnectedness' and Jesus.

In Year 5 the lead theme is 'beginnings and endings', and other main themes are that Jesus worked for the coming of the Kingdom of God, and covenant.



In Year 6 the lead theme is ‘nourishment’, and other main themes are that God nourishes the gift of life in human beings and the natural world, and the Church as the Body of Christ.

In Year 7 the lead theme is ‘Spirit’ (Pupil’s Book) or ‘spirit’ (Teacher’s Book), and other main themes are the Holy Spirit, the Decalogue and the Rosary, the spirit of prophecy, the Sacrament of Confirmation, Easter and the Mass.

In Year 8 the lead theme is ‘creative relationship’, and other main themes are the natural world, the Blessed Trinity, the Sacraments, and the Kingdom of God.

This analysis is structured on the principal themes that appear in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The Programme's lessons for each year have been allocated to these themes, and this re-formatting is presented in Appendix B. Please note that lessons appearing in *italics* are those that have been allocated to more than one theme.

The Programme identifies each lesson by sequential numbering by Term and Lesson. This Analysis prefixes the Year, as follows: lesson number six in the second term of *Alive-O 5* is designated as -- A5-T2L6.

### **3.2 Revelation**

The Programme addresses Revelation in both its information for teachers and lesson material for the pupils; the latter material is partly available directly to pupils in the Pupils Books and Worksheets, and partly in the lesson material in the Teachers Books and Video for use at the discretion of the teacher. The programme gives particular attention to Scripture, both Old and New Testaments, which is excellent in principle. The analysis below notes much good

information on Revelation presented to teachers and pupils, but also suggests some areas which might be strengthened.

The analysis first addresses the information for teachers on Revelation that appears in the introductory pages of the Teachers Books. This information is very important because it gives guidance to the teachers on the meaning of Revelation, especially Scripture, and how to apply the lessons to the pupils.

The analysis next addresses the lesson material for the pupils in two ways.

Firstly, the lesson material on Revelation in general, which is mainly dealing with Scripture, both Old and New Testaments.

Secondly, the analysis will address the lesson material dealing with the Old Testament.

The lesson material dealing with the New Testament is extensive throughout the Programme. It is considered better to address this material in conjunction with the relevant themes and topics of the Programme, in Sections 3.3 to 3.6 below.

### INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

The Information for teachers on Revelation in the Introductory pages of the Teacher's Books for Alive-O 1-4 is very similar, and so is analysed here together. There are several new aspects introduced in Alive-O 5-8, so they will be analysed together subsequently.

The Introductory Information for teachers for Alive-O 1-4 appears on the following pages of the Teacher's Books: Alive-O 1 – VI-VII, XI-XII; Alive-O 2 – VI-VII, XI-XII; Alive-O 3 – X-XI, XIII-XIV; Alive-O 4 – X-XI, XIV-XV.

The Information says that, ‘Revelation is God’s self-communication to us’, and then expands on Scripture, Tradition, the natural world and human experience. This approach is good in principle, and in harmony with the teaching of the Church. However, there are some aspects in which Alive-O’s presentation could be strengthened to better explain the Church’s teaching on Revelation.

Under a heading of 'Other Sources of Revelation' the Information says, ‘Human experience and the natural world are also signs of Christian revelation’. This is then expanded to show that the wonder of creation and the human person can ‘show the world who God is and what God is like’. This harmonises with the teaching of the Church, except that Alive-O expresses no limits on what can be known about God from human experience and the natural world.

The Church teaches that by reflecting on the physical world and the human person we can, through the power of natural reason, come to know of the existence of a personal God <sup>125</sup>. However, there is another order of knowledge, which man cannot possibly arrive at by his own powers: the order of divine Revelation. This supernatural Revelation was communicated to man by God gradually, culminating in the person and the mission of the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ. <sup>126</sup> To clarify the distinction, the CCC does not refer to the knowledge of God through creation as ‘revelation’, and capitalises the term which refers to knowledge disclosed directly by God as ‘Revelation’, divine or supernatural.

The Programme might benefit from following the CCC practice, rather than using the term ‘revelation’ to describe both the supernatural knowledge which comes directly from God, and the knowledge of God available to man through the use of natural reason. Furthermore, the information for teachers would benefit from clarifying that human reason reflecting on

---

<sup>125</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 31-37.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.* 50, 53.

creation can only bring us as far as a theist understanding of God, whereas progress to a full Christian understanding of God requires divine Revelation.

The Information also lists 'The Lives of Believers' among the 'Sources of Christian Revelation'. It might have been helpful to clarify that, while the lives of believers can help to deepen understanding and express the reality of Revelation, they are not themselves *sources* of Revelation. 'Thanks to the assistance of the Holy Spirit, the understanding of both the realities and the words of the heritage of faith is able to grow in the life of the Church: ...through the contemplation and study of believers who ponder these things in their hearts, ...and from the intimate sense of spiritual realities which believers experience'.<sup>127</sup> *Alive-O* makes no reference to 'private revelations', but it might also have been helpful to clarify the Church's teaching in this respect<sup>128</sup>.

In relation to Scripture the Information says that God revealed himself to those who lived in Old Testament times, and that the fullness of God's 'revelation' comes through Jesus. These statements are good.

The Information goes on to quote from *Dei Verbum*<sup>129</sup>, 'Now since in the Bible God has spoken through human agents to humans, if the interpreter of Holy Scripture is to understand what God has wished to communicate he must carefully investigate what meaning the biblical writer had in mind; that will also be what God chose to manifest through their words'. The Information adds that, 'The writers of the Old and New Testaments used stories, songs, letters, statements and poems to convey to the people the messages they wished them to

---

<sup>127</sup> *Dei Verbum*, 8; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 94.

<sup>128</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 67.

<sup>129</sup> *Dei Verbum*, 12.

understand, about themselves, about themselves in relation to others and the natural world, and about themselves in relation to God’.

The above refers to the literal meaning of Scripture. It is certainly good to emphasise the importance of the literal meaning, but a better balance could have been achieved by also including the importance of the spiritual meaning <sup>130</sup>, because without the spiritual meaning ‘Scripture would remain a dead letter’ <sup>131</sup>. The translation of DV12 presented by Alive-O is not helpful, specifically the final phrase, ‘that will also be what God chose to manifest through their words’, which contrasts with the wording in the CCC <sup>132</sup>, ‘To interpret Scripture correctly, the reader must be attentive to what the human authors truly wanted to affirm, *and to what God wanted to reveal to us by their words*’ (emphasis added). The Programme’s translation appears to identify Scriptural meaning with the literal, whereas the CCC wording leaves open the spiritual meaning as well.

The Information emphasises that both Old and New Testaments tell of the loving presence of God. ‘In the New Testament, we find Jesus trying to open the eyes of his disciples to the signs of God’s presence, goodness and care for all creatures in the ordinary things around them’; and again in relation to the Old Testament, ‘The Israelites saw signs of God’s majesty, splendour, love, wisdom and providence in everything around them: the human person, the seasons of the year, birds, flowers, trees, rain. This awareness permeates the Old Testament, especially the Psalms’. While it is excellent to stress the presence of God according to the Scriptures, the balance could have been improved by also emphasising the plan of God.

---

<sup>130</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 109-118.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.* 111.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.* 109.

The Church stresses that Scripture as a whole, both Old and New Testaments, speaks of Christ <sup>133</sup>, and reveals God's plan, which is salvation history <sup>134</sup>. The plan of God for the human race is beautifully summarised in the *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1, 'God, infinitely perfect and blessed in himself, in a plan of sheer goodness freely created man to make him share in his own blessed life. In the fullness of time, God the Father sent his Son as the Redeemer and Saviour of mankind, fallen into sin, thus calling all into his Church and, through the work of the Holy Spirit, making them adopted children and heirs of his eternal happiness'.

It might have been helpful to bring out the Church's teaching on the unity of the Old and New Testaments, so well expressed in *Dei Verbum* 14-17, and summed up in the famous quotation from St Augustine: 'God, the inspirer and author of both testaments, wisely arranged that the New Testament be hidden in the Old and that the Old be made manifest in the New' <sup>135</sup>. It might also have been helpful to emphasize better the special place of the four Gospels in the Bible and their relationship with each other<sup>136</sup>.

It could also have been helpful for the Programme to have informed teachers that all of Scripture is inspired by God and is true <sup>137</sup>. 'Since therefore all that the inspired authors or sacred writers affirm should be regarded as affirmed by the Holy Spirit, we must

---

<sup>133</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*,. 134.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.* 112, 149.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.* 16.

<sup>136</sup> Information on the Gospels is very clearly presented in: David Laird Dungan, *A History of the Synoptic Problem – The Canon, the Text, the Composition and the Interpretation of the Gospels*. New York: Doubleday, 1999.

<sup>137</sup> The question of the truth of Scripture is well developed by Frances Hogan in *Can You Trust the Bible?* London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1991.

acknowledge that the books of Scripture firmly, faithfully, and without error teach that truth which God, for the sake of our salvation, wished to see confided to the Sacred Scriptures'.<sup>138</sup>

The Information says it will introduce the pupils to some of Jesus' parables and events in his life. This is excellent in principle for 4-8 year-old children. However, the Programme seems to overrate difficulties in the parables, referring to 'complex stories', 'metaphorical language' and 'deeply symbolic images'. It is true that some parables are difficult to understand, and that there are hidden depths of meaning in all of Scripture, nevertheless, most parables are expressed in language which is understandable to listeners, including children, if simple explanations are given, which is a normal task of catechesis.

In relation to Tradition, the Information has two excellent quotations from DV9 and CCC80 concerning Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture. The Information then states, 'The Church, in every age, reflects on the message of Christ and applies it to a modern and often complex world. Aided by the Holy Spirit, the Church expands its teachings in its creeds, its dogmas and its doctrinal statements. The name given to this collection of Church teachings is Tradition'. It is very good to refer to the expression of Tradition in Church teachings, but there seems potential for misunderstanding that it is the Church herself that generates Tradition from *reflecting on* the message of Christ. It should be made clear that Tradition is the message of Christ, which the Church receives from the Apostles, carefully preserves and faithfully hands on.<sup>139</sup>

It is excellent to refer to the teachings of the Church in relation to Tradition, but there appears to be scope for clarifying and presenting more fully the role of the Church in relation to Scripture and Tradition, in particular the authoritative teaching office of the Church, the

---

<sup>138</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 11.

<sup>139</sup> *Dei Verbum*, 7-10; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 75-83.

Magisterium, which the Programme does not mention. 'It is clear therefore that, in the supremely wise arrangement of God, Sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture and the Magisterium of the Church are so connected and associated that one of them cannot stand without the others. Working together, each in its own way, under the action of the one Holy Spirit, they all contribute effectively to the salvation of souls.'<sup>140</sup>

The information for teachers on Revelation in Alive-O 5-8 is given in the following pages of the Teacher's Books: Alive-O 5 – [8]-[10], [32]-[33], [34]-[35]; Alive-O 6 – [8]-[11], [30]-[31]; Alive-O 7 – [8]-[10], [26]-[27]; Alive-O 8 – [8]-[10], [27].

Much of the information for teachers in Teachers Books 1-4 is repeated, but there are also several beneficial modifications and additions.

There is much improved material on Revelation in general, bringing in the promise of God for redemption and salvation after the sin of Adam and Eve, and including an excellent and relevant quotation from CCC54.

The role of catechesis in relation to Revelation is well expressed with an excellent quotation from GDC39, and also from GCD33 (Alive-O5&6).

The nature of Tradition is well expressed, with relevant quotations from GDC42-43, 44 and GCD43, including the role of the Church's Magisterium. The information might have benefited from greater attention to the Magisterium, with a separate sub-heading and a more complete treatment<sup>141</sup>.

---

<sup>140</sup> *Dei Verbum*, 10; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 95.

<sup>141</sup> The importance of a theology of scripture, tradition and magisterium is well emphasised by Norris, especially in the context of *Dei Verbum's* 'enormous shift from understanding revelation as the



The biblical theme of "covenant" is addressed, which is excellent in principle, because covenant is central to understanding of salvation history, which is the story of the Bible. The Programme addresses the covenants with Abraham, Moses, and the New Covenant in Jesus. The love of God for the human race, his desire to be in relationship with us and for us to be in relationship with each other, are all well emphasized. The presentation might have been strengthened by describing the nature of 'covenant' in the ancient Near East, the part played by the covenants in salvation history, the covenants with Adam and Eve, Noah, and David, the centrality of redemption in the New Covenant and its fulfillment in the Second Coming of Jesus at the end of time <sup>142</sup>.

#### LESSON MATERIAL ON REVELATION IN GENERAL

Lessons in the Programme are sequentially numbered in each of three terms. Lesson identification is presented below in abbreviated form, with the lesson number prefixed with the year number, as in the following examples: A2-T3L4 – Alive-O 2, Term 3, Lesson 4; A7-T1L3 – Alive-O 7, Term 1, Lesson 3.

A2-T3L4: I want a Word

This lesson introduces the Bible as the Word of God, which is excellent.

A simple explanation about the Bible, what it is and what it means, would probably have been more helpful than the secular material on words in general, some of which is complex.

---

disclosure of doctrines to understanding revelation as the communication of divine life'. Thomas Norris, *A Renewed Theology of Divine Revelation: Response to Jan Lambrecht*, p.130-135 in *Vatican II – Facing the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Dermot A Lane & Brendan Leahy – Editors. Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2006.

<sup>142</sup> The theme of covenant in salvation history is well presented in: Scott Hahn, *A Father Who Keeps His Promises*. Ann Arbor: Servant Publications, 1998.

A6-T3L3: Under God's Wing.

This lesson contains much good basic information on the Bible, both Old and New Testaments. It is a good introduction to the nature and structure of the Bible, and might usefully have been introduced some years earlier. The Bible Search activity is good as a way of helping the pupils get to know the structure and make-up of the Bible. The Search Activity could have been enhanced by a provision of the kind of 'Bible Bookshelf' illustration that is common in elementary Bible study texts.

The Lesson concludes that Jesus would have read the Old Testament Scriptures and learned from them. This is good, and would help understand the great knowledge that Jesus demonstrated when questioned by the elders in the Temple, before he was found by Mary and Joseph. However, it would be helpful to bring out that the Old Testament is all about Jesus as the divine Messiah, and is a preparation for the New Testament. St Augustine said that the New Testament is buried in the Old, and the Old is revealed in the New. If it is stated simply that Jesus learnt from the Old Testament just like any other Jewish boy, there might risk pupils understanding Jesus as no more than an ordinary human being, and not God the Son.

The Lesson states, 'We call the Bible the Word of God because it tells us what God wants to tell us', which is good. The lesson material states, 'In the Bible we can read the story of God's love for his people'. This is good, but it would also be good to bring out that the Bible is the story of God's plan for his people, which is the history of salvation. This gives structure, context and meaning to the entire Bible, so that pupils can see and appreciate it as the greatest of all stories, with a beginning, middle and end. Once they know that the Bible is telling the complete story of salvation (which is Christocentric), pupils can fit the various parts of the Bible into it and see how they relate to one another.

The video shows a group of children visiting the Chester Beatty library, which has a fascinating collection of ancient manuscripts and clay tablets. The children are shown some of the old manuscripts, and use of papyrus and parchment, which is well explained and demonstrated. The video should be very helpful to a better understanding of the Bible.

#### A6-T3L4: Under God's Guidance

'The writers of the Bible gathered together many stories, songs, poems and prayers about God's dealings with his people. When these were all put together they became the Bible'. It is good in this way to introduce the pupils to the variety of literary forms which are found in the Bible. It might also have been helpful to expand this list of literary forms to include teachings, law, wise sayings, history, and prophecy. These additional literary forms play a major role in both Old and New Testaments; for example, Jesus referred to the Old Testament as the Law and the Prophets<sup>143</sup>.

It is good that the Lesson says that God guided those who wrote the Bible, that the Spirit of God was in their hearts and minds, and this is why we believe that the Bible is the Word of God. This might usefully be expanded to say that what the Bible tells is true. Naturally one would need to explain that the Bible teaches spiritual truths, and that one must not seek the truth of a history or science book from the Bible, but nevertheless the truth of Scripture is a very important concept that could helpfully be introduced to the pupils at this or an earlier stage.

It is also good to say that, 'Today, the Church helps us to understand how the Bible can teach us the way to live our lives'. This could usefully have been expanded to explain the Church's

---

<sup>143</sup> Matthew 22:40

teaching authority (Magisterium) in relation to Scripture; how it was the Church selected the writings that are included in the Bible (discerned the Canon of Scripture), and also that it is the Church who has the authority to teach what the Bible means.

#### A7-T1L3 - Hearing the Call

There is reasonable information on God's covenants in the Old Testament, and the mission of the prophets to remind the Chosen People of the covenants and to call them to live in a just and good way. It could have been helpful to bring out the context of salvation history, showing that the Old Testament prophets (up to and including the greatest, John the Baptist) were part of God's plan to prepare his Chosen People for the coming of his Only Son, as the Messiah who would redeem the human race from sin. It might also be helpful to include that God often gave his prophets the power to work miracles as signs that they were called by God. Also that God often foretold the future through the prophets, sometimes telling of coming disaster because of the people's unrighteous living, but especially foretelling of the coming of the Messiah and the end times.

#### A7-T1L6 - The Spirit of Prophecy

This Lesson seeks to make the connection between the prophets of the Old Testament, the role of Jesus as prophet and prophecy today, which is excellent in principle. The presentation is good on the role of the prophets of the Old Testament in warning God's Chosen People of the dangers of following false gods, and the enslavement that would result from this. The presentation might usefully have been expanded to show the place of the prophets in

salvation history, their gift from God to foretell the future, including disasters that would overcome the Chosen People, but most importantly the coming of the Messiah and the end times.

The role of Jesus as prophet is addressed, but essentially in terms of humanitarian action, leaving much scope to express the spiritual nature of Jesus' prophetic mission. The three examples that Alive-O presents of prophetic witness in modern times: Sister Veronica of Aislinn, Bono, and Gandhi, are also expressed mainly in humanitarian terms. It could have been helpful to reflect the Church's view that the prophetic office of Christians today is most fully expressed in evangelisation, of which catechesis is a vital and integral part<sup>144</sup>.

#### A8-T1L3: In Relation to the Word

This lesson contains some excellent statements on the Bible as the inspired Word of God, and on Jesus as the Word of God who was truly God, and became a human being to live among us. The lesson also emphasises the primacy of the love of God in the Bible, and that Jesus is the greatest expression of the love of God. It might have been more helpful to develop the meanings of these statements, rather than the considerable amount of material in the lesson on juggling, language and words from a secular point of view, and the fanciful story featuring God, Adam and Eve, and a buried box of words. It would have been particularly helpful to bring out the Christian meaning of Jesus' mission, as Saviour to deliver the human race from sin, rather than simply to give a good example of God's love.

---

<sup>144</sup> *General Catechetical Directory*, 37.

## LESSON MATERIAL ON THE OLD TESTAMENT

It is excellent in principle that the Old Testament is addressed in each of the eight years of the Alive-O programme. The Old Testament topics are listed below in the order in which they appear, with the appropriate lesson references.

Finding of baby Moses. A1-T1L3

Exodus - Passover meal & leaving Egypt. A1-T3L3

Anointing of David by Samuel. A2-T1L12

'Exodus' (imaginative story). A2-T3L5

Exodus - Passover meal & leaving Egypt. A3-T1L7 (repeat of A1-T3L3)

Exodus – people in the wilderness. A3-T2L1

Exodus – Passover meal. A3-T3L4

Anointing of David as leader of Israel. A4-T1L5

Abraham and Sarah – call & covenant. A5-T2L1 & A5-T2L4

Moses – burning bush & Ten Commandments. A5-T2L2, A5-T2L4 & A6-T1L10

Creation (Genesis 1). A6-T1L2

Ruth & Naomi. A6-T3L3

Finding of Rebekah as wife for Isaac. A6-T3L4

Story of Joseph. A6-T3L5

Elijah. A7-T1L3

Jeremiah. A7-T1L4

Creation & Fall (Genesis 2&3). A7-T1L9

Moses & the Ten Commandments. A7-T1L10.

Moses & burning bush A7-T2L7 (repeat of A5-T2L2)

Creation. A8-T1L2

Abraham & Sarah (visit of angels). A8-T1L4

Jacob's Dream. A8-T1L8

It is good that the Programme addresses a wide range of Old Testament topics, but it can be seen that the topics are not dealt with in chronological order or any other apparent logical sequence; there are also omissions of several important and dramatic Old Testament stories, that would inform and inspire pupils. It might have been better to reflect the sequence of the Old Testament, which could make the Bible more meaningful to the pupils, engaging their interest in this fascinating drama that is the Old Testament, leading to completion of the drama in the New Testament.

A presentation of the lesson material that respects the chronological sequence could have facilitated an understanding of the Old Testament in the context of salvation history, the story of God's wonderful plan of creation and redemption of the human race. This has been called 'The Great Story', and some see it as the prototype of all great stories. Like all great stories, the history of salvation has a beginning, a middle and an end. The beginning is from creation through the Fall, and the formation by God of a Chosen People to prepare for the sending of the Son of God, Jesus Christ the Messiah, who would save the human race from its sins. The middle of the story is the coming of Jesus and the great Paschal event of our salvation, and

his return to the right hand of God the Father in heaven. The end of the story goes from the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, through the time of the Church to the final Resurrection, Second Coming of Jesus and Judgement at the end of time.

An analysis of each of the lessons which address Old Testament topics is presented below:

#### A1-T1L3: Settling In.

There is a story titled, 'Miriam and Moses and Mum'. It is a largely imagined re-telling of the finding of the baby Moses among the bulrushes, in which Miriam features as the central character. It is a simple and well told story, which will introduce the pupils to the person of Moses. It might have benefited from giving the context, to help understand who Moses was, how he came to be abandoned in the basket in the river, and who was the 'princess' who found him. This context could have been achieved by introducing the story later in the programme, after presenting the key Old Testament events that preceded it.

#### A1-T3L3: We Eat Together

There is a story titled, 'The Passover', which tells of the Exodus and the Passover Meal. The story is simply told and will introduce the pupils to the great events of the Exodus, and the Passover meal. It would have benefited from context in terms of the events of the Old Testament and salvation history. The spiritual dimension might be better developed so that it would not appear as a purely human event, planned, organised and lead by Moses, without God's involvement.



## A2-T1L12: God Cares for Us

The lesson has a story titled 'David Cares' which tells of the anointing of David by Samuel, based on 1 Samuel 16:1-22. This biblical episode is an excellent choice to develop the pupils' knowledge and understanding of the Old Testament. The story is simply told, and if read out well by the teacher, it will engage the interest of the pupils and introduce them to Samuel and to God's choice of David as leader of the people of Israel. The story has been simplified, which is not unreasonable for pupils of the age concerned, but it might be over-simplified in relation to omitting King Saul, and also saying that David went immediately from being anointed by Samuel to be leader of Israel. The story may overemphasise the youth of David, describing and illustrating him as a very young and gentle boy, which does not bring out the character and person of David, as described in 1 Samuel 16:1-22, as a fine looking young man (probably in his late teens), a skilled harpist, a brave man and a fighter, prudent in speech, a man of presence, and the Lord was with him.

An illustration of the young man David being anointed by Samuel might have been more dramatic and informative for the pupils, and engaged their interest and imagination better. Putting the story of David in the context of salvation history might also serve to increase pupil interest and understanding.

The story of David is accompanied by a song based on Psalm 23 (22). This is an excellent choice of song, because it relates so well to the person and role of David, initially as shepherd of sheep and later as King of God's people of Israel. The version of the song chosen is tuneful and attractive, but consideration might have been given to one of the other sung versions of this well-known Psalm, with words closer to the original psalm, and which are also more

used in our churches. This would help the pupils understand the psalm better, remember it for the future and also strengthen links between school, home and parish. (Examples include: J.Irvine, *The Lord's My Shepherd*, Veritas Hymnal, 1974; Thomas Egan, *Psalm 22, Alleluia! Amen!*, Veritas 1978; Donald E Fishel, *The Lord is My Shepherd*, Word of God Music, 1981).

#### A2-T3L5: Summer Light

The lesson material contains a story titled, 'The Long Walk', which is loosely based on the Exodus. It is an imagined account of two children who follow Moses on a very long walk and eventually arrive in a 'special place'. The lesson context is nature walks and walks in general. It may serve to teach the pupils something about the Exodus, but the fictional dimensions of the story may prove too strong to improve the pupils' understanding of the biblical account of the Exodus and journey to the Promised Land.

#### A3-T1L7: In Jesus' Time

There is a repeat of the story 'The Passover' about the Exodus and the Passover Meal, from the earlier lesson A1-T3L3: We Eat Together.

#### A3-T2L1: A Different Time.

This lesson has a story titled, 'The People in the Wilderness', based on Exodus 15:22-25. It tells of the people of Israel led by Moses after the Passover meal out into the desert. The people wander in the desert for many years, and they complain against Moses for the lack of

food and water, but God is with them and leads them from the wilderness to a place they could call home.

It is good to give this story of the wanderings of the Chosen People in the Desert, during which time they often complained against Moses because of shortage of food and water. It is also good to tell the story of God's constant care of the people in their difficulties, in spite of their complaining. The story might have been made more dramatic and interesting by including some of the specific instances of God's care for the people: the parting of the Red Sea, the sending of the manna and quails to feed people, the water gushing from the rock after Moses had struck it at the Lord's command, and finally the crossing of the Jordan and the fall of Jericho.

It might also be helpful to explain how the rebellion of the Israelites at Kadesh, after the expedition of the twelve spies, was the reason why they had to wander for 40 years in the desert before entering the Promised Land.

#### A3T3L4: A Time to Share Memories

This lesson has a story titled 'A Special Meal'. The story tells of the Passover Meal in a way which connects with children. The special nature of the meal and the impending Exodus are well covered.

As this is the third and last time that the Passover Meal is addressed in the programme, it might have been helpful to bring out how the Passover Meal, the Passover lamb of sacrifice, and the delivery of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, are all fulfilled by: the Last Supper (which was a Passover Meal); Jesus as the Lamb of God who offered his life in sacrifice to

deliver the human race from the slavery of sin; the Mass which is a re-presentation of the Last Supper and the sacrifice of the Cross. Such a development of meaning might be particularly relevant for this lesson which is devoted mainly to the Mass.

#### A4-T1L5: The Spirit of God in David

This lesson addresses the anointing of David as king of all Israel in Hebron (2Sam.5:1-5). The anointing of David by Samuel was covered in an earlier lesson, A2-T1L12: God Cares for Us. David and his Kingdom are extremely important in the Old Testament, and also very important for the New Testament, so it is good that the Programme follows through on David's anointing by Samuel to the time when David finally became King of all Israel some twenty years later.

Much of the lesson on David is devoted to an imagined reconstruction of how the anointing might have taken place. This certainly has an advantage in seeking to help pupils understand the customs and rituals of the Chosen People at the time of David. However, it might have been more helpful for the pupils to learn something of the dramatic events that occurred between the two anointings, which included David's defeat of the giant Philistine Goliath, his successful military campaigns against the Philistines, David's troubled relationship with King Saul and finally the death of Saul, David's election as king of his own tribe Judah where he ruled for seven years before being accepted as king of all Israel. It might also have been helpful to show David's key role in the history of salvation, God's covenant with David, his ancestry of Jesus, David's role as prophet and writer of psalms, and how the Davidic kingdom was a foreshadowing of the Kingdom of God and of Christ as King.

A5-T2L1: Abraham and Sarah – Loved by God

A5-T2L4: Celebrating God's Love

These two lessons present the call of Abraham by God, and in particular the accounts in Genesis 17 of the appearance of God to Abraham and the offering of a covenant. The story is reasonably well presented and covers Sarah's part in the covenant and the promise of a son that will be born to her in her old age. The lesson also gives an understanding of the nature of covenant, and how it is an expression of the great love of God for his people. It is good that the programme selects this episode which is so crucial to an understanding of the Old Testament and the history of salvation.

While the lesson rightly stresses the great love of God for Abraham and Sarah, which continued through to the New Testament and up to today, the account would benefit from setting the story of Abraham in the context of salvation history. Another dramatic episode in the life of Abraham which might have been presented is the call of God to sacrifice his son Isaac, Abraham's willingness to do so, and God's rewarding of his faith. The sacrifice of Isaac has particular importance in the history of salvation, because it foreshadows and helps us understand the sacrifice of Jesus as God's only Son. The lesson might also benefit from fitting in with the chronological sequence of the Old Testament, so that pupils could follow the story.

A5-T2L2: Moses and the People – Loved by God

A5-T2L4: Celebrating God's Love

A6-T1L10: Loving God

These three lessons cover the call of Moses by God at the Burning Bush<sup>145</sup>, and the giving of the Ten Commandments to Moses<sup>146</sup> and the apostasy of the people with the Golden Calf<sup>147</sup>. The stories present information about these two very important episodes in the Old Testament.

It might have been more helpful to present these episodes in the Programme in the chronological order in which they occur in the Bible, which should increase understanding of the pupils. These episodes would also have benefited from the context of salvation history, though it is helpful that they are presented in the context of the love of God. It might also have been helpful to draw out the full meaning of the Divine name revealed by God, 'I Am Who Am', (which is generally written as Yahweh). The account gives the impression that Yahweh is the name that Moses chose to give to God, and that it means 'God in the distance', which is unhelpful.

Further analysis of the Ten Commandments is given below in Section 3.5.2 The Ten Commandments.

A6-T1L2: And God said.....

This lesson gives an account of creation, based mainly on Genesis chapter 1. It expresses well that God created everything from nothing, and that all of God's creation is good. God's creation is gift, and a sign of his love and power. Human beings are created in the image of God, and they are created male and female. The lesson material conveys well the wonder, beauty and diversity of God's creation.

---

<sup>145</sup> Genesis3:1-15.

<sup>146</sup> Genesis19:16 – 20:21.

<sup>147</sup> Genesis32:1-35.

Though there is much good material in this lesson on creation, some aspects have scope for improvement. It would seem helpful to include the seventh day of creation when God rested, because this is foundational to the Christian understanding of the Sabbath and the Lord's Day. It would also be important to include, in addition to material creation, God's spiritual creation, which is Angels, Heaven and the human immortal soul. The poem on creation suggests that man was made for the world, so it would be helpful to make quite clear that it was the world that was made for man. It would also be helpful to include the command of God, 'increase and multiply and fill the earth', which along with the teaching on man and woman in Genesis chapter 2, is foundational for the Christian understanding of marriage and family.

It would also have been helpful to include the teaching on creation earlier in the programme, because creation is the beginning of the story of salvation, and every story is more meaningful if one starts at the beginning rather than in the middle. It would be quite in order to develop a deeper understanding of creation later in the programme (such as this sixth year), if a very simple presentation had been given in earlier years.

It would also be helpful to provide clarification for a Note (Teachers Book p.20) which implies that God's salvation is only a matter of keeping people safe in a material sense, and also which suggests the impossibility of original sin, saying that only God could disturb the goodness of creation.

### A6-T3L3. Under God's Wing.

This lesson has a story titled, 'At Home under God's Wing', which is the story of Ruth and Naomi, one of the most touching and inspiring stories in the Bible. The story is well presented, but might have benefited from setting the story in its context; firstly, the chronological context of the Old Testament, but more importantly the context of salvation history. Ruth was the great-grandmother of King David, and therefore a direct ancestor of Mary and Jesus. The importance of Ruth in salvation history is highlighted in the gospel of Matthew where she is one of the four women who are specially mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus<sup>148</sup>.

### A6-T3L4: Under God's Guidance

This lesson has a story titled, 'The Servant's Task', based on Genesis 24, which is the story of Abraham sending his servant to find a wife for his son Isaac. The selection is good, because this is an important and interesting episode in the Old Testament, and the story is well told. The angel who helped the servant find Rebekah is likened to a Guardian Angel, which is good. The story is also related to the love of God, and how God helps people in need, which is also good. The story might benefit by giving the chronological context of the Old Testament and especially the context of salvation history.

### A6-T3L5: In God's Family

This lesson has a story titled, 'Joseph and his Brothers', which is a good re-telling of the story of Joseph, based on Genesis 37-45, one of the most fascinating and dramatic stories in the

---

<sup>148</sup> Matthew 1:5.



Bible. It might have been useful to bring out the exceptional competence and managerial ability that Joseph displayed in Potiphar's household and the prison, which helps explain Pharaoh's choice of Joseph as his right-hand man. It might also have been helpful to include the story of Joseph in the Pupil's Book, and to develop the context in Old Testament chronology and salvation history.

#### A7-T1L3 - Hearing the Call

This lesson has good information on the prophet Elijah, telling of his prophecies against King Ahab, his raising to life of the son of the widow of Zarephath, and his experience of God at Mount Sinai. Pupils might also benefit from inclusion of the fascinating and dramatic stories of Elijah's confrontation with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, and his taking up to heaven in a fiery chariot.

#### A7-T1L4 - Jeremiah hears the Call

This lesson has some good information on Jeremiah and his call. It brings out well how Jeremiah had to suffer for the way he called the Chosen People to be faithful to God's covenant. It could have been helpful to show that the prophets were really inspired by God to speak his word, which was more than good human wisdom reflecting on the signs of the times and calling people to turn away from evil ways. It could have been specially helpful to show that God often really did give the prophets the call and ability to foretell future events, in Jeremiah's case concerning the fall of the Kingdom of Judah and the vitally important messianic prophecies of the New Covenant, which are much quoted in the New Testament.

## A7-T1L9 - The Garden Story

This lesson has a story of creation and Fall, titled 'The Garden Story', and based on Genesis 2 & 3. Much of the story is well presented and faithful to the Scripture original, but there are a number of aspects that might be strengthened.

The story says that God made a man from the soil and breathed life into him. It then simply says that 'God made a woman too'. It could have been helpful to include the Scriptural description of the creation of woman taken from the rib of the man, which is so rich in symbolism and meaning.

It might also have been helpful to make clear that the human race is descended from first parents, rather than conveying that Adam and Eve are no more than symbolically representative of humankind. It is good to refer to original sin, but it might also have been helpful to present clearly the Church's teaching on original sin as the sin of our first parents which is transmitted to the entire human race by nature and not by imitation, rather than stating that 'sin came into the world, originally, through people's disobedience', which could suggest that people in general from earliest times have been sinful and this habit of sinfulness has continued until now.

It might also have been helpful to present the Christian understanding that the 'snake' in the story of the Fall is Satan, rather than suggesting that the snake symbolises bad thoughts.

It is good to refer to the need of all for salvation and that Jesus is our Saviour. However, it might have been helpful, if having clarified the Church's teaching on original sin, to explain that it was the grace of the death and resurrection of Jesus, true God and true man, which

brought about our salvation from sin, both original and personal. The information in the lesson suggests it was simply Jesus' teaching and good example which constitutes salvation.

It might also have been helpful to include teaching on the Fall much earlier than Year 7 of the Programme, in particular as part of the preparation for the Sacrament of Confession, which most pupils receive in Year 4, Second Class.

The information for teachers alone opens with excellent quotations from CCC 389, CCC 417, and Romans 5:19, which deal with original sin and salvation. It might have been helpful if this information were more faithfully reflected in the lesson material.

#### A7-T1L10 – Commandments (1)

The Lesson casts doubt on the historicity of the book of Exodus, saying it 'contains some historical facts about the relationship between God and God's people', which are described as 'stories'. The Lesson only concedes as historical fact what the Jewish people *believed about God*. This Lesson is analysed further in relation to the Commandments in Section 3.5.2 The Ten Commandments.

#### A8-T1L2 - In Relation to God's Creation

This lesson seeks to convey the wonder and beauty of God's creation. The pupils are asked to learn that God is the creator of the whole world and of all the people in it, and that the world should be seen as a gift from God and as a sign of God's love and power. There is a prayer based on the great canticle from Daniel 3:62-85. All of this is good.

It is good for the lesson to stress the difference between science and faith, and to point out

that the account of creation in Genesis is a faith account, and not a scientific text. However, there might have been scope to bring out that the account of creation in Genesis is inspired by God and is true, and is more than simply 'the belief of the people of the time about creation'.

It is good to convey some of the findings of science about the origins of the universe, but there might be a tendency to be unduly prescriptive about scientific theories, which by the very nature of science are subject to review and change due to further discoveries. There might also be scope to bring out better that for people of faith today the ever expanding scientific knowledge of the universe does not constitute a challenge to faith, but rather a deepening of faith the more is discovered about the vastness, beauty and complexity of the universe that God has created.

While the prayer based on the canticle from Daniel 3 is reasonable, it could have been enhanced by including verses 57-61 and 86-88 (as in the Prayer of the Church), bringing out God's glory in his unseen creation – heaven, angels and the spirits and souls of the just – in his priests, and in the three young men delivered from the fiery furnace in Babylon.

#### A8-T1L4 - In Relation to Numbers

This lesson has a story titled, 'The Visit of the Angels', which tells of the visit of three angels to Abraham and Sarah at Mamre, based on Genesis 18. The story is well and simply told, and is appropriately accompanied by an illustration of the Rublev icon, which depicts the three angels and is also understood to be a depiction of the Holy Trinity. The story could have benefited from developing the context of salvation history, and also coming earlier in the programme to fit in better with the chronological sequence of the Old Testament. There is a

logic in placing the story in this particular lesson which also addresses the Holy Trinity, but the Trinity could also have benefited from being addressed in earlier years of the Programme.

#### A8-T1L8 - Symbol

This lesson has a story titled, 'Jacob's Stone', which is based on Genesis 28:10-22. It tells the story of Jacob's dream when he stopped for the night on his way to Haran, and in which he saw a ladder reaching to heaven and received a message from God, which was a confirmation of the Covenant with Abraham. This is a very important episode in the life of Jacob, and so it is good to be included in the programme. There is much in the story which reflects the Scripture original, but there are some ways in which the story might be strengthened. The story contains many interpretive additions, which remove the significance of the ladder and focus attention on the stone; interpretations of this dream generally give principal significance to the ladder. It might also have been helpful to develop the context of salvation history, facilitated by those elements omitted from the story, which are God's promises to Jacob and his descendants that they would inherit the land, that they would be exceedingly numerous and that they would be a blessing to all the peoples of the Earth.

It might also have been more helpful to describe the beings in Jacob's dream who were going up and down the ladder as 'angels', which is normal for biblical translations, rather than the term 'messengers', which, though a possible meaning of the original Hebrew word, would be less meaningful to the pupils.

### **3.3 PROFESSION OF FAITH**

#### **3.3.1 The Trinity and God the Father**

##### INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

The information for teachers on the Trinity and God the Father in the Introductory pages of the Teacher's Books appears on the following pages, under a sub-heading of 'Doctrine': Alive-O 1 – IX-X; Alive-O 2 – IX-X; Alive-O 3 – XV-XVI; Alive-O 4 – XVI-XVII; Alive-O 5 – [15]-[16]; Alive-O 6 – [15]-[16]; Alive-O 7 – [13]-[14]; Alive-O 8 – [13]-[14].

The information for teachers gives priority to the Blessed Trinity under the subheading of Doctrine, and gives attention to each of the three persons of the Trinity. This is excellent in principle, because the Church teaches that the Trinity is the most important truth of the Faith, it is the central mystery of Christian faith and life. The Trinity is the most fundamental and essential teaching in the 'hierarchy of the truths of faith'.<sup>149</sup>

It might have been helpful to provide some teaching on God and on the Trinity itself, before providing information on each of the individual persons, because there are things to be said about God and the Trinity as a whole which could help bring greater understanding to each of the persons of the Trinity.

Such teaching on God and the Trinity could include: There is only one true God, who is eternal, infinite, all-perfect, omnipotent, omnipresent and all-knowing, who is Love, Goodness, Beauty and Truth. While God is one, there are three persons in God, who are God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. The Trinity does not mean that there are

---

<sup>149</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 234.

three different gods, but one God in three persons, each of whom is fully God. The Divine Persons of the Trinity always work together in everything, but we can understand especially that God the Father is Creator, God the Son is our Redeemer, and God the Holy Spirit is our Sanctifier.

There can be difficulties in precisely distinguishing between the attributes of God and the first Person of the Trinity – God the Father – but every care should be taken to try to avoid losing the identity of the Father, resulting in God and God the Father coming across as one and the same being.

The Information on each of the Persons of the Trinity is quite brief in Alive-O 1 and 2, which is expanded to a more extensive list of attributes for each person in Alive-O 3, a list which is largely repeated with several additions from Alive-O 3 through to Alive-O 8.

The information for teachers describes the first Person of the Trinity as 'God our Father' (Alive-O 1-2), or simply as 'God' (Alive-O 3-8). There is good emphasis on God as creator, and the source of all goodness, who sent Jesus into the world. There are many other characteristics given, including the action of God in Old Testaments times, which could be attributed to God, but not specifically to God the Father.

Under the characteristics of the first Person of the Trinity Alive-O 8 adds 'who is one but not solitary -- the divine unity is triune'. This statement is helpful in relation to an understanding of the Trinity *per se*, but might have been more helpfully included in a prior teaching on God and the Trinity in general.

The Information also images the first Person of the Trinity as both father and mother. Some re-wording might be helpful here so that expressions of the maternal care of God (the Trinity:

Father, Son and Holy Spirit) do not risk confusing the identity of the First Person of the Trinity, who is God the Father.

While there are many good attributes presented by Alive-O on the first Person of the Trinity, there is scope for greater clarification between God and God the Father.

It is good that Jesus is identified as one of the Trinity, and that much attention is devoted to the characteristics of Jesus. These characteristics are analysed in greater detail below in Section 3.3.3: Jesus Christ. At this point it is only necessary to comment on the information given on Jesus in relation to the Trinity. Greater attention might be given to clarifying the divinity of Jesus. There are a number of statements which imply the divinity of Jesus, such as, 'Word of God made flesh'; 'image of the unseen God'; 'Immanuel, God with us'. These statements are good, but could benefit by making explicit the scriptural language that is used, meaning that Jesus is the one eternal God, as the Father is the one eternal God and the Holy Spirit is the one eternal God.

It is also good that the Holy Spirit is identified as one of the Blessed Trinity, and there are many good attributes listed for the Holy Spirit. These characteristics are analysed in greater detail below, in the Section 3.3.4: the Holy Spirit. At this point it is sufficient to comment only on the information on the Holy Spirit in relation to the Trinity. As noted above in relation to the Father, it might have been helpful to first present a teaching separately on the Trinity in general. Also, there appears to be scope for greater clarification of the divinity of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is reasonably described as the 'spirit of God' who 'deserves our praise and worship'; however, the Holy Spirit's divinity might be more clearly expressed by also using the description 'God the Holy Spirit'.



## LESSON MATERIAL ON THE TRINITY AND GOD THE FATHER

### Alive-O 1&2

The lesson material in the first two years of the Programme in relation to the Trinity and God the Father is very similar, and so is analysed here together.

Right through Alive-O 1 and 2 God is presented as the creator of human beings and of everything in the world. Human beings are created as images of God, each of us in our own unique and individual way. God is presented as loving and sustaining all of creation, especially us human beings. God is always present and cares for us. The goodness of creation and the care given by other human beings are presented as expressions of the love of God. All of this is good.

The pedagogical approach used is almost entirely inductive – focussing on creation first, in order to arrive at an awareness of the God of creation. Might the inductive/deductive balance have been more effective with greater emphasis on the deductive approach, giving more direct teaching on God? A more deductive approach would seem more in harmony with the GDC and the ‘pedagogy of God’.<sup>150</sup>

The pupils are led to give thanks to God for themselves, other people, all of creation, and everything that is good. The pupils are introduced to God as Father, and are led to thank God for Jesus. They are introduced to the two great Trinitarian prayers: 'Glory be to the Father' and the 'Sign of the Cross'. They are also introduced to the Our Father and the Hail Mary. All of this is good.

---

<sup>150</sup> *General Directory for Catechesis*, 139, 150.

The teaching on God's creation might have been further developed by including God's spiritual creation (Angels, heaven, the immortal soul) as well as the material creation. Also God's spiritual care and help to us human beings could have been expressed in addition to his care which is expressed through the material – the world and other human beings.

While the pupils are introduced to God as Father, the identity of 'God the Father' as First Person of the Blessed Trinity might have been brought out more clearly. While it is true that God is pure spirit, and therefore neither male nor female, Alive-O's teaching on God as mother and father might lead to un-clarity in pupil's minds about the identity of God the Father. While the Church teaches that all actions of God are actions of the Trinity, nevertheless the Church especially attributes the act of creation to God the Father, and this might have been better expressed. Could there also be a risk that the Old Snowman and Mrs Spring, who bring the winter snows and the spring, might be identified by the pupils with God as mother?

While it is excellent to introduce the 'Glory be to the Father' and the 'Sign of the Cross', it might have been helpful to explain the meaning of these great prayers, along with teaching on the Trinity itself. Here, too, it is a case of 'Glory be to the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit'. Teaching on the meaning of the 'Our Father' and the 'Hail Mary' might also have been helpful, which could also have been related to the identity of God the Father and of Jesus as Second Divine Person of the Trinity.

It is good that many qualities of God are expressed in these first two years of the Programme, in particular God's goodness, love, care and act of creation. However, there are some other qualities of God that might also have been presented: there is only one true God; God is

eternal - he always was, he is and he always will be; God is omnipotent and all-knowing – he knows all things and can do all things; God is truth as well as goodness, love and beauty.

#### Alive-O 3 & 4

There are many similarities in years 3 and 4 of the Programme, so they are analysed here together. God is mentioned frequently throughout these two years, which is good, so the analysis focuses mainly on those lessons which are especially relevant to God the Father and the Blessed Trinity.

The great Trinitarian prayers, 'Glory be to the Father Father', and the 'Sign of the Cross', are extensively used, which is excellent in principle. It might have been helpful to develop explicit teaching on these prayers in the context of the Trinity. The 'Our Father' is also used many times, which is good, but again it might have been helpful to give teaching on the meaning of this great prayer.

There are two short but good Trinitarian prayers introduced, as follows: 'Praise to the Father. Praise to the Son. Praise to the Spirit. The Three in One'. This prayer appears in the following lessons: A3-T1L3, A3-T1L12. The second prayer is the following: 'God the Father. God the Son. God the Spirit. The Three in one', which appears in lesson A4-T3L4. These prayers are good, but might have benefited from development of the meaning in a Trinitarian context, in particular with the identification of God the Son with Jesus, who tends to be described in the Programme as 'Son of God' or 'God's Son', but not as 'God the Son'.

In a number of lessons 'God Our Father' is affirmed as creator and the one who brings and sustains life, which is good. These lessons are: A3-T1L3; A3-T1L4; A3-T1L5; A4-T1L1; A4-T1L2; A4-T1L3.

In addressing the topic of forgiveness, the text says that, 'In the Sacrament of Penance God our Father forgives us' (A3-T2L8 and A4-T2L7). This might be clarified by teaching that it is not just God the Father who offers forgiveness of sins in the Sacrament of Penance, but rather the full Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, as is expressly said in the absolution pronounced by the priest in the Sacrament of Penance.

The Holy Spirit is addressed in two lessons, A3-T3L6 and A4-T1L4. These are analysed in detail below in Section 3.3.4: Holy Spirit. Suffice it to say at this point that the treatment of the Holy Spirit might have benefited from fuller development in the context of the Trinity.

In general in Alive-O 3&4, there might be scope for greater clarification on the identity of God the Father, which would avoid any tendency to identify 'God the Father' as only a name for God. Also, might there be a risk that the frequent imaging of God as mother (in prayer times about every third lesson) could dilute pupil understanding of God the Father?

#### Alive-O 5-8

The treatment of the Trinity and God the Father is similar in Alive-O 5 through 8, which are therefore analysed together here.

In A5-T3L6 it says that it is God our Father who sent the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. In A6-T3L6 it says that it was Jesus who sent the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. In A8-T2L3 it says that Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to the apostles on Pentecost, and that God our Father gives us the gift of the Holy Spirit to help us to be like Jesus. It might be helpful if all these teachings

were harmonised to show that it is both God the Father and Jesus the Son who send the Holy Spirit, as stated in the Nicene Creed.

The Trinity is addressed in the two lessons titled, 'Christianity Comes to Our Country': A5-T1L6 & A5-T1L7. In the Teacher's Book the story of how St Patrick taught the people about the Trinity using a shamrock is well presented, and there is a good Trinitarian prayer in the prayer times. The teaching might have been strengthened by including the Trinitarian prayer and the story about St Patrick in the Pupil's Book, in preference to the legend of Oisín. There is also an exercise for the children using a shamrock, which could helpfully have been related to the Trinity, rather than to the Oisín legend. St Patrick teaching about the Trinity is also addressed in Lesson A6-T3L6, but only among the discussion starter questions in the optional 'Chatting' session.

It is good to state that Jesus was raised from death by the power of God, but it would be helpful to show that Jesus was raised from the dead in the power of the Trinity, and not just in the power of God the Father<sup>151</sup>.

Again, in addressing the topic of forgiveness, Alive-O says that, 'In the Sacrament of Penance God our Father forgives us', now with the helpful addition of, 'through the words and actions of the priest' (A5-T2L8, A6-T2L8 and A8-T1L6). As noted in relation to Alive-O 3 and 4 above, clarification might usefully show that forgiveness of sins in the Sacrament of Penance comes from the full Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, not just from the Father.

It is good that the Sign of the Cross is related to the Blessed Trinity in A5-T1L1, in a way from which the divinity of the Son and the Spirit could be implied. The teaching might benefit from greater clarity and explanation on the nature of the divinity of the Trinity,

---

<sup>151</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 648-649. Jn.10:17-18.

especially the full divinity of each Person of the Trinity, and also giving the teaching greater prominence relative to the secular material in the Pupil's Book on the theme of 'Beginnings and Endings'.

There are two lessons in Alive-O 8 which expressly address the Trinity, A8-T1L4: In Relation to Numbers and A8-T1L5: In Relation to Being Human, and there are positive aspects in the lessons. The Rublev icon of the Trinity is well presented, and there is an excellent explanation in the Teachers Book about the meaning of this famous work of art. It might also have been helpful to include this explanation in the Pupil's Book, rather than the series of questions without answers concerning the icon.

These two lessons also affirm that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and that this is the Blessed Trinity. The relationship of love within the Trinity is well emphasised. Jesus is affirmed as the Son of God made man. It is also good that the Trinity is expressed as a mystery that human beings cannot fully understand.

It might have been more helpful to give priority to the Blessed Trinity in the presentation of these lessons. The presentation tends to give priority to a secular perspective, in the titles of the lessons (In Relation to Numbers; In Relation to Being Human) and in the way that the secular material on numbers and relationships is presented with greater priority, emphasis and prominence than the material on the Trinity.

Some of the language used about the Trinity in the lessons might, in combination with the greater prominence given to the secular, give the impression that the Trinity is just one possible human way of seeking to understand God, and that the more different ways that we humans express our understanding of God the better. Some re-wording might be helpful to

counteract the risk of conveying this impression, and to clarify that Christian belief in the Trinity is based on Divine Revelation, not on human attempts to image God.

The lessons raise the issue of the imaging of God as both father and mother. Great sensitivity is needed in this issue which is well expressed in CCC 239-240. It is true that the care of the Trinity for human beings is sometimes expressed with a maternal image in Scripture, but this must not confuse the revelation of the first Person the Trinity as God the Father. One of the ways in which the love of God for us is expressed is through the Church, foreshadowed in the Old Testament by the Chosen People of Israel. Scripture often applies feminine images to the Chosen People and the Church, with whom God closely identifies. This issue is analysed further in Section 3.3.5 below on the Church.

While it is excellent to have these two lessons which explicitly address the Blessed Trinity, a question arises: might there not be a case for explicitly addressing the Trinity much earlier in the programme, not just in the final year? This in view of the Church's teaching that the Trinity is the fundamental truth of the Christian Faith, the foundation for all other truths of faith<sup>152</sup>.

While there is much good material on the Trinity in these two lessons, there might also be scope for strengthening the teaching by including the following: The Trinity does not mean there are three different gods, but one God in three persons, each of whom is fully God. The Divine Persons of the Trinity always work together in everything, but we can especially understand that God the Father is Creator, Jesus God the Son is our Redeemer and God the Holy Spirit is our Sanctifier<sup>153</sup>.

---

<sup>152</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 234.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.* 230, 240, 267, 316.

It might also have been brought out how the blessed Trinity expresses God's plan of loving goodness, of creation, redemption and sanctification, which is the history of salvation <sup>154</sup>.

### **3.3.2 Creation**

The theme of Creation is presented in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 279-421. The Church teaches that catechesis on creation is of major importance, for it makes explicit the response of the Christian faith to the questions about the origins and the end of human beings. These answers are decisive for the meaning and orientation of our life and actions. Creation is the foundation of all God's saving plans, the beginning of salvation history that culminates in Christ. <sup>155</sup>.

The Programme does not directly address the theme of Creation in its Introductory information for teachers; there are no section headings or subheadings titled or devoted to 'Creation'. However, the theme of creation may be considered to be partially addressed in an indirect manner, as detailed below.

The Programme's lesson material for pupils is partly available directly to pupils in the Pupil's Books and Worksheets, and partly in the lesson material for use at the discretion of the teacher which is contained in the Teacher's Books and Videos. There are three lessons that directly address Creation, though many other lessons may be considered to address the theme of Creation in an indirect manner.

This analysis first addresses the issue of the Introductory informational pages of the Teacher's Books, and then next addresses the lesson material for the pupils.

---

<sup>154</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 235-236.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.* 280, 282.



## INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

Because of the great importance that the Church attaches to the theme of creation, it should be very helpful to teachers to have a section in the Introductory information that specifically addresses this great theme. Such a section on Creation might contain the following information:

God alone created the whole universe and everything in it, out of nothing, to show his love. God created everything good.<sup>156</sup>

God keeps all creation in existence through his love.<sup>157</sup>

Angels are created by God; angels are spiritual beings without bodies, with intellect and free will. Angels praise and serve God and serve human beings too. God has given everyone a personal guardian angel.<sup>158</sup>

God created heaven, which is his own 'place', where the saints and angels live.<sup>159</sup>

God created all creatures with their own particular goodness. There is a certain interdependence and solidarity among all God's creatures, but all material creatures were created for the good of the human race. We should take care of the world and its resources.<sup>160</sup>

Man is the highest of God's material creation, created in the image of God. We are created to know, love and serve God in this life and be happy with him forever in the next.<sup>161</sup>

---

<sup>156</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 296, 315, 317.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.* 320-321.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.* 328-336, 350-352.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.* 326

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.* 340-344, 353, 358.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.* 381, 1721.

Man is made of body and soul. The spiritual and immortal soul is created immediately by God. We have free will and can choose to love God and do good. We should take care of our bodies and souls. <sup>162</sup>

Each person is created unique and different from one another; each person is special in the eyes of God. <sup>163</sup>

From the beginning God created human beings male and female, with equal dignity and worth, equally reflecting the image of God. God created human beings to live in families, where family members love and care for each other. <sup>164</sup>

Some of the angels rebelled against God, and were driven out of heaven into hell. The fallen angels are called devils; their leader is Satan. They tempt man to reject God and sin, but their power is limited. <sup>165</sup>

Our first parents, Adam and Eve, were created good and without sin. But tempted by Satan or ‘the devil’, they disobeyed God and lost their original holiness. This event is called ‘The Fall’ and the first sin is called ‘Original Sin’. <sup>166</sup>

Original Sin is transmitted from Adam and Eve to every human being. <sup>167</sup>

As a result of original sin, human nature is weakened, with a selfish attraction to sin; we suffer pain and ignorance and will one day die. <sup>168</sup>

After the Fall God did not abandon the human race, but promised to send a Saviour, who is Jesus Christ, God the Son. Baptism erases original sin through the power of Christ’s saving

---

<sup>162</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 354, 364, 382, 1705, 1711.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.* 356-357.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.* 383, 2204-2208.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.* 391-395, 414.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.* 396-399, 415, 1707.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.* 416-417, 419.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.* 405-409, 418, 1714.

death. Baptism turns us back to God but we are still inclined to sin and need the help of God's grace.<sup>169</sup>

'The doctrine of original sin is, so to speak, the "reverse side" of the Good News that Jesus is the Saviour of all men, that all need salvation and that salvation is offered to all through Christ. The Church, which has the mind of Christ, knows very well that we cannot tamper with the revelation of original sin without undermining the mystery of Christ'.<sup>170</sup>

While the Programme's information for teachers in the Introductory pages of the Teacher's Books does not address the theme of Creation directly, the theme of creation might be considered to be addressed indirectly in the sections that treat the Characteristics of Pupils of the relevant ages in Alive-O 1-5, and in the sections on Revelation in all eight Teacher's Books under the subheadings on the 'Natural World' and on 'Human Experience'. While there is much good information related to creation included in this indirect manner, the majority of the information suggested above (which is based on the Church's teaching on Creation) is not covered.

This information which indirectly addresses the theme of Creation appears on the following Introductory pages of the Teacher's Books: Alive-O 1 – v, VII; Alive-O 2 – v, VII; Alive-O 3 – VIII, X-XI; Alive-O 4 – VIII, X-XI; Alive-O 5 – [6], [10]; Alive-O 6 – [10]; Alive-O 7 – [9]; Alive-O 8 – [9].

In relation to the 'Characteristics of Pupils', children are described as open, spontaneous, and possessing a fascination and wonder at the natural world; they learn through their senses, and

---

<sup>169</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 405, 410.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.* 389.

respond particularly well through learning by activity. Children possess a great natural curiosity, with a love to explore and discover. Children learn a great deal from the adults in their lives at home and at school, and they have a great desire for belonging – to relate well with others, both adults and other children. They respond well to learning about their connectedness with the created universe, and their responsibility for the earth and its resources.

While it is good that the Programme highlights these characteristics of children, would it not be more helpful for a Catholic religious education programme to include spiritual, as well as material, characteristics? Such spiritual characteristics might include that children have spiritual immortal souls, that they can experience God in a spiritual way and are open to the grace of God, and that they also unfortunately experience the negative effects of Original Sin, just like the rest of humanity<sup>171</sup>. It would also be helpful to include the change that comes about the age of seven, when children reach the use of reason, and are considered capable of sin.

The Introductory information for teachers has, under the subheading ‘Human Experience’, some information relevant to creation of human beings, including: human beings each have unique talents and abilities, which can grow and develop; human capacity for love, care, concern, cooperation, trust, honesty, truthfulness and respect are all reflections of being created in the image and likeness of God. While there is much that is helpful in this, it would greatly benefit from explicit teaching on creation, as suggested above, and as with the case of

---

<sup>171</sup> The vital importance for education of an authentic Christian anthropology, which takes full account of the spiritual as well as the material dimension of the human being, the ‘*anthropology principle*’, is well expressed by Norris. (Thomas J Norris, *Getting Real about Education*, 19-32. Dublin: Columba Press, 2006).

the characteristics of children noted above, it would be helpful to include the spiritual nature of human beings, not just the material.

Under the subheading 'The Natural World' the Introductory information approaches creation in an indirect way: the wonder and beauty of the natural world speaks of creation by God; the seasons of the year each with their particular characteristics, the grandeur of nature, and the mystery of new life, all show the providence, love and care of God for creation.

In relation to the 'Natural World' and 'Human Experience' the information for teachers gives priority and emphasis to material creation, then God is brought in secondarily as creator and sustainer. Might this risk diminishing God's importance and transcendence relative to the material world, even identifying God with material creation?

In Teacher's Books 3 to 8 there is a subheading 'Heaven and Hell' in the sections 'Content of the Programme' (Books 3 and 4) or 'Promoting Knowledge of the Faith' (Books 5 to 8). Under this subheading the information says that Heaven is a state of joy in union with God after death for those who love God, but that it should not be thought of as a place. The Church teaches that heaven is a 'place' or state, and it is the 'place' of the angels, as well as the 'place' or state where human beings will go after death if they die in friendship with God.

<sup>172</sup> The information omits mention of angels in heaven; the creation or existence of angels is not mentioned at all. The Programme's lesson material contains mention of angels at important events, such as the Annunciation, Nativity, and Resurrection, but there is no teaching on the creation of angels or what an angel is, and the fallen angels - Satan and his devils - are never mentioned at all. There are no illustrations of angels in the lesson material for pupils, even though children love to look at and to draw pictures of angels. Might this risk

---

<sup>172</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 326.

the pupils concluding that angels are not a reality, or being influenced by popular television programmes which present angels as people who come back from the dead, or New Age concepts of angels?

The information says that children may have questions about the 'devil' and be frightened by what they have seen on television or in films. Having made a good case for giving the pupils the true teaching of the Church on the devil, the Programme does not do so at all, neither here in the information for teachers nor anywhere in the lesson material for pupils<sup>173</sup>. Might there be the risk that the pupils will remain overly afraid, or conversely conclude that Satan and the Devils are not real, nothing to be worried about, and therefore not on their guard and seeking the grace of God to counteract the wiles and temptations of the Evil One?<sup>174</sup>

The information says that the word 'hell' can cause difficulties, but only says that it represents the spiritual reality that those who refused to love God and to love others will remain separated from God. The Church teaches that hell is an actual state or 'place' of the utmost unhappiness, something to be feared and avoided.

## LESSON MATERIAL ON THE THEME OF CREATION

The Programme has three lessons which directly address creation by God, as follows:

---

<sup>173</sup> The importance of being aware of the reality of Satan is well expressed in *The Ratzinger Report – An Exclusive Interview on the State of the Church*, p.135-138, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger with Vittorio Messori. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1985. The account quotes Pope Paul VI at his general audience of November 15, 1972, 'I have the feeling that the smoke of Satan has penetrated the Temple of God through some crack or the other. .... The evil which exists in the world is the result and effect of an attack upon us and our society by a dark and hostile agent, the devil. .... The devil is the enemy number one, the source of all temptation'.

<sup>174</sup> An example of how a primary school RE programme (the *Image of God series*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994) can give authentic Catholic teaching on angels and demons in a clear but non-alarmist way, is outlined by Éanna Johnson in 'Angels in Primary Schools: A Comparative Review of Teaching Materials', *The Sower*, January-March 2005, p.33-34. (*The Sower* is a quarterly catechetical journal published by the Maryvale Institute, Birmingham B44 9AG, UK).

A1-T1L12 - We Belong to God

A6-T1L2 - And God said.....

A7-T1L9 - The Garden Story

A1-T1L12 - We Belong to God: This lesson brings out very well that it was God who created each person, and continues to sustain and care for us, which is good. It also tells pupils that they are creators too, which is potentially valid, because God does call us to participate in his work of creation in a number of different ways. However, the difference between God's creation and our ability to participate in his creation could have been more clearly expressed, particularly in the light of another lesson (A6-T1L1) which says that the pupils have the Spirit of God in them, and can therefore breathe life into their school world, in the way that the Holy Spirit breathed life into Creation in the beginning. There is also a statement which might benefit from clarification which says that the pupils can negotiate how they belong to God.

A6-T1L2: And God said.....: This lesson gives an account of creation, based mainly on Genesis chapter 1. It expresses well that God created everything from nothing and that all of God's creation is good. God's creation is gift, and a sign of his love and power. Human beings are created in the image of God, and they are created male and female. The lesson material conveys well the wonder, beauty and diversity of God's creation.

Though there is much good material in this lesson on creation, there are some aspects where they might be scope for improvement. It would seem helpful to include the seventh day of creation when God rested, because this is foundational to the Christian understanding of the

Sabbath and the Lord's Day. The poem on creation suggests that man was made for the world, so it would be helpful to make quite clear that it was the world that was made for man. It would also be helpful to include the command of God, 'increase and multiply and fill the earth', which along with the teaching on man and woman in Genesis chapter 2, is foundational for the Christian understanding of marriage and family.

A7-T1L9 - The Garden Story: This lesson has a story of creation and Fall based on Genesis 2 & 3. Much of the story is well presented and faithful to the Scripture original, but there are a number of aspects that might be strengthened.

The story says that God made a man from the soil and breathed life into him. It then simply says that 'God made a woman too'; it could have been most helpful to include the Scriptural description of the creation of woman taken from the rib of the man, which is dramatic and so rich in symbolism and meaning.

It would also have been helpful to present the Christian understanding that the 'snake' in Genesis 3 is Satan, rather than simply suggesting that the snake is a symbol for bad thoughts.

It might also have been helpful to make clear that the human race is descended from First Parents, rather than conveying that Adam and Eve are no more than symbolically representative of humankind. It is good that the lesson refers to original sin, but it might also have been helpful to present clearly the Church's teaching on original sin as the sin of our First Parents which is transmitted to the entire human race by nature and not by imitation<sup>175</sup>, rather than stating that 'sin came into the world, originally, through people's disobedience', which might suggest that people in general from earliest times have been sinful and this habit

---

<sup>175</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 396-409.



of sinfulness has continued until now.

It is good to refer to the need of all for salvation and that Jesus is our Saviour. However, it might have been helpful, if having clarified the Church's teaching on original sin, to explain that it was the grace of the death and resurrection of Jesus, true God and true man, which brought about our salvation from sin, both original and personal <sup>176</sup>. The information in the lesson implies that it was simply Jesus' teaching and good example which constitutes salvation.

While it is very good to include teaching on creation based on Scripture, in particular the first three chapters of Genesis, it might have been helpful to include this teaching much earlier in the programme. The understanding of the Fall of our First Parents might be strengthened by a teaching on the prior Fall of the angels, under the leadership of Satan <sup>177</sup>. A suggested structure for teaching on Creation might be:

Years 1 and 2 - elementary introduction to creation based on Genesis 1;

Years 3 and 4 - teaching on the creation and fall of the angels, and the Fall of Adam and Eve, which would help give the pupils a sufficient understanding of the Sacraments of Baptism and Penance which they receive during year 4;

Years 5 and 6 - further development of the teaching on creation and Fall based on Genesis 2 and 3;

Years 7 and 8 - further development of teaching on Creation, including relationship between the Christian understanding of creation and scientific discoveries and theories, and also on ecology and care of material creation.

---

<sup>176</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 280.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.* 391-395.

In addition to the three lessons above that directly address Creation by God, the Programme has thirty-five lessons that address the theme of Creation in an indirect way, focusing primarily on the natural world and/or human beings. The approach is predominantly indirect or inductive – focus first on the wonder of the natural world and human beings, which leads to an appreciation of a loving God who created everything and sustains it in being. The lessons focus on material creation, both inanimate and animate (plants, animals, and human beings), but not on God’s spiritual creation. These 35 lessons are listed below:

*Focus mainly on the natural world*

A1-T1L5 - My World in Autumn    A1-T2L1 - My World in Winter

A1-T2L8 - My World in Spring

A1-T3L1 - Food is Good    A1-T3L2 - The Food we Eat

A1-T3L4 - My World in Summer

A2-T1L5 - Autumn    A2-T1L6 - Autumn Colours

A2-T2L1 - Winter - A Time to Rest    A2-T2L8 - New Beginnings

A2-T3L1 - Water is Good    A2-T3L2 - Water is Fun

A2-T3L3 - Water is God's Gift    A2-T3L5 - Summer Light

A6-T1L1 - Within God's creation.    A6-T1L4 - St Francis Cares for Creation.

A8-T1L2 - In Relation to God's Creation    A8-T3L7 - Kingdom Ecology

*Focus mainly on human beings*

A1-T1L6 - Me in Autumn    A1-T1L10 - How Do I Belong?

A1-T2L2 - Me in Winter    A1-T2L4 - Thank You, God, For Me

A1-T2L5 - Celebrating Me    A1-T2L9 - Me in Spring

A1-T3L5 - Me in Summer    A1-T3L6 - Holidays

A2-T2L2 - Winter    A2-T2L9 - Spring

A2-T3L6 - Hurray For Summer

A3-T1L2 - Any time    A3-T1L3 - Inside Time    A3-T1L4 - Time Moves On

A6-T1L6 - God nourishes us.    A6-T1L7 - God sent Jesus to nourish us.

A6-T1L8 - God Sent the Holy Spirit to Nourish Us.

These lessons acknowledge that the Natural World, both inanimate and animate, is created by God, and its beauty and wonder are well brought out. The seasons of the year are well described, each with its own particular character and sources of wonder and enjoyment. Much attention is devoted to the plant world: the trees, flowers, leaves, fruit and pasture. The creatures that God has created, both large and small, are well described: animals, birds, fish, each with their own particular characteristics in which we can rejoice. Food and meals, water and light, all get attention, along with appreciation of those who produce our food. Time itself is well brought out as part of the gift of life from God. The wonderful scientific discoveries about the created universe are also addressed.

The lessons also acknowledge Human Beings as created by God and describe the wonder of

the human being: hands, eyes, feet, fingers, voices. The uniqueness of each individual person is well brought out. The lessons communicate a sense of joy and happiness in one's self personally, and among all human beings. The growth and development of the human body is expressed as something good and to be celebrated. The unity of the universal human family is strongly emphasised. Attention is given to the unity that exists between human beings and natural world, along with their interdependence, and the need for human beings to care for the earth as stewards, and give God thanks for it.

While there is much good material on Creation in these lessons, the following suggestions are put forward strengthening the presentation:

The lessons give attention to material creation, that is what can be seen, both inanimate and animate, especially human beings; the presentation would be greatly strengthened by appropriate focus on God's invisible creation, which is considered most important by the Church<sup>178</sup>.

While the lessons are good in expressing God's care and continual presence which sustains all of creation, the transcendence of God might be expressed more clearly, in order to avoid undue identity between God and creation, which could lead to a pantheist concept of God. Might the portrayal of Little Nite-Lite (A2-T1L8: Hallowe'en), the Old Snowman (A2-T2L1: Winter – A Time to Rest) and Mrs Spring (A2-T2L8: New Beginnings) as part of creation while seeming to have creative powers also risk suggesting a potential pantheistic misunderstanding of God?

While the lessons are good in expressing the solidarity that exists between human beings and

---

<sup>178</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 328, 362-368.

all the rest of God's creation, both animate and inanimate, it might have been helpful to bring out that man is the summit of God's creation and that all of creation exists for the sake of man.<sup>179</sup> This special position of the human race in God's creation would have been brought out well by the suggestion noted above of including the creation by God of the immortal human soul. The lessons could be strengthened by bringing out the spiritual nature of human beings, and the purpose of our creation to know, love and serve God here on earth, and to be happy with him for ever in Heaven in the next life after death. The lesson on ecology (A8-T3L7: Kingdom Ecology) expresses well the need to care for the earth as stewards of God, but gives no precedence to human beings over the rest of material creation, which might risk equating the Reign of God with a better world in a material sense, but neglecting the spiritual. The lessons bring out well that God is the author of all creation. It might also have been helpful to bring out that creation is the work of the Blessed Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit<sup>180</sup>, even though we speak in a special way as the Father being the Creator. There might also be scope for bringing out more clearly that the world was made for the glory of God<sup>181</sup>, and that creation in the beginning of salvation history<sup>182</sup>.

The learning approach to Creation in the information for teachers in the Introductory pages and in most of the lessons, focuses primarily on the natural world and human beings, from which one infers a knowledge of God as creator. The *General Directory for Catechesis* affirms this approach to learning, which it describes as inductive or 'existential',<sup>183</sup>. The GDC also recommends a deductive or 'kerymatic' approach, which would involve teaching first about God and his work of creation, based primarily on divine Revelation, and then

---

<sup>179</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 342-344, 358.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.* 290.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.* 293.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.* 280.

<sup>183</sup> *General Directory for Catechesis*, 150-151.

observing and coming to a better understanding of creation in the light of this divine Revelation. The GDC recognises the value of both inductive and deductive approaches <sup>184</sup>.

One might suggest that the approach in the Programme in relation to Creation should favour deductive learning, based on divine Revelation, because young pupils are so open to new information, but lack the experience and reasoning power on which to base an inductive synthesis. Favouring of a deductive approach would also harmonise with the Church's teaching that reflection on the created world and human person can lead only as far as a theistic knowledge of God, but that a full Christian understanding of God can only come from divine Revelation <sup>185</sup>.

### **3.3.3 Jesus Christ**

#### INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

The introductory Information for teachers on Jesus Christ for Alive-O 1 and 2 is the same, and appears on page X in each of the Teacher's Books. The Information is quite brief and conveys that children learn about Jesus gradually and intuitively, mainly by participating in the faith of adults. This is not unreasonable, but it might have been helpful to give rather more information about Jesus to help teachers in their task of handing on the Faith to young children.

---

<sup>184</sup> *General Directory for Catechesis*, 150-151.

<sup>185</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 36-38.

The introductory Information for teachers on Jesus Christ varies little between Alive-O 3 and 4, and is therefore analysed here together. The Information appears on pages XV-XVI in Teacher's Book 3 and on pages XVI-XVII in Teacher's Book 4. The Information covers many of the main events of the life of Jesus: birth at Bethlehem which is commemorated at Christmas, boyhood in Nazareth, Jesus' ministry of prayer, healing the sick, the opposition he met from the scribes and Pharisees, his last meal before his death, his death on the cross, his resurrection and his sending the Spirit to the apostles at Pentecost. The Information also addresses the ministry of Jesus who, through word and example, showed us what God is like, taught us the love of God and how we should love and forgive each other.

While one must not expect a complete and comprehensive treatment of Jesus Christ at this point, there are nevertheless some suggestions for strengthening this Information. The Information is given in the context of the Trinity, but Jesus' divinity might be better presented. The first person of the Trinity is described as 'God', while Jesus is described as 'Son of God', which could imply that Jesus is somehow not God and less than God. It is good that Jesus is described as 'the Word of God made flesh', but these Scriptural terms could helpfully be drawn out to show they mean that Jesus, the Second Divine Person of the Trinity, is true God and true man.

It might also be included that Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary; that he ascended to the right hand of God after his resurrection and will come again at the end of time as Judge. To say that Jesus is the 'Bread of Life' is good, but is also open to many understandings of the Eucharist other than the Catholic one, that Jesus is truly present in the Eucharist body and blood, soul and divinity, described by the Church as

‘transubstantiation’<sup>186</sup>. The goodness that Jesus saw in people is emphasised to the point of appearing to be the source of morality; it might be helpful to balance this by noting that our foundation is in God’s goodness, not our own, and that the goodness of human nature is flawed through the effects of Original Sin.

It is good to say that Jesus shared his last meal with his friends before he died, but there seems much scope for developing the meaning and significance of the Last Supper. It is good to say that Jesus died on the cross for us, but the meaning of this could helpfully be drawn out in the context of salvation history, clarifying that Jesus is the divine Saviour from sin of the human race, the Redeemer that was promised by God from the time of the Fall of Adam and Eve. It is reasonable to say that Jesus was raised from the dead by God the Father, but it would be helpful to clarify that he was also raised in his own divine power, otherwise it might be concluded that Jesus was only a human being raised from death by a power outside himself, like Lazarus or the daughter of Jairus.

The Information for teachers on Jesus in the Teacher’s Books 5-8 follows the same pattern as that established for Alive-O 3 and 4, but with additional points that parallel the lesson material in each book, along with some helpful clarifications.

The Information on Jesus in Teacher’s Books 5 and 6, on pages [15]-[16] in both books, adds a number of new points in line with the lesson material, for example: Jesus' time in the wilderness, the cure of the centurion’s servant, the calming of the storm on the Sea of Galilee, the forgiveness of the Zachaeus, Jesus' appearances after his Resurrection, and the story of the Prodigal Son. There is some improvement in clarifying the divinity of Jesus, by saying that Jesus with God the Father hears our prayers and deserves our praise and thanks; while

---

<sup>186</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1376; cf. John6:35f.



helpful, there is still further scope for clarifying the divinity of Jesus. There is a clarification on the Eucharist which says that Jesus is truly present in the Eucharist under the appearances of bread and wine; it would be helpful to add that Jesus is present body and blood, soul and divinity, and also to use the term chosen by the Church for the change, 'transubstantiation'<sup>187</sup>. There is a helpful addition that Jesus continues to offer himself in sacrifice for us at Mass; however, there is still scope here for clarification of the nature of Jesus' sacrifice in the context of salvation history and the nature of the Mass.

The Information for teachers on Jesus in Teachers Books 7 and 8, on pages [13]-[14] in both books, follows a similar pattern. There are a number of additional points in parallel with the material that appears in the lessons for pupils, and there are some further helpful points of clarification.

Additional points of information include: Jesus gave an example of service by washing the apostles' feet; he asks us to be his witnesses in the world; Jesus is present in the Mass in the Word, in the assembly and in the minister; Jesus entered Jerusalem in triumph on Palm Sunday and drove the sellers and money-changers out of the temple; he sends us to others and to the world to love and serve him; we meet/encounter Jesus in the seven sacraments, including Confirmation, the Anointing of the Sick, Marriage, and Holy Orders.

There are some points that are indicative of the divinity of Jesus: Jesus is the image of the unseen God; he is the Way, the Truth and the Life; Jesus is 'The Living Word'. While these points are helpful towards an understanding of Jesus as God, there is still scope for further clarification, especially considering that Jesus is still described as 'Son of God', while the first person of the Trinity is still presented as 'God'. There are some additional points that are

---

<sup>187</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1376.

suggestive of salvation history: Jesus is more than a prophet, whose coming was prepared for and foretold by the prophets throughout the Old Testament. While these points are indeed helpful, more is required to give a full Christian understanding of salvation history<sup>188</sup>.

## LESSON MATERIAL ON JESUS CHRIST

### *JESUS' LIFE*

#### The Annunciation

There are lessons which are particularly relevant to the Annunciation in the Years 2, 3, 5 and 7. It is appropriate to address this great theme several times in the course of the Programme, progressively developing the pupils' understanding of the theme over the years. Lessons relevant to the theme of the Annunciation are listed below:

A2-T1L13 - Preparing

A3-T1L7 - In Jesus' Time

A3-T1L13 - One Moment

A3-T3L1 - Mary's Joy

A5-T1L9 - Mary Wonders -- Who Is the One Who Is Coming?

A5-T2L3 - At Home with God's Love

A7-T1L12-14 - Waiting in Joyful Hope;

The lesson in Year 2 passes over the Annunciation and goes straight to the theme of the

---

<sup>188</sup> For helpful insights the doctrine of redemption and salvation history, see: Stephen B Clark, *Redeemer – Understanding the Meaning of the Life, Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ*. Ann Arbor: Servant Publications, 1992; and also Joseph Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, p.228-234. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990, 2004.

Visitation. The text simply presents the excitement and joy of two cousins, Mary and Elizabeth, who are both expecting new babies. This is good in that it introduces pupils to Mary and Elizabeth, and conveys the joy of the expectation of a new baby. However, it might have been helpful at this early stage to introduce the fact that it was Jesus that Mary was expecting, and also something about the significance of the baby that Elizabeth was expecting, John the Baptist. The illustration for the pupils shows two women joyfully embracing, who are both in an advanced stage of pregnancy. This illustration may give a misleading impression to the pupils that Mary was already well pregnant at the time of the Annunciation, because the Visitation occurred very shortly after the Annunciation.

It might have also been more helpful to present the Annunciation first to the pupils, because it did in fact occur before the Visitation and gives meaning to the latter event.

There are three lessons relevant to the theme of Annunciation in Year 3.

The first of these lessons, A3-T1L7 - In Jesus' Time, does not directly address the theme of the Annunciation, but has some relevance to it. The lesson addresses the kind of activities that would have been common in the village where Jesus grew up, which is satisfactory in principle. However, the illustration might have the potential to be misleading in relation to the fact that Mary was a virgin at the time of the Annunciation, and that Jesus was her first and only child. The illustration shows a household which appears to show Jesus helping his father at work, his mother holding a toddler, and five girls busy in the household, which have all the appearance of being the daughters of the house, a few of whom appear to be older than Jesus. The text in the Teacher's Book only addresses the various activities going on, and does not address the nature of the household.

The next lesson in Year 3, A3-T1L13 - One Moment, directly addresses the Annunciation.

The Teacher's Book has a simple description of the appearance of the Angel Gabriel, his message to Mary that she would have 'a very special baby who would be God's son', and her reply that she would 'do whatever God asks'. It is also good that there is mention of the Angelus and an introduction to the first part of the Hail Mary. There might have been scope for developing better the significance of Jesus and of this great event, especially since the pupils are taught in the lesson that they are all 'very special'.

The lesson sets the significance of the Annunciation in the context of the significant moments in every person's life, the significant moments in Mary's life, and describes the Annunciation as 'a significant moment in the biblical infancy narrative'. It is good to seek to highlight the significance of the Annunciation; however, we suggest that more could have been done to call attention to the enormous significance of this event for the entire human race in the history of salvation. The Annunciation marked the Incarnation, and it would be hard to find adequate superlatives in language to describe this event and the significance of Mary's *Fiat*.

The significance and importance of the event could also have been increased by showing an illustration of the Angel Gabriel appearing to Mary and giving her this great message, but the illustration only shows Mary looking up at a beam of light. (The Programme refers to angels at several great events, such as the Annunciation, the Nativity, and the Resurrection, but does not have illustrations of Angels nor teaching on the nature of angels and their creation by God). Another way in which the illustration might be improved would be to show clearly that Mary was not pregnant at the time. This is particularly so in relation to the illustration noted above on the Visitation, where Mary is clearly in the advanced state of pregnancy. The picture of Mary at the Annunciation shows her seated wearing a loose gown and apron which would hide a pregnancy if she were indeed pregnant.

The final lesson in Year 3 on the theme of the Annunciation, A3-T3L1 - Mary's Joy, addresses the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary, which includes the Annunciation and Visitation. The text does not add anything of significance to that in the early lessons, but there are two new illustrations. The illustration of Mary at the Annunciation is attractive, but also shows her in a seated position with a loose gown which could conceal a pregnancy. The Visitation illustration again depicts Mary in the same advanced stage of pregnancy as Elizabeth. It might have been more helpful to amend these illustrations to avoid any inference that Mary was already pregnant at the time of the Annunciation. This lesson also introduces the second part of the Hail Mary which is excellent in principle. It might have been helpful to develop in the text of the lesson the significance of the title 'mother of God' in relation to the divinity of the child that Mary conceived at the Annunciation.

There are two lessons in Year 5 of the Program which further develop the theme of the Annunciation.

The lesson, A5-T1L9 - Mary Wonders -- Who Is the One Who Is Coming?, recalls the Annunciation and develops further the message of the Angel in a satisfactory way, saying that Mary will become pregnant by the power of the Holy Spirit, that her son would be named Jesus, who will be Son of the Most High, and Son of God.

The next lesson in Year 5, A5-T2L3 - At Home with God's Love, introduces the Angelus prayer, and relates the prayer to the Annunciation with a satisfactory story based on Luke 1:26-55. All this must help develop the pupils' understanding of the Annunciation. (It might have been more helpful to use the traditional form of the Angelus prayer; this aspect is analysed further below in Section 3.6: Christian Prayer). It might not be entirely helpful to have repeated the illustration of the Annunciation from the early lessons, for the reasons

noted above.

The final lesson that is particularly relevant to the Annunciation comes in Year 7, A7-T1L12-14 - Waiting in Joyful Hope. There is a very commendable effort to set the Annunciation in context by presenting some of the historical elements of the Chosen People, their waiting for a Saviour, and linking in the prophecy of Isaiah concerning the coming Messiah. This is a very commendable development, but it would have benefited from giving a full context of the history of salvation, going back to the need for salvation in the Fall. The text merely refers to the Saviour as the one who would be 'the path to the Tree of Life, and to God'; more would be needed to make clear a Christian understanding of the redemption and salvation.

The message of the Angel Gabriel at the Annunciation is further developed in a good way. Mary is described as a virgin, on whom the power of God will descend to bring about the conception of Jesus. There is also mention of King David as the ancestor of Jesus and Jesus as a King. It is perhaps less than satisfactory that the earlier illustration of the Annunciation is repeated, for the reasons noted above, in particular because it is put beside an illustration of an obviously very pregnant Mary, without any words of explanation.

In conclusion, one can see many satisfactory elements in the way that the Programme treats the great event of the Annunciation. The event is given attention in several lessons, the coming birth of Jesus is highlighted, it is mentioned that the announcement came by the Angel Gabriel, that Mary gave her consent to the will of the Lord, and that the baby to be born is 'son of God' or 'Son of God'.

The presentation of the Annunciation might be strengthened in a number of ways. The significance and importance of the event might be increased by showing an illustration of the Angel Gabriel at the Annunciation, and providing teaching in the Programme on the creation

of Angels by God, what an angel is, and the mission of the Angels in the service of God and man.

Teaching on the nature of Jesus might be strengthened, both in terms of teaching who Jesus is and what is his mission, and also by including this information much earlier in the Programme. The divinity of Jesus could be greatly strengthened and brought forward up to the very earliest parts of the Programme when teaching about the Annunciation. It is good to teach that Jesus is the 'son of God', but it should also be clearly taught that Jesus is divine, that he is God the Son, the second divine Person of the Blessed Trinity; this is to clarify the vast distinction between Jesus' Sonship through his divine nature, and the sonship of human beings through adoption. The identity of Jesus as Saviour might also be clarified. Clarification on Jesus as Saviour might helpfully come early in the Programme, because this is the principal reason why Jesus, second divine Person of the Blessed Trinity became man, in order to redeem the human race from its sinful condition brought about by the Original Sin of our First Parents.

Mary's virginity is important from several points of view (as noted below in Section 3.3.6: Mary & the Saints), and there might be scope for bringing this out more clearly. Mary is only described as virgin in Year 7, and only in passing, which the pupils could easily miss. It might be helpful if Mary were described as virgin much earlier in the Programme, and that it were given at greater attention. It might also be helpful to amend the illustration which gives an impression that Mary had several other children besides Jesus.

Mary's assent to become the mother of Jesus is mentioned a number of times, which is very good. However, this was such a momentous decision that its significance could receive greater attention, and be brought out more fully. The Church sees Mary as the 'second Eve',

whose obedience was key to God's plan for redemption of the human race, which reversed the disobedience of the first Eve.

There is much good material here in relation to the Annunciation, but it could be strengthened in content and also introduced much earlier in the Programme. Some material which is potentially confusing or misleading might helpfully be revised.

### The Nativity

There are lessons which specifically address the Nativity of Jesus in most years of the Programme. It is reasonable in principle to re-visit this great event frequently in order to progressively develop and deepen the pupils' understanding. Lessons which address the Nativity are listed below:

A1-T1L15 - Jesus is Born

A2-T1L15 - Celebrating the Birth of Jesus

A3-T1L15 - The Moment They'd All Been Waiting For

A4-T1L12 - The People Who Walked In Darkness

A4-T1L13 - From Darkness to Light

A4-T1L14 - Jesus - A Light For All

A4-T2L1 - Returning - A New Beginning

A6-T1L12 - Come to the Manger.

A7-T1L12-14 - Waiting in Joyful Hope

A8-T1L13-16 - Nativity Play



The lessons in years 1 and 2, A1-T1L15 - Jesus is Born and A2-T1L15 - Celebrating the Birth of Jesus, give a reasonable introduction to the Birth of Jesus. They address the basic events of Mary and Joseph arriving in Bethlehem, the angels appearing to shepherds, and the birth of Jesus. While this information is good and appropriate to the age level of the pupils, it is virtually all contained in the Teacher's Book, and there could be scope for including more in the Pupil's Book.

Jesus is described as a 'very special baby' who came to show us how much God loves us and cares for us. While it is good to present the simple account of the birth of Jesus in years 1 and 2, it might also have been helpful to begin to introduce that Jesus is God himself who has become human, and that he came to be born as a human being as our Saviour, in order to save us from our sins, and introduce us into the life and love of God, the Holy Trinity.

The Lesson in Year 3 of the Programme, A3-T1L15 - The Moment They'd All Been Waiting For, continues the theme of the Nativity. There is no further information on the Nativity in the Pupil's Book, except that Jesus is now described as 'the Son of God', which is good. The Teacher's Book has a reasonable account of the Nativity, which is similar to the earlier books.

While it is good to continue the theme of the Nativity, there might be scope for more information in the Pupil's Book about this great event, and scope for developing the nature of Jesus as both divine and human, more clearly than the simple description of 'the Son of God', because we are all sons and daughters of God.

There are four lessons in Year 4 of the programme which continue the theme of the Nativity; A4-T1L12 - The People Who Walked In Darkness, A4-T1L13 - From Darkness to Light, A4-T1L14 - Jesus - A Light For All, and A4-T2L1 - Returning - A New Beginning. These

four lessons all address the Nativity from the perspective of the visit of the Magi, as given in the Gospel of Matthew.

It is very good in principle to give attention to the visit of the Magi, because of the significance of this part of the Nativity story, and also because it is a very dramatic event that will engage the interest and attention of young pupils. There are several illustrations in the Pupil's Books, but very little information in the text, because Pupil's Book 4 adopts the approach of having questions without answers as the great majority of its text.

Lesson A4-T1L14 Pupil's Book has a dialogue (not in the Gospels) in which Mary tells the Magi that the name of her baby is Immanu-El, meaning 'God is with us'. The Magi ask, 'When and how is God with us?' to which Mary replies, 'Right here and now, in the birth of my son, God is with us. In light and darkness, in sorrow and joy, in every moment of every day, God is with us'. This is probably intended to indicate that God is always with us in Jesus, but might it be misunderstood that God's general presence in the world at all times is no different to the presence of God in Jesus? It might have been helpful to bring out the meaning of the name Immanuel as signifying that Jesus is both God and man, that he is the Second Divine Person of the Blessed Trinity come to earth in the form of man to save us from sin, and give us divine life.

While it is good in principle to devote much attention in the lessons to the visit of the Magi, it might have been more helpful to have less fictional additions, and more attention devoted to bringing out the significant meanings contained in this Gospel episode. The appearance of the guiding star gets much attention, which is good, but more could have been made of seeing the star as a sign given by God and its significance for the birth of Jesus. In an earlier lesson, A2-T1L8 - Halloween, the Teacher's Book says, 'Sometimes when a very very special person

was born a brand-new star would appear in the sky'. It is good that this statement is not repeated in Book 4, because it seems to suggest that Jesus is no more than one of several outstanding human beings.

In these lessons it might have been helpful to bring out the significance of the Gospel references to Jesus as Christ and as King, rather than simply describing him as 'leader'. It could also have been helpful to bring out the significance of the Magi as representatives of the Gentile people, to whom Jesus is revealed in addition to the Jewish people, which foreshadows the universal revelation of Jesus after his death and resurrection. It is good that the gifts of the Magi of gold, frankincense and myrrh are mentioned, but it would have been helpful to bring out the significance of these gifts as understood by the Fathers as indicating Jesus' kingship (gold), divinity (frankincense), and his Passion by which he redeemed the human race (myrrh).

There is one lesson in Year 6 which addresses the Nativity, A6-T1L12 - Come to the Manger.

The Pupil's Book has a good account based on Luke 2:1-19.

The Pupil's Book also has a question and answer as follows: *Q. Who is Jesus Christ? A. Jesus Christ is the only Son of God who became man to save us. He is truly God and truly man.* This is an excellent presentation of the nature of Jesus, his divinity, and his mission of salvation. It would be most helpful if this statement had been referred to, explained and developed further in the lesson material in the Pupil's Book and Teacher's Book, but there is no further reference, which might tend to diminish the value of this good question and answer.

The Teacher's Book repeats the good presentation on the Nativity from the Pupil's Book, but also adds an imagined dialogue from other 'characters': Hills, a Cave, Animals, and the

Manger. This imagined dialogue does not seem to contain any material which would significantly expand and deepen the pupils' understanding of the Nativity, and may even distract from it. The emphasis is on Jesus as someone who came to nourish us by teaching us God's love, through which we can live life to the full. This seems to put all the emphasis on Jesus' mission as teacher and example of the love of God, and misses out the opportunity to develop the excellent question and answer to show Jesus' divinity, and his mission as Saviour from sin through his sacrificial death on the cross.

Year 7 of the Programme has three lessons devoted to the Nativity, A7-T1L12-14 - Waiting in Joyful Hope. There is a good account of the Nativity in the Pupil's Book, which is repeated in the Teacher's Book. A number of important items are introduced for the first time in the Programme. There is mention that the people of Israel were waiting 'for God to send a Saviour, a Messiah, who would be their path to the Tree of Life and to God'. This is very good. It would be helpful however, to present a full Christian understanding of the nature of the salvation won by Jesus, which is insufficiently described as a 'path to the Tree of Life'.

There is also a reference to prophecies of Isaiah<sup>189</sup>, indicating that one of David's family will one day be king, who is our Saviour, Jesus Christ. This is very good.

Year 8 of the Program addresses the Nativity through a drama which is spread over four weeks' lessons, A8-T1L13-16 - Nativity Play. The drama seeks to set the Nativity in context, starting from Creation and going through the history of the Chosen People right up to the Nativity itself. This approach is excellent in principle, and goes some way towards setting the Nativity in the wider sweep of history, but the account might be greatly strengthened by inclusion of some additional key elements, and also by simplification and clarification,

---

<sup>189</sup> Cf. Isaiah 7:13-14; 9:5-7; 11:1-2.

because the drama is unduly complex.

The account of creation (which is a repeat from lesson A6-T1L2 - In Relation to God's Creation) is faithful to Scripture in relation to creation of the material world and creatures other than human beings. It then gives the impression that human beings were created only as an afterthought by God, rather than as the centre of God's creation. The Fall is also omitted, which undermines the mystery of Christ and of salvation<sup>190</sup>. Attention is given to the theme of covenant, which is excellent in principle, but the full nature of covenant is not brought out, in particular in relation to the history of salvation. There is a reference to 'the history of our salvation', but it might be helpful to have included an explanation or development of what salvation means.

The value of this drama is also diminished by the complexity of its structure, and the numerous characters who come and go, which are likely to cause confusion rather than clarification of the context of the Nativity. For example, it is likely to be confusing to the pupils when the story mixes characters from the New Testament, Old Testament, and three Irish women saints who bring gifts of bread and wine to the baby Jesus while repeating prayers from the Offertory of the Mass.

### The Childhood of Jesus

The event of the Flight into Egypt and the deaths of the Holy Innocents is not covered. It might have been good to cover this event, because it is both important and interesting to engage the attention of the pupils. Might the omission be motivated by a concern not to upset the pupils by the shocking event of the murder of little ones? This might be valid for the

---

<sup>190</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 389.

younger pupils in primary school, but would hardly apply to those in the later classes.

The lesson A3-T1L8: Jesus - Journey Man, addresses the finding of the boy Jesus in the Temple at Jerusalem. There is a story and poem (repeated in lesson A3-T3L1, Mary's Joy, which deals with the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary), which cover most of the events of the finding of the boy Jesus in the Temple, adapted from Luke 2:41-50. While the lesson will introduce the pupils to this dramatic event of Jesus being lost in Jerusalem and then being found again by his parents, there are some ways where the lesson might be strengthened. The context of the lesson focuses on journeys, which may deflect attention away from the central event.

The stories have several imagined additions, but it might have been more helpful to include aspects from the Gospel which are not covered: the dramatic event of Joseph and Mary leaving for home thinking Jesus was with the caravan, discovering him missing and then returning to Jerusalem and only finding Jesus three days later; that on return to Nazareth Jesus lived under the authority of his parents; that Mary stored up all these things in her heart; that Jesus increased in wisdom, in stature, and in favour with God and men. The imagined additions also present Joseph as strict and ill-tempered, whereas the Gospel says that the mild words of chiding were spoken by Mary.

### The Baptism of Jesus

There are two lessons in Alive-O 5 that deal with the Baptism of Jesus:

A5-T1L3 - Where Are We Now?

A5-T1L10 - John the Baptist Wonders -- Who Is the One Who Is Coming?

The lessons give brief accounts of John the Baptist, the cousin of Jesus, preaching in the wilderness, calling people to mend their ways, to prepare for the One who was to come, and be baptised. The accounts cover Jesus coming to John for baptism and being baptised. After Jesus' baptism, a voice from heaven says, 'This is my beloved son with whom I am so pleased'.

The lesson accounts are good in that they cover some of the basic information about John preaching in the wilderness, his baptising of people and Jesus' baptism. It could have been helpful to recount the extraordinary events surrounding the birth of John, to bring out the very special nature of John's identity and mission, his unique position as the last of the prophets of the Old Testament, and that his baptism was for the repentance of sins. Also, it would have been helpful to bring out Jesus' mission as divine Saviour from sin, rather than simply the one who would teach and show people how much God loves them. It would also have been helpful to bring out that John predicted that Jesus would bring a baptism of a very different nature to the baptism that he was administering, that he was baptising only with water, while Jesus would baptise with the Holy Spirit and fire.

It would also have been helpful to follow through with the significant event of Jesus' temptation in the desert, which is recounted in all the Synoptic gospels. Might the omission of the Gospel account of Jesus temptation by Satan in the desert be linked with the omission from the Programme of teaching on the fallen angels, and on temptation?

There is one lesson in Year 8 which addresses the baptism of Jesus: [A8-T2L1 - Fan the Flame](#). It is very helpful that this lesson highlights the importance of the baptism of Jesus because it appears in all four Gospels. However, there appears to be potential for confusion and misunderstanding in the way that the lesson refers to 'Jesus' Birth and Rebirth'. The

lesson material could imply that Jesus was born in Bethlehem and then was reborn when he was baptised by John in the Jordan in the same way that human beings become children of God at their baptism. The lesson material could give the impression that there is no difference between the baptism of Jesus by John and Christian baptism. The Church teaches that there certainly is a connection between the baptism of Jesus by John and Christian baptism, but they are far from being identical. Might there be potential for misunderstanding Jesus as just a human being by referring to his 'rebirth', a term not applied to Jesus by Scripture nor by the CCC?

In accepting the baptism by John, Jesus allowed himself to be numbered among sinners, already anticipating the 'baptism' of his bloody death. It was Jesus who, through his sacrifice, would be the source of the Spirit for all mankind <sup>191</sup>. It was through his passion and death that Christ opened to all men the fountain of Baptism, and it became possible to be born of water and the Spirit in order to enter the Kingdom of God <sup>192</sup>. The text in this lesson might helpfully include the dimension of the sacrifice of Jesus as the source of our redemption, and the saving grace of Baptism, otherwise the impression could be given that there was no essential difference between Jesus' baptism by John and Christian baptism.

### *JESUS' MISSION AND MINISTRY*

A1-T1L13 - Simeon and Anna Wait. This lesson covers the story of Simeon and Anna meeting the infant Jesus and his parents at the Presentation in the Temple. The story says that Simeon and Anna were waiting, but it does not say what they were waiting for. When the

---

<sup>191</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 535-536, 565, 1224.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.* 537, 1225.



infant Jesus appears he is described as 'a very special baby'.

A1-T1L14 - Mary and Joseph Wait. This lesson focuses on Joseph and Mary journeying to Bethlehem for the birth of Jesus. The text says that 'God sent Jesus to show us how much God loves us'.

A1-T1L15 - Jesus is Born. This lesson describes the birth of Jesus, and says that 'he came to earth to show us how much God loves us and cares for us'.

A2-T1L14 - Preparing for the Birth of Jesus. This lesson covers various aspects of the preparation in Bethlehem for the birth of Jesus. It says that 'God sent Jesus to show us how much God loves us'.

A3-T1L7 - In Jesus' Time. The information for teachers alone prior to the lesson material in the Teacher's Book, says that, 'Jesus shows us who God is and what God is like: loving, compassionate, embracing, forgiving, accepting'.

A3-T1L11 - Jesus – Diviner. This lesson is based on the story of Jesus meeting with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:5-42). In the Gospel account Jesus offers the woman living water, which is a symbol for the grace of eternal life, and he goes on to reveal that he is the Messiah. The lesson does not really bring out this meaning from the story, but conveys instead an understanding of Jesus finding hidden capacity for love in the woman and drawing it out; this is the explanation for describing Jesus in the lesson title as 'diviner', meaning a water-diviner; the title is somewhat unfortunate, because 'diviner' normally means somebody who foretells the future by dubious means, including the occult. There is little doubt that Jesus did indeed have the capacity to see the good in people, their capacity for love, and that he had the ability to draw this out and encourage it. However, the main meaning of the

Scripture passage in this particular case is something different and important, and it would have been helpful if the Programme could bring out this very important dimension of Jesus' mission.

A4-T1L7: Jesus - The One Who Calls. This lesson covers the call by Jesus of the first apostles, Peter and Andrew, adapted from Mt.4:18-22. It is good that the Programme includes this important event, which appears in all three Synoptic Gospels. It might have been helpful to base the story on the more complete and dramatic version in Luke5:1-11, which includes the miraculous draught of fishes, and the call of James and John as well. Also, it might have been better to use the normal translation, that of 'catching' fish and 'catching' people, rather than the term 'gather', which is a less dynamic, less proactive analogy for evangelisation. There might be scope for the Programme to bring out better how Jesus used the time of his public ministry to teach his closest followers, especially the Apostles, in the way that apprentices learn from and are formed by a master. <sup>193</sup>

A4-T1L9 - Jesus - Saying and Doing. The information for teachers at the start of the lesson says that Jesus was 'deeply aware of God in himself, in others and in the world around him'. It would be helpful to clarify that the presence of God in Jesus was quite different to the presence of God in other people and in the world. The information also says that 'Jesus, in calling people forth to a new way of being-in-the-world, offered nourishment in who he was - in his actions, his words, his stories, his friendship, his love'.

The information goes on to state that Jesus said 'no one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends (John 15:13) as he gave his life for love of humankind'. It would be

---

<sup>193</sup> This dimension of Jesus' teaching is well developed – analysed as 'legitimate peripheral participation' – by David M Csinos in "'Come, follow me": Apprenticeship in Jesus' approach to Education'. *Religious Education – The Journal of the Religious Education Association*, 2010, 45-62.

helpful to clarify that Jesus in laying down his life redeemed the human race from the sin of Adam, because millions of people have laid down their lives for others in a multitude of ways, but only Jesus, who was truly God and truly man, brought about the redemption of the human race through his passion and death on the Cross.

A4-T1L14 - Jesus - A Light For All. This lesson addresses the Nativity. Jesus is described as a 'very special child' whose name would be Immanu-El, which means 'God is with us'. In the text Mary says, 'Right here and now, in the birth of my son, God is with us. In light and darkness, in sorrow and joy, in peace and trouble, in every moment everywhere, God is with us'. There could be scope for clarification of this text, because it could be understood that Jesus is truly God, or it could be understood that Jesus in some undefined way is a sign that God is always with us anyway in all situations and circumstances. In either case, the text conveys that the mission of Jesus is to be the presence of God in the world.

A4-T2L1 - Returning - A New Beginning. This lesson addresses the Magi returning to their homes after the Nativity. The text says that the wise men were searching for a new leader, and that Jesus became that leader, who 'showed people how much God loves them. He shared his life and love with those around him'. This would indicate that the mission of Jesus was to show by the example of his life that God loved all peoples.

A5-T1L3 - Where Are We Now?. This lesson addresses the Baptism of Jesus. The text says that, 'God had promised to send someone - a Messiah they called him - who would lead them and teach them about God's great love for them'. And again that Jesus 'knew the time had come when he must begin his work of preaching and teaching and healing and showing the people how much God loves them'. These texts indicate that the mission of Jesus was one of teaching and example to show people the love of God.

A5-T1L9 - Mary Wonders -- Who Is the One Who Is Coming? The text states that, 'During Advent we look forward: we know that Jesus will come in glory'. 'We look forward to his return in glory'. 'Jesus will come again one day to change the world for ever'. These quotations are all indicative that the mission of Jesus includes his coming again in glory at some time which will have a beneficial change for the world. It could be helpful to develop a deeper and fuller understanding of Jesus' Second Coming: the end of the world, the general Resurrection, the Last Judgment with Jesus as infinitely merciful and just judge, the new heavens and the new earth, the fulfilment of salvation history.

A5-T1L11 - Joseph Wonders -- Who Is the One Who Is Coming? A6-T1L12 - Come to the Manger. These two lessons have the same Question and Answer in the Pupils' Book as follows: Q. Who is Jesus Christ? A. Jesus Christ is the only Son of God who became man to save us. He is truly God and truly man.

This very good question and answer is a clear statement of the divinity of Jesus in addition to his true humanity. It is also a clear statement of his mission of salvation as the reason for why he became man, the reason for the Incarnation. It could be helpful to develop the answer further to show what Jesus saved us from, that is, to reverse the original sin of Adam and Eve, and that it was through his sacrificial death on the Cross that our salvation was won. It might also be helpful to provide material in the Pupil's and Teacher's Books which would explain and develop the meaning of this answer.

A6-T2L6 - Lent. In relation to the time that Jesus spent in the wilderness after his Baptism by John the text says, 'It was a time of preparation and a time of focus. He emerged with a resolve to do the work his Father had sent him to do'. This text does not give much information about Jesus' mission, except that it was something that the Father asked him to

do. However, it could have been helpful to include in the text the temptations of Jesus in the wilderness by Satan. All three Synoptic Gospels say that Jesus was driven into the wilderness by the Spirit after his baptism in order that he might be tempted by the devil. The three temptations to which Jesus was subjected by Satan are very informative and instructive in relation to Jesus' mission, because they give a very clear indication as to what the mission was not. The inclusion of the Gospel accounts of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness could contribute much to understanding of Jesus' mission and ministry.

A7-T1L5 - Jesus and Prophecy and A7-T1L6 - The Spirit of Prophecy. These two lessons address the ministry and mission of Jesus as prophet, and relate this mission of Jesus to the prophets of the Old Testament, and the role of Christian prophets today. The foundation is the Scripture text from Luke 4:16-30, where Jesus quotes Isaiah and his Prophecy of freedom for prisoners, sight to the blind and relief for those who suffer. This is a very good choice of Scripture to illustrate the fulfilment of Prophecy. The text also presents the story of the healing of the woman who was bent over, and the restoring of sight to the blind beggar Bartimaeus.

The lesson text explains that Prophecy involves the prophet seeing the needs of others, and responding to those needs with love and care and help in various ways. 'Jesus sought out the marginalised, the outcast, the outcast, the lost sheep of the house of Israel'. 'Jesus saw that some of God's people were very poor and some were outcast because they were lepers. Jesus healed people'.

The text also emphasises that Jesus is an example for Christians today in acting in this way. 'We are challenged to listen to the Word of God in Jesus and to follow his example through the power of the Spirit'. 'In today's world, we believe that God still calls us, the followers of

Jesus Christ, to be prophets. God calls us to look at our world, to see where there is injustice, to see where God's children are enslaved, to see where people need God's favour. God calls each one of us to bring God's favour to those in need'. The examples given in the text of those who act in a prophetic way - Sister Veronica of Aislinn, Bono, and Gandhi - reinforce the message that prophecy equates with love and care for other people in a humanitarian way.

While it is good to emphasise the dimension of care and love for other people, there could also be scope for bringing out the dimension of Prophecy as listening to and speaking out God's Word, recognising the spiritual dimension, in addition to humanitarian action. There is also scope to bring out that Jesus' role as prophet is completely fulfilled in his mission as divine Saviour from sin; the text does mention 'salvation', but tends towards identification of salvation with healings and miracles.

The text also tends to identification in essence of the role of prophets in the Old Testament, Jesus' role as prophet, and the action of Christians today in a prophetic way. There appears to be scope to bring out the essential difference between the three modes of Prophecy, in addition to the similarity.

A7-T1L7 - Mary and the Mysteries of Light. This lesson presents the five new mysteries of the Rosary that were added by Pope John Paul II. The text says that Jesus 'announced the good news of God's love. He called people to change their ways, to turn back to God, to be forgiven'. This tends to emphasise the dimension of Jesus mission as preaching about the love of God, and the need for repentance.

A7-T1L12-14 - Waiting in Joyful Hope. This set of lessons address Advent and the Nativity.

There is a good introduction to Jesus as Saviour: 'The people of Israel waited for many generations for God to send a Saviour who would be their path to the Tree of Life and to

God'. 'During Advent we remember that waiting in joyful hope, and we look forward to Jesus' coming anew in our lives, as our leader, as a light for the world waiting in darkness, and as our Saviour'.

It might be helpful if the text developed the meaning of Jesus being our Saviour, in the context of our redemption from sin through his sacrifice on the Cross. The expression 'path back to the Tree of Life' may not be adequately expressive of the meaning of salvation.

A7-T2L6 – Lent. This lesson includes an account of Jesus going into the wilderness after his Baptism by John, and contains information concerning Jesus' mission. Jesus 'wanted to show people God's great love for them. He wanted to teach them about God's Kingdom by describing it in parable and story. He would bring about God's Kingdom by feeding those who are hungry, healing those who were unwell, freeing those who were imprisoned and by bringing God's forgiveness to those who had sinned'. The emphasis here is very much on Jesus' mission being one of teaching and caring for people; the reference to bringing God's forgiveness to those who had sinned might infer that his mission was one of salvation from sin, but this could be expressed more clearly and explicitly. The opportunity might also be taken to express that Jesus is Son of the Father, and he wanted to bring his Father's Kingdom. The text goes on to give an account of Jesus' time in the wilderness, but which does not describe the temptations of Satan which are included in all three Synoptic gospels. Instead of the three temptations the text says that three things became clear to Jesus: that hungry people needed more than bread, but needed every word that came from the mouth of God; that he could trust in God's love; that his life would be spent in the service of God. It could have been helpful for the text to give the temptations of Satan, because they can help explain the meaning of Jesus' mission, by clarifying three very important things that it was not.

A8-T1L3 - In Relation to the Word. In relation to the Bible this lesson states the mission of Jesus, as follows: 'God wanted to give people the very best example of what the word love means, so God sent Jesus, to be that example. ....In the life, death and resurrection of Jesus we see many illustrations of the meaning of the words love, forgiveness, compassion, justice, prayer, friendship, joy, peace, suffering and so on'. The emphasis here is entirely on the mission of Jesus being to give a good example of the love of God. It could have been helpful to balance this better, indicating that giving a good example was one dimension of the mission of Jesus, but the most important dimension was salvation of the human race from sin.

A8-T1L9 - Conversations and Stories. This lesson includes an account of Jesus' meeting with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:5-42), which had earlier been addressed in the lesson A3-T1L11 - Jesus – Diviner. This account in Year 8 contains two important elements which had not been included in the earlier lesson. These elements are that Jesus offered to give the woman living water, and that he revealed himself as the Messiah, which are both important dimensions of Jesus' mission and ministry. While it is good that these two elements have been included, it could have been helpful in the lesson material to draw out their meaning for the pupils.

A8-T2L1 - Fan the Flame. This lesson addresses the nature of Jesus' mission and also the nature of the mission of the followers of Jesus. The text says that, 'Jesus showed (his followers) God's great love for all. In the way he treated people - feeding, teaching, healing, forgiving their sins, talking to them and telling them stories of the Kingdom of God - Jesus gave witness to God's love. .... He sent them out to be witnesses in their lives to the commandment: Love God and love your neighbour as yourself'. The primary emphasis here is that the essential nature of Jesus' mission was one of giving a good example of the love of



God, so that his followers could continue showing the love of God in their lives in imitation of Jesus' example. One might imply that the mention of Jesus forgiving sins does contain his mission of salvation from sin, but the mission of salvation does not appear to be clear enough that the pupils would understand it as the principal mission of Jesus. There appears scope to develop the text so that giving good example is not seen as the sole mission of Jesus.

In relation to Jesus' mission the Church puts the primary emphasis on his becoming man in order to save us from sin<sup>194</sup>. 'The Word became flesh for us in order to save us by reconciling us with God',<sup>195</sup>. 'The desire to embrace his Father's plan of redeeming love inspired Jesus' whole life, for his redemptive passion was the very reason for his Incarnation'<sup>196</sup>. Integral to Jesus' mission was his showing of the love of God for us, which is demonstrated by his coming to us to give his life for us in order to save us from sin. 'The Word became flesh so that we might know God's love: In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him'<sup>197</sup>.

Acting as an example of holiness for us was also an important part of Jesus' mission. 'The Word became flesh to be our model of holiness'<sup>198</sup>. 'He called his disciples to take up their cross and follow him, for Christ also suffered for us leaving us an example so that we should follow in his steps'<sup>199</sup>.

The analysis above of the Programme's treatment of the mission of Jesus would indicate that the dimension of his mission which involves acting as a model, example and teacher of how

---

<sup>194</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 599-622.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.* 457.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.* 607.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.* 458.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.* 459.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.* 618.

Christians should live their lives gets primary emphasis. There appears to be scope to give much greater emphasis to Jesus' primary mission of redemption, and also to develop fully what this mission of redemption means<sup>200</sup>.

### The Paschal Mystery

There are several lessons which address the Paschal Mystery, the events and their significance from Palm Sunday through the Last Supper on Holy Thursday, the Passion and Death of Jesus on Good Friday, the Resurrection on Easter Sunday, Jesus' post-resurrection appearances, and finally his Ascension to heaven.

The events of Palm Sunday are covered in three lessons: A6-T2L9 - Jesus' Never-Ending Love (Holy Week), A7-T2L12 - Holy Week, and A8-T2L8 - Holy Week. The account of Palm Sunday is well covered in these lessons, and there is an excellent illustration in Pupils Book 6. Lesson A8-T2L8 is in the format of an account by a Roman centurion of the events of Holy Week. This format is reasonable in principle, but there could be confusion in the name, 'Longinus', given to the centurion. In Christian tradition, Longinus was the Roman soldier who thrust the spear into the side of Jesus, and not the centurion who supervised the crucifixion<sup>201</sup>.

The Last Supper on Holy Thursday is briefly addressed in several lessons: A3-T2L9 - Time For Joy, A5-T2L10 - Holy Week, A6-T2L9 - Jesus' Never-Ending Love (Holy Week), and A7-T2L12 - Holy Week (which adds the washing of the feet by Jesus). The lessons cover the

---

<sup>200</sup> The treatment of redemption from sin through Christ's death has already been noted above in Section 2.1 as a limitation in post-Vatican II Catholic catechesis. A specific example of this limitation can be seen in Ed Gordon, 'The Divine Pedagogy', *RTJ: The Magazine for Catechist Formation*, April/May 2007, 14-15. New London, CT: Twenty-Third Publications.

<sup>201</sup> One of the four giant statues that surround the High Altar in St Peter's Basilica, is that of St Longinus. He is depicted as a Roman soldier holding a lance.

basic events of the Last Supper, but there is some scope for clarification and development of the meaning. It could be better clarified that those at the meal with Jesus were the Twelve Apostles, which is highly significant from many points of view; one of the lessons refers to 'apostles', but the others refer to 'friends and followers' or 'disciples'.

Other aspects of the Last Supper which could helpfully have been brought out are: the connection between the Last Supper and the first Passover meal which liberated the Chosen People from slavery in Egypt; the connection with Jesus' redemptive sacrifice on the cross<sup>202</sup>; the connection with the institution of the Eucharist, and the sacrament of Holy Orders.

The *Passion and Death* of Jesus is addressed in the following lessons: A2-T2L10 – Easter, A3-T2L9 - Time For Joy, A4-T2L9 - The Passion and Death of Jesus, A5-T2L10 - Holy Week, A6-T2L9 - Jesus' Never-Ending Love (Holy Week), A7-T2L12 - Holy Week, and A8-T2L8 - Holy Week.

These lessons give reasonable coverage of most of the events of the Passion and Death of Jesus: his prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, his capture and arrest, the trial before Pontius Pilate, the scourging and condemnation to death, the carrying of the cross with help given by Simon of Cyrene, his crucifixion between two thieves on Calvary, and finally his death and burial.

There are some aspects which might be strengthened. While it is good to say that Jesus prayed for strength and courage in the garden of Gethsemane, it would also be good to bring out the dimension of the agony that he suffered and that his chosen apostles could not stay awake to pray with him.

---

<sup>202</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 610.

It also would be good to bring out the role played by the Jewish leaders. The Scriptures say that those who arrested Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane were sent by the chief priests and the Pharisees, whereas the lessons state that Jesus was arrested by Roman soldiers or by a crowd. The Scriptures (Mt.26:57-68; Mk.14:53-65; Lk.22:54-55, 66-71; Jn.18:12-24) tell that Jesus was brought first to the high priests for interrogation and later put on trial before the complete Sanhedrin, which judged him worthy of death on a charge of blasphemy, claiming that he was God; the Jewish leaders then decided to bring Jesus to Pontius Pilate because they wished him to be put to death, and only the Romans had authority to order a death sentence. In lesson A7-T2L12 the trial before the chief priests is covered in a prayer time, but all the other accounts omit this key role played by the chief priests and Sanhedrin, and say that Jesus was brought straight to Pontius Pilate after his arrest. The Scriptures say that the Jewish leaders incited the people to call for Jesus to be crucified, but the lessons only say that it was the crowd who called for Jesus death and do not mention any role played by the Jewish leaders. The Scriptures say that when Jesus was on the cross he was mocked by the crowd and by the chief priests, scribes and elders of the people; the lessons mention the crowd mocking Jesus but omit any mocking by the Jewish leaders.

The purpose of Jesus' death on the cross is another aspect that could be strengthened. The lessons state that, 'Jesus died rather than stop loving God and his friends'; that 'Jesus died on the cross to show his love for God the Father and for us'; that 'Jesus gave himself completely to his Father'; that it 'cost Jesus everything to show us God's love'. Lesson A5-T2L10 includes the Stations of the Cross with the traditional response, 'Because, by your holy cross you have redeemed (saved) the world', which is good, but much more could be done throughout the lessons to develop the purpose of Jesus' redemptive death on the cross.

The Resurrection of Jesus is appropriately addressed in every year of the Programme. The lessons bring out well the reality and joy of the Resurrection and cover the main events of the Resurrection and post-Resurrection appearances of Jesus. The Resurrection is addressed in the following lessons: A1-T2L10 – Easter, A2-T2L10 – Easter, A3-T2L9 - Time For Joy, A4-T2L10 - The Resurrection, A5-T3L1 - We are an Easter people, A5-T3L3 – Celebrating the Risen Jesus at Mass (2), A5-T3L4 - Follow me, A6-T3L1 - The Risen Jesus, A7-T3L1 – Easter, A8-T3L1 - Easter.

The lessons cover the main events of the Resurrection: the posting of a guard at the tomb; the actual Resurrection itself; the bribing of the guards and their story that the disciples had stolen away the body of Jesus; the arrival of the women at the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus, their finding of the empty tomb and the message given to them by the angel; the appearance of Jesus to Mary Magdalene; Peter's visit to the tomb.

The lessons also cover post-Resurrection appearances of Jesus: the two disciples on the road to Emmaus; the appearance to Thomas; the appearance to Peter and other disciples on the shore of the Lake of Galilee.

The discovery of the empty tomb by Mary Magdalene and the other women receives considerable attention, appearing in seven of the eight years of the Programme. This is not unreasonable, but by comparison the discovery of the empty tomb by Peter and John could be given much greater attention. The discovery of the empty tomb by Peter receives only a very brief mention (A5-T3L1), in which John is not mentioned at all. The witness of the empty tomb by Peter, the one whom Jesus appointed as head of the apostolic band, and by the beloved disciple John, who authored much of the New Testament (a Gospel, three letters, and the Book of Revelation) is extremely significant and warrants much greater attention.

It is good to give attention to the appearance of Jesus to Mary Magdalene, but the account in lesson A6-T3L1 contains imagined additions which could give the impression of a personal emotional relationship between Jesus and Mary (building on the linking together of Jesus and Mary Magdalene in the accounts of the Marriage Feast at Cana<sup>203</sup> – also an imagined addition, because Scripture does not mention the presence of Mary Magdalene at this marriage feast<sup>204</sup>). An account which stayed closer to the Scripture original would be preferable.

There is a good account of the meeting of Jesus with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus in lesson A7-T3L1 which is faithful to the Scripture original. The account in the earlier lesson A5-T3L3 is less satisfactory, and omits key elements from Scripture dealing with the prophecies of the Messiah which have been fulfilled in Jesus. Some connection is made with the Mass, but this might be strengthened by connecting the Liturgy of the Word with Jesus opening up the Scriptures for the disciples on the road, and the Liturgy of the Eucharist with Jesus' breaking of bread when they reach the house.

It is good to cover the appearance of Jesus to Peter and other disciples on the shore of the Lake of Galilee. However, Jesus' conversation with Peter is reduced only to his saying to Peter, 'Follow me'. The full conversation as recorded in John 21:15-19 is very significant in relation to Peter's leadership of the apostolic band and of the Church. It appears that much more could be made of this conversation, which would enlighten the pupils' understanding of Peter as head of the Church, and provide an opportunity to explain that the Pope is the successor of St Peter and continues the ministry that Jesus established in leading the Church.

It is good that the lessons affirm that Jesus was raised from the dead by the power of God.

---

<sup>203</sup> Lessons A6-T1L5: Mary and A7-T1L7: Mary and the Mysteries of Light.

<sup>204</sup> John 2:1-11.

'On Easter Sunday God Our Father raised Jesus to new life'. 'God the Father raised Jesus from death to life in a glorious body'. While these statements are reasonable, it would also be good to convey clearly that Jesus was not raised passively from the dead by the power of God in the way a human being might be raised, such as Lazarus or the daughter of Jairus. It would be important to make it clear that Jesus was raised in the power of the Blessed Trinity<sup>205</sup>, so that he was raised from the dead in his own power as he was truly God<sup>206</sup>.

The account of the Resurrection in Lesson A8-T3L1 is very good in that it covers the posting of a guard on the tomb, the actual Resurrection event itself, the guards reporting of this event but succumbing to bribery in order to spread the false story that the disciples of Jesus came and stole away the body. It would be better, however, not to give the name Longinus to the centurion, as noted above, because Christian tradition names Longinus as the soldier who pierced the side of Christ with a lance. Also, it would not happen as stated in the text that a group of centurions would be posted on guard of the tomb, because such a task would be given to soldiers/guards of the lowest rank, not to senior officers of centurion rank. The Scriptural account does not make clear whether the guards were Roman soldiers or Jewish Temple guards; this author considers that probability favours Levite Temple guards, rather than Roman soldiers.

The Ascension of Jesus is addressed in lesson A5-T3L5 - Love and Serve the Lord. The lesson has a brief account of the Ascension, in which Jesus tells his friends that he is going back to the Father, and that he would send special help to them, after which he blessed them and was carried up into heaven. The colourful illustration shows twelve men looking

---

<sup>205</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 648-649. 'In it (Christ's Resurrection) the three divine persons act together as one, and manifest their own proper characteristics'. ... 'As for the Son, he effects his own Resurrection by virtue of his own power'.

<sup>206</sup> 'I lay down my life, that I may take it up again. .... I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again'. John 10:17-18.

upwards. While reasonable in itself, the lesson might have brought out more dimensions of the Ascension that are contained in Scripture.

It might be made explicit that Jesus promised the Holy Spirit; the lesson context suggests that the 'special help' that Jesus promised was to help the disciples use their talents. It might also have been helpful to include the key elements of the 'Great Commission' as given in Matthew 28:19-20 and Mark 16:15-18. Also to include that the apostles worshipped Jesus, who was ascending to the right hand of the Father - signs of Jesus' divinity. The account could also be made more complete and dramatic by including the witness of the angels.

The illustration is colourful and attractive, and captures the joy and wonder of the apostles. It might have been enhanced by including Jesus ascending to heaven, and made more accurate by showing eleven men rather than twelve, because Matthias had not yet been selected to replace Judas.

### *JESUS' HEALINGS AND MIRACLES*

The lesson A3-T1L10: Jesus - Sharer of Bread includes the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand. This is a very good choice to help the pupils understand the Eucharist, and also Jesus' command over nature, which is an indication of his divinity. The brief account of the miracle in the lesson covers many of the essentials of this great event.

The account of this miracle might be strengthened in a number of ways: It could be helpful to describe it as a miracle. The story centres on the boy who had the five barley loaves and two fish (who appears in the Gospel of John, but not in the three Synoptic gospels). The focus on the boy might take attention away from the central character of the story who is Jesus; also



the story says the boy was there to sell his bread and fish, and gives the impression that Jesus peremptorily took them away from him without asking and without paying. It might also have been helpful to draw out the significance of this miracle as a sign of Jesus' power (John6:14), and a foreshadowing of the Eucharist. The main focus in this lesson is on the fictional story of the wicked fairy and her magic bread, which might distract attention from the real meaning of the Eucharist and give the impression that Jesus' miracle was all a matter of magic.

The story of the feeding of the five thousand, 'Micah's Story', is repeated in lesson A4-T1L8: Jesus - Teaching and Nourishing. The only addition to the earlier lesson is to draw a parallel between the bread that fed the five thousand and 'nourishment' of Jesus' teaching. This analogy is not invalid by any means, but it would be helpful to draw out the principal analogy which is that of the Eucharist.

A4-T1L11: Jesus – Healing. This lesson tells of the healing from a fever of Peter's mother-in-law. This is a good example of Jesus' healings and is simply and well presented in the Pupil's Book. The event is much expanded in the Teacher's Book with fictional additions, but it might have been more helpful to bring out the significance and meaning of Jesus' healings and miracles.

A4-T2L3: Jairus' Daughter. This lesson addresses the raising to life by Jesus of the daughter of Jairus. It is a very good choice to illustrate Jesus' compassion and his divine power over life and death. While the choice of event is good, there would appear to be much scope for strengthening the presentation. The lesson's presentation of the event contains a substantial amount of imagined material, which may serve to distract from, rather than enhance, the central meaning. The impression is given that the girl did not die, and may not have even

been seriously physically ill, but only down in spirits. (The story of Jairus' daughter is repeated in lesson A4-T2L8). The story does not say that Jesus raised her from the dead, or that he performed a miracle.

The additional fictional material diverts attention from the focus that the Gospel accounts put on Jairus. The Programme accounts do not mention that Jairus was an official of the synagogue, unlike the Gospels which give prominence to this fact. The Programme accounts simply say that Jairus asked Jesus to come, whereas the Gospel accounts say that he fell at Jesus' feet and pleaded with him. Do the Gospels focus on Jairus because as a synagogue official he risked his reputation and position by going to plead with Jesus, which required great courage and humility on his part? Might Scripture also be drawing a contrast between Jairus, whose righteous humility restored life to his beloved twelve year-old daughter, and Jephtha the Judge (Judges 11:29-40), whose unrighteous vow brought death to his beloved only child, a daughter about the same age as Jairus' daughter?

A5-T1L5: Story (1) – The Centurion's Servant. This lesson addresses the healing of the Centurion's servant as told in Matthew 8:5-13. It is a good choice to illustrate how Jesus heals many people, and there is a particular lesson in this incident concerning faith. The story is told in the Pupil's Book, which is reinforced by a drama, which is very good in principle.

There are some elements where the presentation might be strengthened. In the gospel the Centurion says, "For I am under authority myself, and have soldiers under me". The Programme's lesson renders this as, "For I know what it's like to be in charge", which may seem little different, but is not insignificant. The Centurion recognized that he only had authority because he was under authority; he was not commanding soldiers because of his own personal authority but because he carried with him the authority of the entire Roman

Empire, the authority of the Emperor himself. The Centurion recognized that Jesus was not acting in his own power simply as a man, but must be acting in the name of God and with the full power of God. This was the tremendous faith that the Centurion had, which Jesus praised so highly, more than the thousands of people came to Jesus trusting that he could heal them. It would be helpful to bring out this character of the Centurion's faith.

The structure of the drama involves a fictitious television programme. This approach to present Bible stories can work well, but requires great skill because of its complexity, and is best suited to extensive events (e.g. the Exodus, the Invasion of the Promised Land). Discrete events, such as the healing of the Centurion's servant, are more effectively acted out directly. Also the drama lacks immediacy because the central character, Jesus, does not appear.

A5-T1L8: Story (2) - The Sea of Galilee. This lesson covers the calming of the storm on the Sea of Galilee by Jesus, as recounted in Mark 4:35-41. Again, it is a very good choice of event to illustrate the power of Jesus to work miracles. There is a good brief account in the Pupil's Book, based on the Gospel account.

The use of a drama to reinforce the story is very good in principle, but again the format chosen, that of a television studio production, is probably too complex, and a simple acting out of the drama would be more effective. It should also be more effective to include Jesus in the drama, because he is after all the central figure. The significance of Jesus' power in controlling nature and calming the storm, which is a sign of his divinity, could also be brought out more effectively.

A5-T2L9 – Story (3): Cure of Paralysed Man. This lesson covers the cure of the man who was paralysed, based on Mark 2:1-12. Again it is an excellent choice of event to illustrate the power of Jesus over nature, and also the power of Jesus to forgive sins, both of which are

signs of his divinity. The Pupil's Book has a brief but reasonable account of the miracle, though some key points are omitted. Again, the account of the healing of the paralytic is reinforced with a drama, which is good in principle.

The lesson might be strengthened by referring to this great event as a 'miracle' and bringing out more clearly that Jesus' ability to forgive sins and to bring about this extraordinary healing were signs of his divine authority and mission. The illustration to accompany the lesson is colourful and eye-catching, but it might usefully have shown a scene from the actual miracle itself, which is very dramatic, rather than a fictional Conga-type dance. The format for the drama is again that of a television studio programme, a complex formula which does not include the main event: Jesus healing the paralytic and telling him his sins are forgiven. A straight acting out of this dramatic event would be more effective.

A7-T1L5 - Jesus and Prophecy. This lesson includes the healing or deliverance by Jesus of the woman who was bent over, as given in Luke 13:10-17. The Scripture account is given in full in the Teacher's Book, which is very good. The development of the healing is given in a poem and prayer time, which are mostly imagined additions; it might have been more helpful to explain the significance of this miracle and also the conflict with the leaders of the synagogue over the Sabbath.

It might also be helpful to include one of the exorcisms that Jesus performed. Some of these are very dramatic and would capture the interest and attention of the pupils. It would also serve to clarify the existence of evil spirits and Jesus' power over them.

The Teacher's Book also has the Gospel account of the healing of the blind man Bartimaeus, in Mark 10:46-52. This is another very good choice of a healing of Jesus. It might have been

helpful to include it is also in the Pupil's Book, along with some development of the meaning, especially the part played by the faith of the blind man.

A6-T1L5: Mary, and A7-T1L7: Mary and the Mysteries of Light. These two lessons address the changing of water into wine by Jesus at the wedding feast of Cana; this miracle is a particularly good choice, because it was Jesus' first miracle, it marked the beginning of his public ministry, and it had much significance, including for the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Marriage.

The two Pupil's Books have a story-poem, based on John 2:1-11, which covers the main events of the wedding feast and miracle, but which might be strengthened in some respects. The story-poem includes a lot of imagined additions which might distract from, rather than enhance, the meaning of this event. It could have been helpful to include verse 11, which says that this was Jesus' first miracle, through which he let his glory be seen, and his disciples believed in him. One aspect of the story-poem which seems potentially misleading, is that Jesus' name is linked with that of Mary Magdalene; apart from the absence of scriptural evidence that Mary Magdalene was present at the wedding feast of Cana, might the pupils conclude that Jesus and Mary were close, like a couple?

It is good that Teacher's Book 7 includes the scriptural account in full, but there are several aspects of this miracle which might helpfully have been brought out: the prefiguring of the Eucharist, Mary as intercessor, the sign of Jesus' blessing on marriage which raises it to the dignity of a Sacrament.

## *JESUS' TEACHINGS*

### *Jesus' Parables:*

Parables are an important part of Jesus' teaching. Parables are metaphors, many in the form of stories, which catch the imagination, engage the interest and easily remain in the memory. At the same time Jesus used the parables to teach profound truths. All people respond well to Jesus' parables, but particularly children.

There are over thirty parables in the Gospels, and it is good that the Programme uses eleven of these parables in its lessons. Eight of these parables get individual attention: The Sower, the Lost Sheep, the Talents, The Mustard Seed, the Fig Tree, the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son, and the Banquet. Three parables are just touched in a drama combined together with other parables: the Lost Coin, the Lamp on the Lampstand, the Yeast.

Jesus' parables teach about God and his ways, and show how it is good for us to follow God's ways and live in the Kingdom of God. About half of Jesus' parables also show the unpleasant consequences that follow from rejecting God's ways and leading a sinful life. The Programme tends to avoid the parables that teach the negative consequences of sinful ways, and in the few parables selected that do so teach, this dimension of the parable is not brought out in the lessons. This approach may be motivated by a desire to be positive rather than negative; however, might it be more faithful to Jesus' teaching to reflect both dimensions in the parables selected for the lessons and their presentation?

The *Parable of the Lost Sheep* appears in seven lessons: A3-T2L5 - The Good Shepherd; A3-T2L8: I Was Lost, I Am Found; A3-T3L2: A Time To Share Stories; A4-T1L10: Jesus -

Telling Parables; A4-T2L5: The Good Shepherd; A4-T2L8: Reconciliation Rite; A6-T1L4: St Francis Cares for Creation.

The Programme uses the version of the parable from the Gospel of Luke, chapter 15, verses 3-6, with an explanation in verse 7. Chapter 15 of Luke's Gospel further illumines the meaning of the parable through two other parables - the Lost Coin (verses 8-10), and the Prodigal Son (verses 11-32) - and the introduction to the three parables (verses 1-3), which presents them as Jesus' reply to the complaints of the Pharisees and scribes about his welcoming tax collectors and sinners. The Lost Sheep Parable tells how the love of God seeks out the sinner, and how much joy is experienced when a sinner repents and receives forgiveness through God's mercy. The Parable is therefore a very suitable choice to help in teaching pupils about repentance, forgiveness and the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

The Programme generally gives the title 'The Good Shepherd' to this parable, which may seem reasonable, but which might also be confusing. The 'Parable of the Good Shepherd' is normally taken to refer to John 10:1-18, in which Jesus refers to himself as the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep.

The Programme gives great attention to the Parable of the Lost Sheep, presenting it twenty-three times in different ways over the seven lessons, which is good in principle. However, there appears scope for strengthening the presentation by likening the lost sheep to a repentant sinner, in harmony with the central meaning of the parable given in verse 7, and to making the connection with sin and repentance, the merciful forgiveness won by Jesus our Saviour on the Cross, and the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The presentations give the impression that the sheep is just accidentally 'lost' and gets found (Video 3, Segment 8 likens the Lost Sheep to Jesus lost in the Temple), rather than a sinner who repents. It might also be

helpful to revise the potentially confusing story in lesson A4-T2L5, in which the lost sheep blames the 99 ‘virtuous sheep’ for letting it get lost, whereupon the virtuous sheep repent.

It might also be helpful to bring out the dimension of heavenly rejoicing, as given in the parable’s explanatory verse 7. It is interesting that the Fathers of the Church identified the ninety-nine virtuous sheep with the angels in heaven, and the lost sheep with mankind.

The use of drama is excellent in general, and this parable is particularly amenable to such a presentation. Acting out this parable in dramatic form could have been very helpful to the pupils’ understanding. However, the drama in lesson A4-T1L10: Lost and Found, in which the Lost Sheep parable is jumbled up with four other parables (The Sower, the Lost Coin, the Lamp on a Lampstand, the Yeast), seems more likely to confuse the meaning of all five parables.

The *Parable of the Sower* appears in appears in four lessons: A3-T1L9: Jesus - Story-teller, A3-T3L2: A Time To Share Stories, A4-T1L10: Jesus - Telling Parables and A6-T1L4: St Francis Cares for Creation.

This parable is full of meaning and is a good choice to include in the Programme. It is one of the few parables for which the gospels give a full and detailed explanation. The Church gives special attention to this parable by selecting it as introduction to the *General Directory for Catechesis*, saying that, ‘The parable of the sower going out to sow is the source of inspiration for evangelisation’.<sup>207</sup>

Lesson A3-T1L9: Jesus - Story-teller, has the text of the Parable of the Sower in the Pupil’s Book straight from Matthew 13:3-8; it might have been helpful to also include the explanation of the parable which is given in Matthew 13:18-23. The illustration shows a

---

<sup>207</sup> *General Directory for Catechesis*, 15.



rather strange person, like a clown or jester; it might have been more helpful to the pupils to show a sower of Jesus' time. The lesson's material for Teachers describes parables as complex and abstract, which may discourage the teachers from attempting to explain parables to the pupils. It may have been more helpful to include the Gospel explanation given in Mt.13:18-23, and then to draw out its meaning.

Lesson A3-T3L2: A Time To Share Stories, repeats the Parable of the Sower adapted from Mt.13:4-10, but without any explanation or development of the meaning.

The Parable of the Sower appears again in lesson A4-T1L10: Jesus - Telling Parables, in a fictional drama, "Lost and Found", in which five parables (The Sower, The Lost Sheep, the Lamp, the Yeast and the Lost Coin) are jumbled up together; it is hard to see how this could do other than confuse the pupils about all five parables. Additional potential for confusion arises with this parable of the Sower: the gospel (Mt.13:3-8) explains that Jesus is the sower (by implication), the birds snatching the seed are metaphors for the devil stealing the word of the kingdom, while the rich harvest stands for those who receive the word of God. In the 'Lost and Found' drama, the sower (Jesus) invites the birds (the devils) to come eat the harvest (the new Christians). The use of drama is excellent in principle, but it would be more helpful if each parable were dramatised separately, and in a way which is faithful to the Scripture original.

Lesson A6-T1L4: St Francis Cares for Creation has a story which mixes the Parable of the Sower as told by Jesus with St Francis caring for birds; this story appears to have potential for further confusing the meaning of the Parable, especially the symbolic meaning of the birds in the parable.

Lesson A8-T3L4: Kingdom Friends takes the imagery of the Parable of the Sower and applies it to secular friendships, which could detract from the Gospel meaning of the parable.

The Parable of Ten Talents (Mt.25:14-30) is addressed in lesson A5-T3L5: Love and serve the Lord. The story of this parable covers most of what is in the Scripture, and additional lesson material reinforces the message that we should use the talents that God has given us; this is all good. There are, however, some aspects which might be changed in order to strengthen this lesson. The main subject of this lesson is the Ascension, and it would have been more helpful to present key Gospel passages that relate to the Ascension, in particular the 'Great Commission' from Matthew 28:18-20, and Mark 16:15-18. This parable might be more effectively presented in the context of a lesson on the Last Things, because it is part of the Eschatological Discourse of Matthew chapters 24 and 25.

In presenting the parable the lesson omits verses 29-30, which tell of the negative consequences of failing to follow the will of God in using our talents, and indicate how well this parable fits in with the context of the Last Things. Inclusion of the complete parable would help understand its full meaning.

The lesson's story of the parable goes on to include a paragraph which is based on Mt.25:31-37, but which modifies the wording of these verses so that they fit in with the theme of using one's talents. This is hardly desirable or necessary, because the Parable of the Ten Talents can stand on its own merits, and does not need to be reinforced in this way. Also, the verses in question, Matthew 25:31-37, belong as part of the passage on the Last Judgment, Matthew 25:31-46, and it would be more helpful to treat them in that context.

The *Parable of the Mustard Seed* is presented in lesson A6-T1L3: Jesus and Creation. The parable, based on Luke 13:18-20, is well presented, and the poem in the Pupils Book adds additional colour. The versions of the parable in the gospels of Matthew and Mark (Mt.13:31-32; Mk.4:31-32) might have been more helpful, because they speak of the mustard seed as the smallest of seeds, which could then be related to Jesus' teaching on faith like a mustard seed from Matthew 17:20 and Luke 17:6.

The *Parable of the Fig Tree*, based on Luke13:6-9, is also presented in lesson A6-T1L3: Jesus and Creation, in accordance with the Scripture original. However, there is a lack of explanation of the meaning of this parable, which is by no means easy to understand, and does not seem to fit in very well with the main theme of this lesson.

The *Parable of the Good Samaritan* is presented in lessons A6-T1L7: God sent Jesus to nourish us, and A6-T1L11: Loving My Neighbour. This parable is a very good choice to include in the Programme; its imagery is powerful and it has a most important message, so it is not surprising that it is one of the favourite parables in the gospels. The parable is well and simply presented in the lessons. There might be some scope for greater explanation of the meaning, for example, who the Samaritans were and why there was enmity between them and the Jews, how considerations of ritual purity might have motivated the priest and the Levite to walk on the other side of the road from the apparently dead man, the nature of the road from Jerusalem to Jericho and its symbolic significance, etc.

The *Parable of the Prodigal Son* (Luke15:11-32) is presented principally in Lesson A6-T2L7: The Prodigal Son. This parable is also a very good choice for inclusion in the Programme; it is dramatic, with a powerful message, and is many people's favourite gospel

parable. The presentation of the parable in this lesson is mainly through a drama and song, which is good in principle. Most of the essentials of the parable are covered, and the illustrations are good; there are also ways in which the presentation might be strengthened.

The drama and song could be greatly simplified; there are significant imagined additions which add much to the complexity but little to the meaning. The drama describes the younger son's life in the distant country as foolish, careless, and selfish, but does not describe it as sinful or immoral. The Greek word in the gospel to describe his way of life is *asotos*, rendered in major translations of the Bible as dissolute, riotous, profligate, debauched, which indicate a way of life not just unwise but also immoral. The lesson could bring out clearer the younger son's sin and repentance, and the corresponding mercy and forgiveness of the father. This should teach more clearly our own sinfulness and need for repentance, in order to receive the merciful forgiveness of God.

Lesson A8-T1L6: In Relation to Reconciliation includes the Gospel account of the Parable of the Prodigal Son, which is good.

The *Parable of the Great Banquet* (Luke 14:15-24) is presented in lesson A8-T3L8: In The Kingdom – Forever. The text is given straight from Scripture. The parable is relevant to the theme of the lesson, which addresses the Last Things. There is a brief explanation of the parable as meaning that all are invited by God to heaven, which is good. It might also be brought out that the most apparently suitable who are invited first may be the very ones who refuse, and what we think of as the least likely are the very ones who respond to God's invitation to heaven; also that to refuse is to choose the very unpleasant alternative of hell.

## Other Teachings of Jesus

Jesus' teachings are implicit in all of Christianity, whether it is Creed, liturgy and sacraments, morality or prayer. Some of the Programme's presentations of teachings of Jesus are more satisfactorily analysed in other sections, for example, Jesus' teachings on morality are addressed below in Section 3.5. Life in Christ-Morality. The analysis below focuses on some other lessons that explicitly present teachings of Jesus.

There are three lessons in Alive-O 3 which address *Jesus' teaching on children* – A3-T2L3: We Are The Greatest; A3-T2L8: I Was Lost, I Am Found; A3-T3L2: A Time To Share Stories. The main teaching is in the form of story adapted from Matthew 18:1-5, which is then reinforced in several ways, including discussion, prayer time, song and illustration. The lesson also includes a quotation from Luke 9:46-48. The lesson teaches that Jesus loved children and welcomed them, and that in the eyes of Jesus children are good and greatly valued. This is good.

There is, however, another dimension to the Programme's teaching which might helpfully be modified. The lesson says that Jesus taught the children, and the people, that children are the greatest in the Kingdom of God, which is not quite so. Jesus taught that, 'the one who makes himself as little as this little child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven' (Matthew 18:4). This and other teachings of Jesus makes clear that it is wrong to make oneself out as the greatest, because real greatness in the eyes of God consists in humility, being ready to serve others and not putting oneself forward as great and important. Jesus used the child as an example of one who is humble, who is ready to think of himself as small and one who should

serve others. So it was not the child *per se* that is the greatest in the Kingdom, but rather the person with a child-like attitude of humility and service who is the greatest.

Several other Scriptures reinforce this teaching of Jesus. 'The greatest among you must behave as if he were the youngest, the leader as if he were the one who serves' (Luke 22: 26).

See also: Mark 9:33-36; Luke 9:46-47; Matthew 19:14; Matthew 20:26-28; Mark 10:43-45.

The greatest example of all of this way of service and humility is Jesus himself, manifested by his becoming a human being and then giving his life for sinners on the cross (Philippians 2:6-8), and the example he gave of washing the feet of his apostles (John 13:4-16); the washing of the feet is covered in lesson [A7-T2L12: Holy Week](#).

In reinforcing its teaching that children are the greatest, superior to all adults including their parents, the Programme has a song for the pupils to sing, 'We Are the Greatest', and badges to wear stating 'We Are the Greatest'. Might there be a danger that children will pick up the very attitudes of pride that Jesus warns against? If children believe themselves to be the greatest in the eyes of God, might they find it difficult to recognise that they could be sinners in need of repentance? Might they also be disinclined to honour and obey their parents, who must be their inferiors if children are 'the greatest'?

Jesus' *teaching against worry* is addressed in lesson [A6-T1L3: Jesus and Creation](#). There are two stories based on Matthew 6:25-26, and 28-30. It is very good to give Jesus' teaching against worry and the Scripture verses selected are appropriate and relevant.

There might be scope to further develop the teaching to bring out better that our trust in the goodness and care of God is the source of lack of worry for a Christian. This is well expressed in the full relevant scripture passage, Matthew 6:25-34, in particular verse 33, 'Set your heart on the Kingdom of God first, and on his righteousness, and all these other things

will be given you as well'. The main emphasis in this lesson seems primarily on nature and how reflection on nature triggered off Jesus' thoughts about God; the balance might helpfully be shifted towards Jesus wishing to teach about God and using the things of nature as illustrations, metaphors and parables, which people could readily relate to, in order that they might come to know the truths of God.

### **3.3.4 The Holy Spirit**

The Programme addresses the Holy Spirit in both its information for teachers and lesson material for the pupils; the latter material is partly available directly to pupils in the Pupil's Books and Worksheets, and partly in the lesson material in the Teacher's Books and Video for use at the discretion of the teacher.

The analysis first addresses the information for teachers that appears in the introductory pages of the Teachers Books, which gives guidance to the teachers on content and how to apply the lessons to the pupils. The analysis next addresses the lesson material for the pupils.

#### INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

The information for teachers on the Holy Spirit in the Introductory pages of the Teacher's Books appears on the following pages, under a sub-heading of 'Doctrine': Alive-O 1 – X; Alive-O 2 – X; Alive-O 3 – XVI; Alive-O 4 – XVII; Alive-O 5 – [16]; Alive-O 6 – [16]; Alive-O 7 – [14]; Alive-O 8 – [14].

It would have been helpful to provide teaching on God and the Trinity in general, before providing information on the individual persons of the Trinity. This would have helped

understanding of the Holy Spirit, setting the Third Divine Person in context and relationship with the Father and the Son, Jesus Christ. The same holds for the Father and Son (as noted above in Section 3.3.1: The Trinity and God the Father), but is probably particularly relevant to the Holy Spirit, because it is less obvious that the Spirit is a person, and may more easily be misunderstood as a godly presence or force. It should prove helpful to repeat that while the Divine Persons of the Trinity always work together in everything, we can nevertheless understand especially that God the Father is Creator, God the Son is our Redeemer, and God the Holy Spirit is our Sanctifier.

It is good that the Information for teachers identifies the Holy Spirit as the third person of the Trinity, and lists many actions of the Holy Spirit, which are analysed in greater detail below. This Analysis also notes some teachings of the Church on the Holy Spirit which it seems appropriate to include, and suggests ways in which the presentation might be strengthened.

The Information for teachers in Alive-O 1 and 2 refers to the pupils' introduction to the Holy Spirit in the prayers of the 'Sign of the Cross' and the 'Glory be to the Father'. It is good to mention these great prayers, but it would also have been helpful if these prayers were explained for the pupils in the lesson material. The information notes that pupils 'will become aware of the spirit of God present and acting in the natural world and in those people whose lives are imbued with the spirit of love, truth, justice and peace - the spirit of God'. There is much truth in this, but it might convey the impression that the Holy Spirit is no more than a godly spirit of goodness in nature and in people.



The information for teachers in Alive-O 3 through 8 lists several items in relation to the Holy Spirit, which are mostly actions of the Spirit. These items are progressively added to and developed in moving from Teachers Book 3 through to Teachers Book 8. The actions of the Holy Spirit that are listed include: inspired Jesus; was sent to the apostles at Pentecost; helps us to live and love like Jesus; is with us in Baptism, through which we become members of the Church and are called children of God; gives courage; forms the Church and the Body of Christ; inspired the apostles and friends of Jesus; sanctifies and nourishes us with God's life and love; comes to us at Confirmation, giving us the sevenfold gifts and fruit of the Spirit; gives worship to God through the seven sacraments; renews the face of the earth with presence, action, energy, creativity and love; whose action and energy were evident in Mary.

The Information also gives some characteristics of the Holy Spirit: is represented symbolically by fire, breath and wind; deserves our praise like God the Father and the Son; is the third person of the Blessed Trinity.

While there is much good in the information noted above in the Programme's Introductory Information for teachers on the Holy Spirit, there are also some aspects of the teaching of the Church which would be appropriate to include. The Church teaches that the Holy Spirit brings grace, but the Information does not mention grace. The Information does not make it clear that the Holy Spirit is a distinct Divine Person, truly God, equal to the Father and the Son; the divinity of the Holy Spirit is really only hinted at by saying that the Spirit 'deserves our praise', but this does not really make the divinity of the Holy Spirit explicit. Use of the term 'God the Holy Spirit' would have helped to clarify the divinity of the Spirit. The many actions of the Spirit noted in the Information are good, but they do not in themselves make

explicit that the Spirit is a distinct divine person, and could be understood simply as signs of the presence of God.

It is not unreasonable to state that the actions and energy of the Holy Spirit were evident in Mary, but it would be more helpful to be explicit that Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit in the Virgin Mary. It is also good to say that the Holy Spirit inspired the apostles, but it would be helpful to make explicit that the Holy Spirit inspired all of Revelation, both Scripture and Tradition, that the Holy Spirit can be considered the author of Scripture.

#### LESSON MATERIAL ON THE HOLY SPIRIT

The lesson A3-T3L6 - Holy Spirit Help Us, introduces pupils to the Holy Spirit. There is a short prayer, 'Holy Spirit help me', which is good. The longer prayer, 'Spirit of God in the heavens', is less satisfactory because it could give impression that the Holy Spirit is no more than the spirit of God which is present everywhere at all times. These two prayers, which appear in Books 3 through 8, are written by the Programme and so will not serve to link the pupils with home and parish. The traditional prayer, 'Come Holy Spirit', which is excellent and would serve to bind pupils closer to home and parish, appears in Books 6 through 8; it might be helpful to introduce this prayer from Book 3 onwards.

This lesson also introduces pupils to the story of Pentecost, which is excellent in principle. The story contains much that is in harmony with the Scripture, which is good, but there is scope for improvement. The story says that, prior to the coming of the Spirit, the disciples felt lost, sad and lonely, they huddled together in a room by themselves. This seems like

transposing from John 20:19, which described how the apostles were afraid after the Crucifixion and before they knew that Jesus had risen from the dead. Scripture says that after the Ascension the apostles and disciples went back to Jerusalem full of joy and praised God publicly in the Temple (Lk.24:52-53). They then selected Matthias to replace Judas, and met together in the Upper Room in continuous prayer (Acts1:12-26). This indicated that the apostles and disciples, including Mary, were waiting in purposeful confidence, trusting that the promise of Jesus would be fulfilled and that they would receive the Holy Spirit.

The story says that a bright light shone in the room whereas the Scripture says that tongues of fire separated and came to rest on the head of each of them (Acts2:3). The story omits the presence of Mary (Acts1:14) and the amazing phenomenon of the gift of tongues, which so impressed people (Acts2:4-13). The story also omits the speech of Peter (Acts2:14-36), which was the first proclamation of the 'Kerygma', and which asked people to repent before being baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. The story covers the way that the first Christians lived together in relation to sharing their goods with each other, praying together, and breaking bread, but omits the teaching of the apostles (Acts2:42).

While there is much good in this initial introduction to the Holy Spirit, it would be helpful if there were some teaching on who the Holy Spirit is, as the third Divine Person of the Blessed Trinity.

The principal theme in the lesson, A4-T1L4 - Earthed In The Spirit, is that everything material, both inanimate and animate (which includes human beings), is all interconnected as one and depends upon the earth, in which we find the spirit of God. Human beings are not given any special status, not recognised as having immortal spiritual souls, not recognised as

the reason for which all of creation was brought into being by God, but simply seen as part of the Earth. The earth is presented as the source and foundation of all things and a spirit of God moves in the earth.

The illustration in the Pupil's Book is of a spider in her web, which does not resemble any Christian symbol of the Holy Spirit. The prayers in the Pupil's Book are plays on prayers of the Mass, especially the main prayer which reads, 'Holy Spirit gather us round, make us one in mind and heart, through us, with us and in us'. This prayer reads like a parody on the final great doxology of the Eucharistic Prayer.

The song, 'Round and Round and Round the Earth', is a kind of mantra which the pupils sing while doing circular type dance movements which resemble New Age rituals. The pupils are led to pray, 'We belong to the earth and the earth belongs to us', and 'We remember that we are all part of the earth'. The pupils sprinkle 'Holy Water' on bowls of clay and soil with another prayer which seems to parody the Mass, as follows: 'Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation. Through your goodness we have this soil which comes from the earth'.

The approach of this lesson is to see humans as material beings sprung from and identified with the earth, which is the source of all things and contains the spirit of God. Might this risk conveying a pantheistic, rather than Christian, understanding of human beings and the Holy Spirit?<sup>208</sup> It would seem more helpful if this lesson were completely re-written, especially as parents are to be invited to the prayer and dance ritual.

---

<sup>208</sup> New Age influences are a very real danger to the Church, and great care is needed to avoid such influences. Helpful guidance on the New Age is provided by: Pontifical Councils for Culture & Interreligious Dialogue. *Jesus Christ, the Bearer of the Water of Life - A Christian Reflection on the "New Age"*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2003; and by The Irish Theological Commission. *A New Age of the Spirit? - A Catholic Response to the New Age Phenomenon*. Dublin: Veritas Publications, 1994.

The lesson, A5-T3L6 - Gifted with the Spirit, focuses on the Day of Pentecost as given in Acts 2:1-41, which is very good in principle. There are a number of stories in the Pupil's Book and Teacher's Book which cover much of what is in the Scripture, but there are also many imagined additions, some less than helpful, and several omissions, some of which are significant.

The stories and illustration stress that, prior to the coming of the Spirit, Peter and the other disciples felt lost and afraid, they hid away and locked the door of their room. As noted above in relation to lesson A3-T3L6 - Holy Spirit Help Us, the Scriptures give a very different picture.

The Lesson's stories of the Day of Pentecost have omissions from the Scriptural account (Acts 2:1-41) as follows: the disciples received the gift of tongues which amazed the people to hear Galileans preaching in their own languages about the marvels of God; the main parts of the *Keryma* as preached by Peter – the outpouring of the Holy Spirit had been predicted by the prophet Joel, the messianic prophecies of David, the signs and miracles wrought by Jesus yet the people had him crucified, Jesus' resurrection, Peter's argument that Jesus is both Lord and Christ, which means that he is truly God and the Messiah; the people's repentance for what they had done to Jesus; that through baptism people would have their sins forgiven and receive the Holy Spirit.

It would be helpful if the Lesson's accounts of Pentecost contained less imagined additions and more of what is in Scripture.

The Lesson's questions and answers convey much good information about the Holy Spirit: God our Father sent his Holy Spirit to the apostles at Pentecost; we received the Holy Spirit

when we were baptized; the Holy Spirit helps us to live like Jesus, to remember the words of Jesus, and to be his witnesses in the world.

It might also have been helpful to note: that the Holy Spirit was sent by Jesus Christ, God the Son, as well as by God the Father; and that Baptism is essentially Trinitarian, giving us the grace of new birth in God the Father, through his Son Jesus, in the Holy Spirit <sup>209</sup>. The mission of the Holy Spirit might also be helpfully expanded in accordance with the teaching of the Church. <sup>210</sup>

There are two lessons in Alive-O 6 on the theme of the Holy Spirit. The first of these lessons: A6-T1L8 - God Sent the Holy Spirit to Nourish Us, focuses on the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to do good work in the world, mainly in a humanitarian sense. The Trinity is described as, 'God, Jesus, Holy Spirit', which is potentially unhelpful, but because it could imply that only the first Person of the Trinity is divine, and that the second and third persons are not so.

The next lesson in Alive-O 6 on the theme of the Holy Spirit is: A6-T3L6 - The Holy Spirit. This lesson introduces the traditional Prayer to the Holy Spirit, 'Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of the faithful'. This is very good, because this prayer is full of significance and meaning, and as it is part of the great tradition of the Church it will help link pupils with

---

<sup>209</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 683.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.* 686. 'The Holy Spirit is at work with the Father and the Son from the beginning to the completion of the plan for our salvation. But in these "end times", ushered in by the Son's redeeming Incarnation, the Spirit is revealed and given, recognized and welcomed as a person. Now can this divine plan, accomplished in Christ, the firstborn and head of the new creation, be embodied in mankind by the outpouring of the Spirit: as the Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting'.

home and parish. It would be helpful if the meaning of the prayer had been drawn out in the lesson material.

The questions and answers are reasonable, but this time the balance is shifted entirely to Jesus, rather than the Father, as the one who sends the Holy Spirit; it would be more helpful to note that it is both the Father and Jesus who send the Holy Spirit. It is good that the fruit of the Spirit is given.

There is another account of the Day of Pentecost which is some improvement over the accounts given in lesson: A5-T3L6 - Gifted with the Spirit, in that the receipt of the gift of tongues by the disciples is included. In other respects the same suggestions for modification as noted above apply to this lesson A6-T3L6 also.

In a 'Chatting' or discussion session this lesson presents a brief but good teaching on the Trinity, which does clearly state the divinity of each Person of the Trinity. However, the value of this good teaching is greatly diminished by the way it is placed along with discussion starter questions in an optional 'Chatting' session; these sessions are not designed for the imparting of information to the pupils, but merely as suggestions to help the teacher lead a discussion session. There are always much more questions than the teacher could actually use in the time available, and the Programme also recommends teachers not to lead the discussion sessions at all, but leave the leading to the children themselves. The potentially positive impact of this good information on the Trinity is therefore likely to be minimal. One might suggest that this good information be incorporated into comprehensive teachings on the Trinity in the Pupil's Books, supported by appropriate material in the Teacher's Books, to be repeated a number of times with progressive development and starting much earlier than Book 6.

Alive-O 7 has a set of three lessons which address the Holy Spirit, as follows: A7-T2L7 - Enkindling the Spirit; A7-T2L8 - Spirit Wind; and A7-T2L9 - Breath of the Spirit.

Lesson A7-T2L7 - Enkindling the Spirit, has an account of the Day of Pentecost, which is a further improvement on earlier versions, specifically by including: most of Peter's speech, Baptism for the forgiveness of sins, the conversion of 3000 that day, and the teaching of the apostles as part of the life of the early Christian community. Elements that are still omitted and could helpfully be included: the presence of Mary among the disciples when the Holy Spirit descended, the Old Testament prophecies of the outpouring of the Spirit and the coming of Jesus the Messiah, the proclamation by Peter of Jesus as Lord and Christ. There is a brief follow-up account of the Day of Pentecost in the next lesson, A7-T2L8 - Spirit Wind, which is not very helpful because it presents the work of the Holy Spirit in the Christian community solely in terms of good humanitarianism.

The Teacher's Book has a section titled, 'Fire and the Holy Spirit', which develops the symbols of fire and wind for the Holy Spirit. It is good to develop these symbols of the Holy Spirit, as taught by the Church <sup>211</sup>. The Lesson speaks of the sound of a great wind and the tongues of fire that rested on the heads of the disciples when they received the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, which is good. There are other aspects of this teaching which might helpfully be modified. The teaching refers to Jesus going into the desert after his baptism and then immediately returning to set out preaching the Good News; the temptations by Satan are omitted, (though the Gospels say that the purpose for which the Spirit lead Jesus into the wilderness was so that he would be tempted by the Devil), which is in harmony with the Programme's non-recognition of evil spirits and of temptation. The parallel is drawn between

---

<sup>211</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 691, 696.



the Baptism of Jesus and our Baptism, in a way which suggests no difference between the two, which is not good. The Spirit of God is referred to as 'it', which is not appropriate for a person; it would be better to follow the normal practice of the Church and apply a personal pronoun to the Holy Spirit, such as 'he'. The teaching refers to the disciples in a state of great fear and locked in prior to the coming of the Holy Spirit, but as has been noted above, in relation to Lesson A3-T3L6 – Holy Spirit Help Us, this is contrary to Scripture (Luke 24:52-53; Acts 1:12-26). The Lesson gives the impression that the disciples did not actually experience the sound of a mighty wind and the tongues of fire, they just experienced some kind of inner growth in confidence and courage, and then thought up the idea of wind and fire to express their inner feelings; this diverges from Scripture.

The lesson, A7-T2L8 - Spirit Wind, focuses on the action of the Holy Spirit in the Church and in the world since the time of Pentecost, which is very good in principle. However, in the opening teaching, the general content of the lesson material in the Teachers Book, and in the examples selected of the movement of the Spirit, the balance favours the secular and humanitarian, rather than the spiritual. It would be helpful if this imbalance were corrected.

Two of the three examples of the movement of the Spirit are expressed in humanitarian terms, while one expresses the spiritual. This latter example is Pope John XXIII, and brings out the movement of the Spirit in his life, especially in relation to the Second Vatican Council. It might be helpful if the summary of Pope John's main priorities reflected the spiritual, rather than being expressed only in humanitarian terms: the rights and dignity of workers, the growing role of women in public life, and the interdependence of nations. It might also be helpful to mention that Pope John's diary is available in bookshops under the

title, 'Journal of a Soul', which pupils could be encouraged to read.

The second example selected as a sign of the movement of the Spirit is the Civil Rights Movement in Northern Ireland. This was certainly a great movement for good, which merits inclusion.

The third example selected is the protest against a nuclear-energy power-plant at Carnsore Point in County Wexford. Apart from the imbalance in favour of humanitarian examples, one might doubt the wisdom of selecting this particular example, because it represents just one viewpoint, at a particular time, in relation to energy, technology, economy, ecology, risk assessment and global politics; it does not represent fundamental issues of rights and wrongs. Future changes could see the Carnsore Point demonstrations in a different light.<sup>212</sup>

There are many examples of spiritual movements of the Spirit which could be selected to give a better balance. Such examples might include: the multitude of ecclesial movements among the laity, e.g. Legion of Mary, Charismatic Renewal, Focolare, Neocatechumenate Way, the Pro-Life Movement; new religious communities, e.g. Mother Teresa of Calcutta and the Missionaries of Charity, Fr Benedict Groeschel and the Friars of the Renewal; great missionaries like Bishop Shanahan of Nigeria; many martyrs like Fr Maximilian Kolbe.

---

<sup>212</sup> At that time and at present there would be much popular support for the anti-nuclear energy position, but that could change. The decision against a nuclear power plant in Ireland led instead to the building of a very large coal-burning power station at Moneypoint; this was not a controversial decision at the time, but later the harmful emissions from this plant proved to be very controversial and strongly opposed by many environmentalists. The future is uncertain, and severe disruption in the highly volatile Middle East region could lead at any time to a catastrophic reduction in oil supplies; in this possible future scenario the decision against a nuclear-energy power-plant in Ireland could be judged as most unfortunate.

The lesson, A7-T2L9 - Breath of the Spirit, has a brief teaching on breath as both the meaning of 'spirit' and also a symbol for the Holy Spirit. It recalls how Jesus after his resurrection breathed on his disciples and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit', and how the Spirit was with the first disciples as they travelled in all directions. This is good.

The lesson, A8-T1L4 - In Relation to Numbers, addresses the Trinity in the context of the famous Rublev Icon; this has been analysed above in Section 3.3.1: The Trinity and God the Father. The lesson also has a specific teaching which addresses the Holy Spirit, focusing on ways that we can appreciate and understand the Spirit. It points out that it is easier to appreciate and relate to the Father and the Son, which is very true; it is good that there is reference to 'God the Father' and 'God the Son'. The lesson outlines many ways in which the work of the Spirit can be appreciated and seen in people's lives and in the natural world, which is good. However, the lesson does not bring out that the Holy Spirit is fully God, equal to the Father and Son; the Spirit is never described as 'God the Holy Spirit'. Much of the text gives the impression that the Holy Spirit is a kind of presence of God working at all times in people and the natural world. The Programme-written prayer, 'Spirit of God in the heavens', also supports an understanding of the Holy Spirit as a presence of God in the material world, and this prayer is given prominence over the Church's traditional prayer, 'Come Holy Spirit'. There is certainly good material in this teaching, but there is much scope for modification to bring out clearly the divine nature and person of the Holy Spirit.

The lesson, A8-T2L3 - Led by the Spirit, introduces the dove as a symbol for the Holy Spirit. This is good, because the Gospels say that after Jesus' baptism the sky opened and he saw the Spirit of God coming down on him like a dove. The Church also sees the dove as a symbol for the Holy Spirit in relation to the dove that was released by Noah at the end of the flood returning with a fresh olive-tree branch in its beak; the Church understands the flood as a symbol of Baptism<sup>213</sup>.

While it is very good that the lesson refers to the dove as a symbol for the Holy Spirit, it is not good that the impression is given that the symbol of the dove was thought up by the Gospel writers in a human way, rather than being revealed by God: 'The writers of the Gospels wanted to find ways to describe the Holy Spirit, so they did what all writers do - they used symbols'. The lesson could helpfully be modified to make it clear that the symbol of a dove at Jesus' baptism was revealed by God, and was not something thought up by the human writers of the Gospels.

### **3.3.5. The Church**

The Programme addresses the Church in both its information for teachers and lesson material for the pupils; the latter material is partly available directly to pupils in the Pupil's Books and Worksheets, and partly in the lesson material in the Teacher's Books and Video for use at the discretion of the teacher.

---

<sup>213</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 701.

The analysis first addresses the information for teachers that appears in the introductory pages of the Teachers Books, which gives guidance to the teachers on content and how to apply the lessons to the pupils. The analysis next addresses the lesson material for the pupils.

### INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

The information for teachers on The Church in the Introductory pages of the Teacher's Books appears on the following pages, under a sub-heading of 'Doctrine': Alive-O 1 – X; Alive-O 2 – X; Alive-O 3 – XVI; Alive-O 4 – XVII-XVIII; Alive-O 5 – [16]-[17]; Alive-O 6 – [16]-[17]; Alive-O 7 – [14]; Alive-O 8 – [14].

There is much good information on The Church in the Information for teachers, which is progressively expanded and developed from Alive-O 1 through to Alive-O 8, as follows:

We become members of the Church through baptism, and the first contact with the Church should be in the family. However, for some their first contact with the Church will be the school, which tries to model life and shared living on Christian values.

Children experience belonging with others, at home, in school, in their neighbourhood, and in the Church community which gathers in liturgical celebrations to praise and thank God with the Risen Jesus. The church building is the place where people come together to pray.

The Church believes in Christ's resurrection and in Jesus Christ, is animated and inspired by the Holy Spirit, lives in accordance with Jesus' teaching and uses its talent to serve. The Church celebrates Jesus' presence and action among us, celebrates the forgiveness of God in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and is fed by the Eucharist and confirmed at Confirmation.

The Church celebrates the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus, and commemorates the chief events of Jesus' life, looks forward to Jesus' coming at the end of time, and eternal happiness with God.

The Church can be understood as the Body of Christ, the Bride of Christ, and the people of God of the New Covenant. Relations between the various Christian Churches will help pupils engage in ecumenism.

While there is much good information included for the teachers as summarised above, it could also be helpful to develop the information about the Church further, as follows:

It would be good to expand the contribution that can be made by the Catholic school, which hopefully will do much more than model life and shared living on Christian values. The school should teach the Catholic faith, help prepare the pupils for the Sacraments, and teach them about prayer, liturgy, and morality.

It is good to mention the church building as a place where people gather for prayer and liturgical celebrations. However, it would be good to mention specifically the Mass, especially Mass on Sundays, the place of celebration of the Sacraments, and the Real Presence of Jesus in the Tabernacle, which can be a focus of prayer at any time of the day.

The Information emphasises the Church as the voluntary gathering of those who are baptised and believe in Christ for the sake of community and shared prayer and worship. It would be helpful to make clear that the Church is part of the plan of God, and not just the response of the people. The Church was established by Jesus and initiated by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

The Holy Spirit does more than animate and inspire the Church, he constantly guides the Church in the Truth, so that we as members accept her authority<sup>214</sup>.

It is good to state that members of the Church believe in Jesus Christ and his resurrection. It would be helpful to also make clear that we believe in Jesus as God the Son, who is our saviour from sin, and who will come as Judge at the Second Coming, and through him all creation will be renewed. It is good to mention that the Church is the Body of Christ, but it would also be helpful to make clear that Jesus is the Head of this Body; it is good that the Information gives the reference to CCC 787, but it would be helpful if the information gave other relevant CCC references as well. It would be helpful to include that the Church has a missionary responsibility, to preach the Gospel to the whole world, so that everyone will come to believe in Jesus<sup>215</sup>, and that the marks of the Church are that she is one, holy, catholic and apostolic<sup>216</sup>.

It would be helpful to mention ‘the Catholic Church’, and also to go further and give concise and relevant information about the Catholic Church, which might include:

We find the fullness of the one Church of Christ in the Catholic Church, governed by the Pope and bishops<sup>217</sup>. Other Christians, who are not Catholics, but who are baptized and believe in Christ, are accepted as brothers and sisters in Christ. We pray that God will restore unity among all Christians<sup>218</sup>.

---

<sup>214</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 804.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.* 849.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.* 811.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.* 870.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.* 820-822, 838.

The Pope is the bishop of Rome, successor of St Peter. He is head of the Church, the vicar of Christ <sup>219</sup>. The Church has the authority to interpret the Word of God in Scripture and Tradition and to teach on faith and morals <sup>220</sup>. The Bishops succeed the apostles, and have the task of teaching, guiding and sanctifying the Church in their dioceses <sup>221</sup>. Each parish has its own special history and identity, and is part of its diocese and the universal Church <sup>222</sup>.

The Bishops are helped by priests, their co-workers, and by deacons <sup>223</sup>. Those not ordained are the lay people, who are called by their Baptism to be fully Christian in their personal, family, social, and church situations <sup>224</sup>. Religious brothers and nuns, whose lives are specially consecrated to God, make vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience <sup>225</sup>.

The Church is related to non-Christians in various ways. The Church is profoundly linked with the Jewish people who were first to hear the Word of God. The Muslims acknowledge one God and Creator, and profess the faith of Abraham. The Church recognises the search for God in all religions, and respects all goodness and truth found in them. At the same time the Church has its missionary mandate to call all to the fullness of truth in the Church. <sup>226</sup>

## LESSON MATERIAL ON THE CHURCH

It is good that the theme of the Church is addressed in the lesson material progressively through the eight years of the Programme. There is much good and relevant information about the Church; however, the lesson material largely reflects what has been noted above in

---

<sup>219</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 937.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.* 100, 889-892.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.* 938, 939.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.* 814.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.* 888, 939.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.* 941-942.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.* 944.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.* 839-856



relation to the Introductory Information for teachers in that there is also much scope for further development of what is taught to the pupils, not least in relation to the Catholic Church. There is some information on the Catholic Church but it is quite limited, and tends to present the Catholic Church in an unfavourable light relative to other Christians who are not Catholic.

It is considered most helpful to present the analysis below in relation to three major sub-themes which are discernible through the Programme. These three sub-themes are:

- The nature of the Church
- Church structures
- Church history and ecumenism

### *The nature of the Church*

The lesson, A1-T1L9 - Belonging, focuses on belonging in a human community and in class at school. The lesson attempts to convey a sense of connectedness, complementarity, safety, comfort, warmth and security as elements of belonging.

The next three lessons (from Alive-O 2) continue the theme of understanding the experience of human community as the basis which will lead to an understanding of the Church. Lesson, A2-T1L2 - Together Again, starts from the theme of, 'I am special' and goes on to, 'You are special too', to develop the idea of cooperation together among pupils. Lesson, A2-T1L4 - Getting Along Together, focuses on the theme of play as an important way in which pupils learn to cooperate together and develop relationships. Lesson, A2-T1L7a - Let's Celebrate, continues the theme of pupils playing and working together and uses the helpful analogy of individual bricks being built together into a wall.

The next three lessons (from Alive-O 3) focus on the school class as a particular human community which will lead pupils to understand later the Church. Various ways are used to develop a strong sense of class unity and identity, which is reasonable, but others could helpfully be amended to avoid causing confusion in relation to the nature of the Church, morality and Sacrament.

Lesson, A3-T1L1 - We Begin Together, has an exercise in developing class identity and solidarity involving constructing a tree on which are hung pieces of paper with the names of the class members which form the 'leaves' of the tree. This exercise may well serve to develop class unity in a helpful way, but the next exercise appears problematic. The pupils are led to develop a 'class code' as a way of being together, but the Class Code is not to be based on any Christian teaching. Will peer-pressure lead the pupils to follow their Class Code even if it is found in some areas to be in conflict with the law of God? Will the exercise in developing their own Class Code lead the pupils to think that they can make up their own moral code first and only think about the law of God later?

Lesson, A3-T1L5 - We Belong Together, continues the development of a strong class identity through the group dynamics of a number of exercises. The pupils are led to create their own Class Crest/Badge and a Class Motto. A Class Enrolment Book is developed to contain the names of each member of the class with individual photographs. The class also make banners celebrating their class identity. The next exercises are potentially problematic however, which involve Enrolment Ceremony rituals in the classroom or church which mix together formal enrolment in the class, enrolment as candidates for First Penance and First Communion, and a Rite of Renewal of Baptismal Commitment as a mark of enrolment in membership of the Church. Will the combining together of all these elements lead to

confusion in the pupils' minds as to whether enrolment in membership of the class is no different in essence to enrolment in membership of the Church through Baptism?

The third of the lessons in Alive-O 3 on the nature of the Church, A3-T3L8 - Time To Go -- Alive-O!, consolidates the group identity of the class with focus on the pupils' Certificates of Belonging, the class Enrolment Book and now the issuing of a Congratulation Card to each member of the class to celebrate the end of the year. The stated aim of the lesson is to help the pupils understand the concept of belonging to the Christian community called Church. Will the strong focus on developing class identity through group dynamics really lead to a later true Catholic understanding of the Church, or will it lead the pupils to think of the Church as some kind of secular human community?

Two lessons in Alive-O 4 on the nature of the Church move the focus on from the class to the school. Lesson, A4-T1L3 - School Spirit, focuses on the school Roll Book and has an Enrolment Ceremony which combines enrolment of pupils as candidates for First Penance and First Communion with a Right of Renewal of Baptismal Commitment (similar to the ceremony in lesson A3-T1L5 above). This Ceremony may be helpful in some ways, but it might be more helpful if it clearly distinguished the difference in essence between enrolment as a candidate for sacraments and 'enrolment' in membership of the Church through Baptism. Lesson, A4-T3L11 - Time To Go - Alive-O!, reinforces the idea that the pupils' experience of the 'spirit of interconnectedness' in the class and school will help the pupils 'understand the concept of being part of the Christian community called Church'.

Alive-O 6 has three lessons which helpfully introduce a Christian model for the Church, as the Body of Christ.

The first of these three lessons, A6-T2L3 - The Body of Christ – The Church, has a partly satisfactory account of the conversion of St Paul, and then introduces his teaching that the Church is the Body of Christ, which is good. The lesson material then draws out and develops the theme of the Church being the Body of Christ in several ways, which is excellent in principle. However, while the examples develop the understanding that the members of the Church need each other and must work together like parts of human body, they do not include that the body needs a head, nor do they bring out the analogy that Christ is the Head of the Church.

There is a short poem about the Body of Christ, which is good insofar as it brings out that the parts of the body need to work together and help each other, but there is no head. The story, 'The Organ-ising Body!', has a head, which argues and disputes with the other parts of the body, and ends with the conclusion that all members of the body, including the head, are of equal value. Will this teach pupils that we the members of the Church are one because we are in Christ our Head, or will the pupils understand the Church as a headless secular body?

There is also a story titled, 'The Body of Christ', based on selected passages from the First Letter to the Corinthians, which is good insofar as it brings out well the unity of the Church as the Body of Christ, but it would have been helpful to include quotations which show that Christ is the Head of the Church, e.g. Ephesians 1:22; 4:15; 5:23, Colossians 1:18; 2:19.

The second lesson on the theme of the Body of Christ is, A6-T2L4 - The Body of Christ – At Play. The focus is on children as members of the Church, which is good in principle. It would be helpful if the lesson had brought out the spiritual qualities and attributes of children in addition to the human/secular attributes which are developed in the context of play. Also the story, 'Ishvah's Story', given as, 'related to Luke 18:15-17', is mostly imagined fiction,

and it is hard to see how it could develop the pupils' understanding as members of the Church.

The third lesson, A6-T2L5 - The Body of Christ – At Work, focuses on the world of work. It is good in principle to show that being a member of the Church has implications for one's daily life at work. However, there seems scope to show how being a Catholic in the workplace can mean going further than good humanitarian behaviour. There is a good quotation from the first part of CCC 899, giving guidance about the role of lay Christians, but it would have been helpful to also give the second part of CCC 899, which brings out well how lay believers, under the leadership of the Pope and bishops, are together the Church. The Lesson also has a good suggestion that volunteer parents might be invited in to talk to the class about the work they do, especially the links between their work and being a Christian.

### Church structures

There are three lessons which specifically address the church building.

Lesson, A1-T2L7 - A Place to Celebrate, focuses on the church building 'as a special place, a place of prayer, a place of celebration'. There are two quotations from the CCC, as follows: 'The church, the house of God, is the proper place for the liturgical prayer of the parish community'; CCC 2691. 'Churches are not simply gathering places but signify and make visible the Church living in this place'; CCC 1180. This information about the church building is good, and is reflected in the lesson materials.

However, more could be provided in references and lesson material to convey a full Catholic understanding, for example, including from CCC 2691, 'It is also the privileged place for

adoration of the real presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament'. Also by continuing on from CCC 1180 to CCC 1181, 'The Church, a house of prayer in which the Eucharist is celebrated and reserved, where the faithful assemble, and where is worshipped the presence of the Son of God our Saviour, offered for us on the sacrificial altar for the help and consolation of the faithful - this house ought to be in good taste and a worthy place for prayer and sacred ceremonial'.

There is an illustration of a church stained glass window in the Pupil's Book; naming and explaining many of the items to be found in the church would have been helpful, more so than the optional discussion session in the Teacher's Book which is mostly questions without answers, though it does contain a good suggestion that the teacher might bring the pupils on a visit to a church.

Lesson, A2-T2L6 - Special Places, focuses first on places that children might consider special, such as their home or secret hiding places, and then extends this idea to think of the Church as a 'special place'. The Pupil's Book has an illustration of the interior of the church showing the altar, tabernacle, candles, sanctuary lamp, crucifix and baptismal font. The Teacher's Book has reasonable explanations of these items, and again the suggestion to teachers to bring the pupils to visit one of the churches in the parish. The accompanying video has a man showing children some of the items in a church, which is good in principle, but might be improved in a number of ways. The approach is very casual and there are no signs of respect made in the Church. There is only a cross, not a crucifix and the tabernacle is referred to as the place where we keep 'the holy bread'.

Lesson A4-T3L2 - We Gather Together To Celebrate, is principally about the Eucharist and so is analysed in Section 3.4 below. The lesson also has a video in which children are shown

around the church by a priest. This video adds helpfully to what was covered in the earlier video. On entering the church the children are shown how to bless themselves with Holy Water and how to genuflect as a sign of respect because Jesus is present. The sanctuary lamp signifies that Jesus, the Bread of Life, is present in the tabernacle. There is a crucifix and the priest explains that Jesus is on the cross. The chalice and the ciborium are shown and explained. The priest's vestments are shown and the significance of the different colours explained.

Lesson, A6-T2L2 - Our Parish, focuses mainly on the parish as a basic structure of the Church, and also has some information on the diocese. The Pupils Book has a sample Newsletter from a fictional parish; it is an interesting way of presenting what goes on in a good Catholic parish. One worksheet has a 'Parish Fact File' to be filled in by the pupils, while a second worksheet has a map of Ireland with diocesan boundaries. This is all good and contains much that should be helpful to the pupils.

There are, however, some ways in which the presentation might be strengthened. The spiritual significance of the parish could be better drawn out, for example by having a place in the 'Parish Fact File' for the spiritual services in the parish, such as the times of Masses, confessions and other spiritual activities. The tendency in the lesson material in the Teachers Book is to emphasize the parish as one's physical and secular 'home place', reinforced by the prominence given to the touching story, 'Rosie Wants To Go Home'. It is good to have a map of diocesan boundaries, but it would be helpful to teach about the diocese, explaining that a diocese is more than a geographical area like a county, how it is part of the Universal Church, and what a Bishop is.

The role and significance of the priests in the parish could be further developed. The names of priests appear in the Parish Newsletter, but the lesson material simply states that, 'the priest is also a part of the parish community'. The terms 'Parish Priest' and 'Parish Curate' could be used and explained, and given a place in the 'Parish Fact File'.

It would be helpful to use and explain the term 'the Catholic Church'.

It could also be helpful to recognize the ecclesial movements and organisations for the laity within the Catholic Church, which have contributed hugely to the vitality of parishes and the wider Church. Some groups, such as the Legion of Mary and the St Vincent de Paul Society, have been a dynamic part of the Church's life for many years. Other movements and groups have been raised up by the Holy Spirit in the Church since the Second Vatican Council, and have been encouraged by successive Popes.

Lesson, A7-T2L3 - Christian Community, introduces pupils to the Church in another part of the world, which is good because it should help pupils get some idea of the Universal Church. This is done through testimonies of children from Chile about their preparation for First Holy Communion and Confirmation, and the story of a little girl who lives among the very poor in Pakistan. The testimonies of the children from Chile are inspiring and indicate that they have been very well prepared for their sacrament. The story of the little girl from Pakistan highlights the poverty in which she and her family live, but it could be helpful if it also showed whether or not her family are Christian, and whether or not the Church is helping them.

While the Chilean children are a good introduction to the Universal Church, there is so much more that could be done to inform and enthral pupils about the fascinating reality of the more than one billion strong Catholic Church which exists in every nation around the globe.



### Church history and ecumenism

Lesson, A3-T3L7 - Treasures From Long Ago, seeks to present the pre-Christian Celtic culture and spirituality that existed in Ireland before the coming of Christianity as a means of helping the pupils to experience the presence of God in their lives. There is potential benefit in this, because it is generally accepted that the Celtic peoples of Ireland were deeply religious, and that their seeking after God prepared them to accept and embrace the truth of Christianity. The principal ways in which the Lesson seeks to achieve this is through the legend of the Children of Lir, through a prayer which is presented as an ancient Celtic blessing, and through the prayer of St Patrick and the Celtic cross.

While the objective of the lesson is admirable, there could be difficulties in the way the presentation is done, which might lead to confusion of the pupils. The legend of the Children of Lir is a colourful story, but it is fiction. Might the way it is presented lead pupils to think that it is factual, or knowing it to be fiction might they confuse fiction with fact and disbelieve factual elements of the lesson?

The authenticity of the Celtic blessing may be doubted when one looks more closely at its representation in the lesson A6-T1L3: Jesus and Creation, as a chant and dance titled, 'Celtic Blessing', taken from the 'Dances of Universal Peace'<sup>227</sup>. The Alive-O 6 video presentation

---

<sup>227</sup> [www.DancesofUniversalPeace.org](http://www.DancesofUniversalPeace.org). PeaceWorks Publications, PO Box 55994, Seattle, WA 98155, USA. These New Age style dances originated with Samuel L Lewis, a Sufi Murshid (teacher of Sufism – a mystical form of Islam) and Rinzai Zen Master. It is claimed the dances draw on timeless traditions of Sacred Dance, including Buddhism, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Sikhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Native American, Celtic, Native African, and Goddess traditions. In addition to the 'Celtic Blessing', the PeaceWorks 'Dances of Universal Peace' feature dances such as: Dervish Zikr Dance, Allah Snake Dance, Hare Rama Hare Krishna Dance, Hallelujah Snake Dance, Om Nama Shiva, and I Am a Circle.

shows a series of strictly choreographed, ritualistic type movements, while moving round in a circle and 'blessing each other with nature -- because nature is a great healer and peace-giver'.

It is good to include the prayer of St Patrick and the Celtic Cross; it would also have been helpful to explain the origin and meaning of the Celtic cross. The value of the Celtic Cross might be compromised by encouraging the pupils to take their Crosses home with them and use it to give the New Age type blessing to someone they know.

There are two lessons that tell of the coming of Christianity to Ireland, A5-T1L6 - Christianity Comes to Our Country (1), and A5-T1L7 - Christianity Comes to Our Country (2). It is excellent in principle to include the dramatic story of the evangelisation of Ireland, one of the great missionary endeavours in the history of the Church, which had far-reaching consequences in succeeding centuries well beyond the shores of this island.

The information on Celtic Ireland before the arrival of St Patrick is reasonable. There is much good information in the story of St Patrick and his coming to Ireland, but the story seems unduly brief and could well have been better expanded and developed. The story might well have included his conversion while a slave in Ireland (he says in his *Confessions* that he was not religious prior to his capture), his initial rejection and then acceptance by the sailors when he found a ship after his escape, their difficulties when they arrived in France and his eventual reuniting with his family. It would have been interesting to tell of the dream in which the young man Victor came with letters from Ireland, which recalled the dream that St Paul had of the Macedonian who appealed to him to come to Greece (Acts 16:9-10). Also to tell of Patrick's study under St Germanus, his ordination as bishop and his commissioning by Pope St Celestine I to go to Ireland.

There is an excellent piece in the story of St Patrick concerning his use of the Shamrock to teach people about the Trinity. More could be made of this in the follow-up teachings and activities for the pupils. In the artwork activity the children are instructed to make a Shamrock, which could have been helpfully related to the Trinity; instead however, pupils are instructed to draw Patrick on one side and Oisín on the other side.

The lessons give great prominence to the legend of Oisín and Tír na nÓg. Might the mixing of the true story of Patrick's evangelisation of Ireland with the fictional and fanciful story of Oisín undermine the credibility of the lesson's account of the coming of Christianity?

The Worksheet has a board game featuring the different monastic sites around Ireland, which, in conjunction with the good map in the Pupil's Book of the various monastic sites in Ireland, could be an enjoyable way for pupils to learn about the Irish monasteries. The video has a very good presentation on life today in two monasteries, the Cistercian monks at Mount Mellerey Abbey, and the Cistercian nuns at Glencairn Abbey.

There is a good account about the establishment of monasteries in Ireland, how monasteries operated and the importance of prayer within the monastery. However, there is scope for further development of the story of the Irish monasteries. The account states some of the monks were teachers who taught students to read and write; the Irish monasteries did much more than that, becoming great centres of learning which attracted large numbers of students from Britain and the Continent. The Irish monasteries also became power-houses of faith and centres for quite extraordinary missionary achievement; monks went out from Irish monasteries to evangelise in Scotland, the north of Britain, and right across the European continent into Germany, Switzerland, Italy and other countries.

The monasteries played a key role in one of the great adventure stories of Christian history. By the Providence of God, Christianity came to Ireland just at the time when it was under serious threat throughout Europe. The Barbarian invasions into the Roman Empire destroyed much of Christianity and learning throughout the Continent and Britain at the very time that Christianity took root and flourished in Ireland. Then the zeal of Irish missionaries brought back the light of Faith to Europe during the succeeding centuries, profoundly influencing European Christianity, culture and history<sup>228</sup>. It would be helpful to pass on this great adventure story to the pupils.

Lesson, A5-T3L7 - The Early Christian Community, tells of the community that formed in Jerusalem after Pentecost. This is good, because this first Christian community helps the understanding of the Church ever since, including today. The story, 'The Early Christian Community', conveys several aspects of the community described in the Book of Acts, especially how the first Christians lived together and shared all their belongings and talents, making sure that every member of their community had what they needed. However, there are other aspects that could be strengthened, including: the response to the Kerygma preached by Peter; clarify the 'breaking of bread' (Acts2:42) as the Eucharist; the importance of the teaching of the apostles and prayer (also Acts2:42); the identity and continuity of the first Christian community with the Catholic Church.

The lesson has a fictional story about two young Christians in Rome going to the catacombs for Mass. The story may convey something about the early Christian community in Rome,

---

<sup>228</sup> John Henry Newman. 'The Tradition of Civilisation: The Isles of the North', in *Historical Sketches*, vol.III, chapter X, 116-129. Westminster, Md. 1970. Philip Hughes, *A Popular History of the Catholic Church*, 59-65. London: Burns & Oates, 1958.

but it might be more helpful to present a real story from the early Church, as told in the Book of Acts. There are many such stories to choose from, e.g. the healing of a cripple by Peter; the martyrdom of Stephen; the journeys of St Paul; etc, which are interesting and dramatic, and would engage the pupils' attention and inspire their imaginations.

Much of the lesson material focuses on shared interest in a secular activity as a model for understanding the Church; this secular analogy has some relevance but may also detract from a true understanding of the unique nature of the Church, which transcends all types of secular community.

Lesson, A8-T3L6 - One Kingdom, addresses the important theme of ecumenism, Christian unity. It might have been helpful to have more than one lesson on the theme, and to bring it in earlier than the end of the last year. It would also have been helpful to have prior teaching on the Catholic Church, and her understanding of ecumenism; also to outline the Christian landscape throughout the world today, giving the numbers and distribution of the different Churches and ecclesial communions, noting that the Catholic Church is truly worldwide with over one billion members – more numerous than all other Christian groupings put together.

Under the title of, 'Who is the Greatest?', the point is well made that Christians have differed in their understanding of the teaching of Jesus, but their unity in Jesus transcends their differences. However, it would be helpful to give also the Catholic understanding of the Magisterium, otherwise pupils might get the impression that all views about Jesus are equally valid.

The lesson presents a chronological summary of 'Christianity through the Ages', as a basis for understanding Christian Unity, which is good in principle. Much of the information is good, but there appears to be scope for the strengthening of a number of aspects.

'The Early Church' outlines the missionary work of St Paul, which is good. However, the account might lead pupils to conclude that all the early Christian communities were autonomous, and it would be helpful to include also the apostolic dimension of the early Church and its unity under St Peter, who was appointed by Jesus to lead the Church<sup>229</sup>.

It is good to highlight 'The Nicene Creed' as a statement of the basic truths of our Christian faith. It would also be helpful to highlight the Apostles' Creed, which had its origin in the early baptismal formula of the Church in Rome, and is also universally accepted by Christians as a statement of faith, and is the foundation for the Profession of Faith in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

There is useful information given under the heading, 'The Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church', but it might be strengthened in some aspects. The account is oversimplified and puts all the blame on the Catholic Church, whereas history indicated that both sides contributed to this complex Schism<sup>230</sup>. It would be helpful to mention 'Schism' and to explain what a schism is, and how the position of the Orthodox differs so significantly from that of the Christian communions resulting from the Protestant Reformation. It would be helpful to point out that the Orthodox Churches have apostolic succession, valid orders and sacraments, and virtual identity of beliefs, and differ from the Catholic Church essentially in understanding of the authority of the Pope, reinforced by great differences in culture and history. It would also be helpful to say something about the Eastern Rite Catholic Churches.

---

<sup>229</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 765, 816. Mt.16:18-19. Jn.21:15-17.

<sup>230</sup> Philip Hughes, *A Popular History of the Catholic Church*, 89-92. London: Burns & Oates, 1958.

The sections on 'Martin Luther' and 'The Reformation' have much reasonable information, but also tend to put all the blame on the Catholic Church for this serious disruption of Western Christianity, whereas the situation was rather more complex <sup>231</sup>. It would also be helpful to correct the statement that Ireland was one of the few countries in Europe to remain mostly Catholic, whereas in fact a substantial part of Europe – Poland, Lithuania, Slovakia, Belgium, France, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Austria, Hungary, and Croatia – remained mostly Catholic.

Under the section 'The Counter-Reformation' it might be helpful to add that this movement led to an extraordinary new wave of missionary activity which soon added more members to the Catholic Church that had been lost in the Reformation. The final section on 'Christian Unity' has much good to say about the importance of the unity of all Christians, but it would be helpful to include the Catholic perspective on ecumenism. The final definition of 'The Church' as all who are baptised and follow Jesus, represents a non-denominational perspective; it would be helpful to give a Catholic understanding of the Church.

The video that accompanies this lesson shows groups of young people, Catholic and Protestant, talking about their faith. It should help pupils learn about other Christians and their beliefs and practices, but it will probably be most helpful in the witness of other young people who are committed to Jesus. The lesson also recommends re-viewing the video associated with Lesson A5-T2L4: Celebrating God's Love, in which Jewish, Muslim and Catholic children speak about their faith; it is interesting to note that the Muslim children come across as most knowledgeable, confident and happy in their faith, which may have lessons for Catholics in relation to religious education of young people. Future religious

---

<sup>231</sup> Cf. Philip Hughes, *The Reformation*. London: Burns & Oates, 1960.

education programmes for Catholic primary schools will probably have to take greater account of the presence of pupils from non-Christian homes, due to the greatly increased immigration from many countries into Ireland over the past decade. Much could be learned in this regard from the experience of Catholic schools in other countries which have successfully handled significant minorities, sometimes even majorities, of non-Christian pupils, while avoiding compromising the Catholic formation of Catholic pupils.<sup>232</sup>

It would also be helpful to have teaching for Catholic pupils on the great religions of the world from a Catholic perspective.

### **3.3.6 Mary and the Saints**

#### INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

##### Mary

It is good that all Teacher's Books have information under the sub-heading 'Mary', on the following pages: Alive-O 1 - XI; Alive-O 2 - XI; Alive-O 3 - XVI; Alive-O 4 - XVIII; Alive-O 5 – [17]; Alive-O 6 – [17]; Alive-O 7 – [14]; Alive-O 8 – [14].

The information is progressively developed over the eight Teacher's Books to include the following: Mary's 'yes' made possible God's new covenant and through her the Word was made flesh, which we remember in the Angelus; we meet Mary at the Nativity as the Mother of Jesus, God's Son; Mary deserves our love and devotion, and she is a model for us to imitate; she stood at the foot of the cross with Jesus; Mary loves and protects us; Mary's place

---

<sup>232</sup> A creative approach to religious diversity in a Catholic school is described by Damian Breen, of Warwick University's Religions and Education Research Unit, in 'Religious diversity, inter-ethnic relations and the Catholic school: introducing the *responsive* approach to single faith schooling'. *British Journal of Religious Education*, March 2009, 103-115.



in God's plan is celebrated in the Rosary; the principal feasts through which we remember and honour Mary are the Annunciation, Immaculate Conception, Assumption, Mother of God, and Mary's Birthday.

There is much good information on Mary as noted above, but it might be helpfully strengthened in the following aspects:

It is good to mention Mary's feast-days, but it might be helpful to bring them in earlier than Book 8. It would be helpful to explain the meaning of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, that Mary from her conception was preserved from original sin and she did not commit any personal sin throughout her life.<sup>233</sup>

Mary's title of "Mother of God" is mentioned as a feast-day. It would be helpful to explain that Mary is the mother of the eternal Son of God made man, who is God himself.<sup>234</sup>

It would be helpful to note that Mary became the mother of Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit, that both she and her husband Joseph were of the House of David, but that Joseph was only Jesus' foster-father, and that Mary remained a Virgin throughout her life; she had no other children except Jesus.<sup>235</sup>

It is good to mention the Assumption feast-day; it would also be helpful to give the meaning, that Mary at the end of her life was taken up body and soul into the glory of heaven.<sup>236</sup>

It is good to note that Mary is a model for our imitation, but the Information could helpfully be more specific about her example of faith and obedience, humility and love, in union with her Son Jesus, and that she always leads people to Jesus.<sup>237</sup>

---

<sup>233</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 508.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.* 509.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.* 485, 496-501.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.* 974.

It is good to note that Mary stood at the foot of the cross, but it could also be helpful to add that she is Mother of the Church and all members of the Church, because from the cross Jesus gave his mother to his beloved disciple with the words, “Behold your mother”.<sup>238</sup>

It is good to note that Mary deserves our love and devotion. It might also be helpful to clarify that the Church approves many places of pilgrimage and special devotion to Mary (including some of the sites of reported apparitions, such as Guadalupe, Knock, Lourdes and Fatima), not as matters requiring an assent of faith, but as supportive of the spiritual lives of the faithful.

### The Saints

The Introductory Information in the Teacher's Books does not explicitly address the Saints, which might helpfully have been done. However, there is information relevant to the saints under the sub-headings ‘Lives of Believers’ or ‘Christian Witness’ on the following pages: Alive-O 1 - VII; Alive-O 2 - VII; Alive-O 3 - X; Alive-O 4 - X; Alive-O 5 – [9]; Alive-O 6 – [9]; Alive-O 7 – [9]; Alive-O 8 – [9].

Alive-O 1-4 has the following information under the subheading 'Lives of Believers': 'Down through the ages there have always been people who, in remarkable ways, have tried to make Christ present in their world. Some of them have been written into history and are well known to many. Others have lived obscure lives and will never be known except to a few. In their work, in their lives, in their prayer they show us who God is and what God is asking of us'. Alive-O 5-8, under the sub-heading ‘Christian Witness’, adds that exploration of such

---

<sup>237</sup> Ibid. 507, 964, 967-968.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid. 964.

lives helps us to come to a deeper understanding of what the Christian call means when translated into daily living, and includes a helpful quotation from GDC 95 which specifically mentions 'the saints'.

The information on Saints might be strengthened by including the following:

All those in heaven are saints; by formally designating some of them as “Saints”, the Church recognises their exceptional love of God and goodness of life, which is inspired by the Holy Spirit. The Church celebrates the saints on their special feast-days throughout the year (the feast-day being normally the date of the saint’s death and entry to heaven), and encourages the faithful to follow the example of the saints and ask for their intercession with God.<sup>239</sup>

The 'communion of saints' expresses the three states of the Church – those who are pilgrims on earth, the dead who are being purified in Purgatory, and the blessed in heaven<sup>240</sup>.

The Church has a formal process of beatification and canonisation of saints, but in the first millennium of Christianity the process was a less formal recognition of those who were martyrs for the faith or of exceptional holiness.<sup>241</sup>

## LESSON MATERIAL ON MARY AND THE SAINTS

### *Mary and Joseph:*

In analysing Mary as she appears in the Programme, it seems most convenient to also include St Joseph, because their lives are so intimately connected. There are many lessons which address Mary throughout all eight years of the Programme, which is very good, because of her great importance to Christians. Many of the great events and themes in the life of Mary

---

<sup>239</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 688, 828, 961, 1023.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.* 954, 962.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.* 828.

are revisited several times in the Programme, which is very appropriate, so that the understanding of these themes can be progressively developed from the junior classes right through to the senior. It seems most appropriate therefore to present this analysis mainly structured on the great events in the life of Mary, which are parallel to the great events in the life of Jesus.

The *Annunciation* is addressed in a relatively simple way in Alive-O 3 and Alive-O 5, and then in a deeper way in Alive-O 8. It may have been more helpful to introduce pupils to the Annunciation at an earlier stage, because by the time they first meet the Annunciation they have already had lessons about the Visitation, Nativity, and Jesus growing up in Nazareth.

Lessons A3-T1L13 - One Moment, and A3-T3L1 - Mary's Joy, cover the basic events of the Annunciation: the appearance of the Angel Gabriel, his announcement to Mary that she would 'have a very special baby boy', whose name will be Jesus and who 'will be God's son', and that Mary's cousin Elizabeth would also be having a baby; Mary's response that she will do whatever God asks. There appears scope to express better the identity of Jesus as true God as well as true man, because describing him as 'God's son' and 'a very special baby boy' may not be sufficiently clear, particularly as the account is followed by an activity in which the pupils all tell each other, 'You are very special'. Mary is described in the text as 'mother of Jesus' whereas the title 'Mother of God' only appears in the Hail Mary prayer.

The illustrations of the Annunciation might have been made more meaningful to the pupils by showing the Angel Gabriel. There may also be scope for misunderstanding that Mary was pregnant at the time of the Annunciation because the illustrations show her in a position and clothing that could conceal a pregnancy, while the illustrations of the Visitation, which happened immediately after the Annunciation, show Mary as definitely in an advanced stage

of pregnancy.

Lesson, A5-T1L9 - Mary Wonders -- Who Is the One Who Is Coming?, has an account of the Annunciation which is strengthened by including that Mary will become pregnant by the power of the Holy Spirit, and that her son will be called 'The Son of the Most High' and 'Son of God'. The question and answer in the Pupils Book might also be strengthened by adding 'Mother of God' to 'mother of Jesus and our mother' as the reasons why Christians honour Mary.

Lesson, A5-T1L11 - Joseph Wonders -- Who Is the One Who Is Coming?, further strengthens the identity of Jesus, and thereby Mary, by stating that, 'Jesus Christ is the only Son of God who became man to save us. He is truly God and truly man'. There is a good account of the appearance of an angel to Joseph in a dream, and the angel's message to Joseph telling him not to be afraid to take Mary as his wife because she had become pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit. The illustrations could be made more meaningful to the pupils by showing the Angel. The text could also be more helpful in developing the important role of Joseph as Jesus' foster-father and guardian by saying much more than he would help Mary to look after Jesus.

Lesson, A8-T2L6 – Mary, also addresses the Annunciation. There is a brief account of the message of the Angel Gabriel to Mary, with the helpful connection of the Angel's message with the Hail Mary prayer, and Mary's readiness to believe, to say yes, and to be the first disciple of Jesus. The text says it must have been extremely difficult for Mary to understand what this might mean, but that she took a great risk, delving into her own inner energies and strength. However, this teaching could be greatly strengthened to better reflect Mary's quite extraordinary, exalted and unique role in the salvation of the entire human race. Mary would

have been acutely aware, as would all Jewish women of that time, of the possibility of being chosen as mother of the Messiah. It would be helpful to bring out that Mary was predestined and chosen from all eternity to be the mother of Jesus, God the Son, but that God willed that the Incarnation should be preceded by assent on the part of the predestined mother, so that just as a woman had a share in the coming of death, so also should a woman contribute to the coming of life. Mary's obedience reversed the disobedience of Eve. Throughout the Old Covenant the mission of many holy women prepared for that of Mary, fulfilling in her, the exalted Daughter of Sion, God's new plan of salvation<sup>242</sup>.

The *Visitation* of Mary to Elizabeth is addressed in lessons A2-T1L13 – Preparing, and A3-T3L1 - Mary's Joy. The accounts of the Visitation focus on the great joy that the cousins probably experienced in meeting each other, along with many imagined additions of a secular nature. The teaching might be strengthened by focusing instead on the dramatic Scriptural accounts (Luke 1:5-25, 39-66) of the connected events of the conception, birth and naming of Elizabeth's baby, John the Baptist, and of the Visitation itself, including the leaping of John in Elizabeth's womb the moment she heard Mary's voice, Elizabeth's greeting to Mary, the great significance of Elizabeth's greeting and the inclusion of some of her words in the Hail Mary prayer. The illustrations might be strengthened by being more respectful of both Mary and Elizabeth.

The *Nativity* of Jesus is addressed in several lessons.

---

<sup>242</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 487-489.

Lessons A1-T1L14 - Mary and Joseph Wait, and A1-T1L15 - Jesus is Born, focus on the journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem of Mary and Joseph, their searching for a place to stay and finding the cave, the shepherds hearing the angels singing, the birth of Jesus and his placement in the manger, and the arrival of the shepherds and the three magi. It is a simple and reasonable introduction to the Nativity for young pupils. It might have been helpful to precede these lessons with the story of the Annunciation and some information on who Mary and Joseph were. The lesson says that Mary named the baby Jesus, and that Joseph wrapped him in a blanket and laid him in a manger. It would be more helpful to respect the Scripture account, in which it is Joseph who names the baby, and Mary is the one who wraps him and lays him in a manger<sup>243</sup>.

Lessons A2-T1L15 - Celebrating the Birth of Jesus, and A2-T3L4 - I Want a Word, have simple accounts of the Nativity. They might be strengthened by clarifying that Jesus is more than ‘a very special baby’, to state that Jesus is true God and true man, God the Son incarnate. It would also be helpful if Mary were described not only as ‘mother of Jesus’, but also as ‘Mother of God’.

Lesson A3-T1L15 - The Moment They'd All Been Waiting For, has a simple account of the Nativity, which is repeated in lesson A3-T3L1 - Mary's Joy, in the context of the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary. The Nativity account is reasonable, but could be strengthened in clarifying the divinity of Jesus and consequent identity of Mary as Mother of God.

The *Presentation of Jesus in the Temple* is addressed in lessons A1-T1L13 - Simeon and Anna Wait, and A3-T3L1 - Mary's Joy. The focus is on Simeon and Anna, and tends to transpose much of Simeon’s role onto Anna; Mary and Joseph’s role could helpfully be

---

<sup>243</sup> Matthew 1:25; Luke 2:7.

brought out better.

The theme of Jesus growing up and Mary and Joseph's involvement is addressed in a number of lessons:

Lesson A3-T1L7 - In Jesus' Time, addresses the various activities that might be going on in a place like Nazareth in Jesus' time; it is a reasonable way to help pupils understand the kind of life that Jesus might have lived. The illustration in the Pupil's Book is potentially unhelpful because it could give the impression that Jesus had five sisters and a younger brother. It would be good to affirm Mary's perpetual virginity, and that she had no other children but Jesus.

The Finding of the boy Jesus in the Temple is addressed in lessons A3-T1L8 - Jesus - Journey Man, and A3-T3L1 - Mary's Joy. The accounts are mostly reasonable, but could benefit from less imagined additions and closer connection with the Scripture original. It is unhelpful that Joseph is portrayed as cross and ill-tempered, which is not in Scripture.

Lesson A5-T2L3 - At Home with God's Love, addresses the care given to Jesus by Mary and Joseph as his mother and foster-father. This is very good in principle. However, the teaching could be greatly strengthened by bringing out the complementarity of mothering and fathering, recognizing that fathers and mothers each have unique capabilities, characteristics and gifts for their children. The lesson tends to equate mothering and fathering, and even identify parental care with mothering, as exemplified in the examples given and the discussion question, 'What kind of mothering things might Joseph have done?' It would meet a great need of our times to present Joseph as the outstanding model he was of husband and



father – a man of integrity, listening and obedient to God, strong and courageous, caring and loving in leading, protecting and providing for his family. The inclusion in the Programme of the Flight into Egypt and the time of exile there could have helped in the presentation of Joseph as a model of Christian manhood.

Mary's involvement in *Jesus' public ministry* is addressed in lessons A6-T1L5 – Mary, and A7-T1L7 - Mary and the Mysteries of Light. This is most particularly expressed in the account of the Wedding Feast at Cana based on John2:1-11, which is reasonable in many respects, but could benefit from less imagined additions, especially the linking together of Jesus and Mary Magdalene. The account could also have helpfully included the final verse 11, 'This was the first of the signs given by Jesus; it was given at Cana in Galilee. He let his glory be seen, and his disciples believed in him', and brought out better the great significance of the event, including the relevance for the Eucharist. The ensuing prayer time has a response, 'Mary, mother of God! Mary, mother of Jesus!' which is very good, but there is scope to bring out better that the miracle at Cana illustrates the power of Mary as an intercessor with Jesus.

The video associated with lesson, A6-T1L5 – Mary, shows a selection of statues, pictures, icons, and stained glass windows of Mary, which are inspiring, beautiful, and reverential. These images should add greatly to the pupils' understanding of Mary in the great tradition of the Church, and might helpfully have also been included the Pupil's Books, where the illustrations tend to emphasise the ordinariness of Mary.

Mary's involvement in the *Passion of Jesus* is addressed in lesson A4-T3L1 - Mary Our Mother. The lesson brings out well Mary's love and faithfulness, and the extraordinary

sorrow she suffered during the passion and death of her beloved son, Jesus. It could have been helpful to include that the apostle John was also at the foot of the cross, and that Jesus gave Mary to John as mother, and John to Mary as son<sup>244</sup>, and the great significance of this event for understanding Mary as mother of the Church.

The great event of *Pentecost* is addressed in lessons, A5-T3L6 - Gifted with the Spirit, A6-T3L6 - The Holy Spirit, and A7-T2L7 - Enkindling the Spirit. It is good that two of the lessons mention the presence of Mary, but the illustrations do not identify Mary or give her any special prominence. It could be helpful if the illustrations followed the traditional approach of showing Mary as very much in the centre of the group of apostles and disciples, which seems reasonable given that she is the only person named in Scripture in addition to the Apostles themselves<sup>245</sup>.

Mary's *Immaculate Conception* is addressed in lesson, A8-T2L6 – Mary, which says that, 'The Church teaches that Mary is the only person ever to be free from any trace of sin from the first moment of her existence. Mary is called The Immaculate Conception and this is why we say that she is full of grace and blessed among women'. This is not unreasonable, but could helpfully include the dimensions of freedom from original sin through the merits of Christ, as expressed in the dogma proclaimed by the Pope in 1854: 'The most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of Almighty God and by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, Saviour of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin'<sup>246</sup>.

It would also be helpful to amend the statement in the lesson that, 'Christians need to realise

---

<sup>244</sup> John 19:26.

<sup>245</sup> Acts 1:12-14.

<sup>246</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 491.

that, like Mary, each one of us is filled with the gift of God's grace and favour'. The statement could give the impression that Mary is not unique, and that we all share the same fullness of grace and freedom from original sin, as if we were all 'immaculately conceived'. Still, Mary is the type of all authentic Christians, as many Fathers stress.

Mary's *Assumption* is well expressed in lessons A6-T1L5 – Mary, and A8-T2L6 – Mary. It could be helpful to add that the Assumption has been defined as a dogma by the Church, and to link the Assumption with the Fifth Glorious Mystery: the Crowning of Mary as Queen of Heaven.

It is helpful that in a number of the lessons pupils are led to prepare a May altar in honour of Mary. The prayers related to Mary as presented in the Programme – the Hail Mary, the Angelus, and the Rosary – are analysed further in Section 3.6 Prayer below.

### The Saints.

There are four lessons that address the *Feast of All Saints*: A1-T1L8 - Hallowe'en; A2-T1L8 - Hallowe'en; A3-T1L6 - We Remember Together; A4-T1L6 - The Feast Of All Saints.

The lessons tend to treat the Feasts of All Saints and All Souls as the same feast, which commemorates all those who have died. It would be helpful to give a clear teaching on the communion of saints, in particular the three states of the Church: those who are still pilgrims on earth, those who have died and are being purified in Purgatory, and those who are in glory with God in heaven<sup>247</sup>. This understanding of the communion of saints should provide a clear foundation for understanding these two great Feasts of the Church, how they are related and

---

<sup>247</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 946-962.

how they differ. (The Feast of All Souls is analysed in greater detail in Section 3.3.7 The Last Things, below).

There are also ways in which each of the lessons may be strengthened. The focus in lesson A1-T1L8 - Hallowe'en is on secular story-telling, including a story with magic; this could helpfully be changed to a story about an interesting saint. The focus in lesson A2-T1L8 - Hallowe'en is on the themes of light and dark, with a fanciful story about the Waxicles and little Nite-Lite; this could also helpfully be replaced with a story about real saints. Lesson A3-T1L6 - We Remember Together, has some good material on those who kept the faith, showed love of Jesus in their lives and are now in heaven; however, it would be helpful to clarify the difference between the Feast of All Saints and the Feast of All Souls. Lesson A4-T1L6 - The Feast Of All Saints brings out well that apparently ordinary and unknown people can be true saints, people of great charity and holiness. It would be helpful to clarify that the Feast of All Saints is not just for the little known or forgotten people, but for all who are in heaven, both famous and unknown, officially canonised or not.

Eight individual Irish saints are presented in the lesson materials, as follows:

St Patrick is presented in Lessons A1-T2L8 - My World in Spring; A2-T2L7 - Saint Patrick; A3-T3L7 – Treasures From Long Ago; A5-T1L6 &7 – Christianity Comes to Our Country(1)&(2). It is good to include information on St Patrick because of his great significance for the Church in Ireland. There is much good and relevant information in the

stories about our National Apostle, but there are also suggestions for strengthening of the presentation<sup>248</sup>.

One of the stories says that Patrick missed Ireland and wanted to return; however, Patrick's own *Confessions* show that he returned to Ireland, not out of personal feeling or desire, but only because he received a call from God to return.

The stories of St Patrick in the lessons might well have included his conversion while a slave in Ireland (he says in his *Confessions* that he was not religious prior to his capture), and more on the adventure of his escape, winning acceptance of the sailors to be taken on the ship exporting dogs to France, their serious difficulties when they arrived in France and his eventual reuniting with his family. It would have been interesting to tell of the dream in which the young man Victor came with letters from Ireland, (which recalled St Paul's dream of the Macedonian who appealed to him to come to Greece – Acts 16:9-10). Also to tell of Patrick's study under St Germanus, his ordination as bishop and his commissioning by Pope St Celestine I to go to Ireland.

The stories of St Patrick in the lessons say that he told the people of the love of God, which is good; however, it could be made clear that Patrick brought Christianity to Ireland and established the Church here. The stories include the legends of the Children of Lir and of Oisín in Tír na nÓg. These legends are colourful, but they are fanciful fiction, so might their inclusion confuse pupils as to the historical credibility of the life of St Patrick?

*St Brigid* is presented in lessons A1-T2L3 - We Celebrate Saint Brigid, and A2-T2L3 - Peace

---

<sup>248</sup> There are many authentic sources for the life of St Patrick, beginning with the *Confessions* and the *Letter to Coroticus*. A short presentation on Patrick's life and letters is given by Joseph Duffy in *Patrick in his own words*, Dublin: Veritas Publications, 1972. A more extended scholarly analysis of Patrick's writings is presented by Fr Daniel Conneely in *The Letters of St Patrick*. Maynooth: An Sagart, 1993. A highly readable and authentic account is presented by the successful novelist Paul Gallico in *The Steadfast Man – A Life of St Patrick*. London: The Catholic Book Club, 1958.

Around Me. It is good to include this great and popular saint, who was known as the Mary of the Gael (Muire na nGael), her establishment of a convent in Kildare and her extraordinary generosity to the poor. The legend of Brigid's cloak gets great attention, which will probably engage the attention of the pupils, but may strain the credibility of the story of St Brigid.

St Columba (St Columcille) is presented in lesson A3-T1L6 - We Remember Together. There is much scope for strengthening of the lesson by giving the dramatic and fascinating story of this great saint, who was the first of the missionaries to bring the Christian faith from Ireland. The story about the saint talking to his horse is unhelpful.

St Gobnait is presented in the lesson A4-T3L10 - The Spirit Of God In Saint Gobnait. Again, the main focus is on the legend; there is plenty of historical material available on Irish saints which would probably be more helpful.

St Brendan the Navigator is presented in lesson A5-T3L8 – Brendan The Navigator. It would probably have been more helpful to concentrate on the very interesting information about this saint which is considered historically reliable, rather than on a colourful but fanciful incident which is clearly legendary.

St Canaire is presented in lesson A6-T3L7 - St Canaire. The lesson focuses on a legendary confrontation between St Canaire and St Senan.

Saints Kevin & Laurence O'Toole are presented in lesson A7-T1L8 - The Saints. The presentations on these two saints are comprehensive and are accompanied by excellent illustrations, which should prove very helpful to the pupils.

In addition to the Irish saints there are presentations on three other saints, all from Europe.

St Vincent de Paul is well presented in lesson A1-T1L8 - Hallowe'en, with emphasis on his outstanding charitable works for the poor.

St Thérèse of Lisieux, the Little Flower, is well presented in lessons A4-T1L6 - The Feast Of All Saints, and A8-T2L2 - Spirit-Filled Life.

St Francis is presented in the lesson, A6-T1L4 - St Francis Cares for Creation. The first part of the story gives a good account of Francis' early years up to the time of his conversion and his radical commitment of his life to God. After that the focus is on Francis' care for the poor, and his great love of nature, of birds and animals, with which he seemed to be able to communicate. These traits and qualities have endeared successive generations of people of all faiths to this most popular of saints over the centuries. The account might helpfully be strengthened by bringing out the fundamental spiritual nature of St Francis' conversion and mission, his burning and unconditional love for Jesus Christ as his Lord and Saviour, whose call to Francis to 'Re-Build My Church' was the wellspring for his care for people and the created world, his life of prayer and penance, his uncompromising commitment to holy poverty, his stigmata and his visions, and his passionate dedication and obedience to the Catholic Church as the body of Christ.

In presenting the Saints in a primary school RE programme, one of the greatest difficulties is on making a selection, because there are thousands of wonderful and inspiring saints from which to choose. One might suggest that the avoidance of legendary incidents related to saints might give scope for widening the choice. The universal character of the Church might be brought out better by including some saints who are not European. Missionary saints might be better represented; the only missionary in addition to St Patrick is St Columba, but

the account of Columba does not mention his missionary activities. It seems important that the martyrs of the Church should be represented, because of the great importance of martyrdom for the Church; in the early centuries of the Church it was only martyrs who figured in the list of saints. An appreciation for the Catholic Church might be served by including a Pope who is a Saint.

It might also have been helpful to give the Feast-Days of all the saints that are presented in the lessons, and to note that saints' Feast-Days are normally the anniversaries of their deaths, when they were 'born' into the new life of heaven.

### **3.3.7 The Last Things (Eschatology)**

#### INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

The Information for teachers on the Last Things appears under the subheading 'Heaven and Hell' in Teachers Books 3-8, and under the subheading 'Purgatory' in Teachers Books 5-8. The information appears on the following pages: Alive-O 3 – p. XVII; Alive-O 4 – p. XVIII-XIX; Alive-O 5 – p. [17]-[19]; Alive-O 6 – p. [17]-[18]; Alive-O 7 – p. [15]; Alive-O 8 – p. [15]-[16].

Heaven and Hell. The information in Teachers Books 3-8 is the same, apart from a small amendment in Books 7 & 8.

The Information contains much that is good about heaven: after death we are all called to eternal happiness with God; we already share in the life of Jesus; heaven is a state of



happiness with God, much greater happiness than we can possibly imagine; this life will one day lead to fullness of life and joy in union with Christ.

The information also states that it is through the resurrection of Christ that the possibility of this new life has been achieved; this should be amended to state that it is through the death and resurrection of Christ, and the sending of the Holy Spirit, that our salvation has been achieved.

The Information states that pupils, some of whom may have been exposed to frightening images of hell or have been threatened with hell, will not be introduced to the words 'hell' or 'mortal sin', but only the spiritual reality underlying these words – that those who refused to love God and to love others cannot live with God, and will remain separated from God.

Sensitivity is important when teaching young pupils about these matters. However, to state that there is a spiritual reality underlying the words 'hell' and 'mortal sin', might give the impression that hell and mortal sin are not real; it would seem better to follow the Church's approach of treating hell and mortal sin as definitely real and giving clear explanations of what the words mean.

If some pupils are suffering from frightening or incorrect images of hell, it seems best not to leave them in ignorance about hell and mortal sin but to give them the truth of the Church's teaching in a simple and non-threatening manner. Jesus taught a lot about hell, and the Church recognises that teaching about hell can be an admonition, a call to responsibility and conversion <sup>249</sup>. There are analogies in human life of the value of admonition: caring parents will warn their children about real dangers – such as crossing the road, playing with fire,

---

<sup>249</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1036.

smoking, etc. – in order to protect their children from harm, but communicated in a prudent way which will not generate undue alarm or phobias.

It would be helpful that the Information should include that hell is very unpleasant, a state of terrible suffering; to state merely that hell involves separation from God might not bother a person who cares little about God, or who may even welcome the prospect of an afterlife free of a God who would challenge a current disordered lifestyle.

Books 7 and 8 add that ‘there is a sin that is mortal, which cuts us off from God, and this total separation from God has often been called hell’. This is good, but it might be helpful to clarify that committing one mortal sin will not separate us from God forever; we will only go to hell if we die in a state of un-repented mortal sin.<sup>250</sup>

Purgatory. The information on Purgatory is the same in Books 5 through 8. The information is a good summary of the teaching of the Church on Purgatory, and gives the relevant references and quotations from CCC 1030-1032.

While there is much good information about the Last Things in the Teachers Books as noted above, it would be helpful to give a more comprehensive summary of the Church's teaching<sup>251</sup>, which might include the following additional items:

---

<sup>250</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 1033.

<sup>251</sup> A clear summary of the Church's teaching on eschatology seems particularly important in view of apparent contemporary confusion about the Last Things. Joseph Colombo in 'Eschatology Past and Present: A Review Essay', *The Living Light*, 1989, 266-273, notes that today, more often than not, the question "Is there life after death?" has displaced the traditional question "What is the shape and character of life in the world to come". Colombo notes that popular images of the afterlife are more effective in shaping the attitudes of the Christian community than official church teaching.

Everyone has a spiritual immortal soul. Our soul separates from the body at death, but will be reunited with the body at the final Resurrection at the end of time. Life is changed, not ended, by death.<sup>252</sup>

Jesus our Saviour, by his death and resurrection, has opened heaven to us, and gives us this grace of new life in Baptism.<sup>253</sup>

Jesus gave a sign and a pledge of the resurrection from the dead when he was on earth by restoring to life some of those who had died: Lazarus, the daughter of Jairus, the son of the widow of Nain.<sup>254</sup>

Immediately after death the immortal soul will be judged by Christ, in accordance with the person's works and faith. This 'particular judgment' will lead to entrance into the blessedness of heaven – through purification or immediately – or everlasting damnation.<sup>255</sup>

Hell is a state of eternal unhappiness and suffering.<sup>256</sup>

Catholics celebrate funerals to pray for the person who has died, especially at the Eucharist when celebrated, and to comfort relatives and friends.<sup>257</sup>

Jesus will come again at the end of time (only God knows the day and the hour) to judge the living and the dead in a 'general judgment'. The bodies of the dead will rise and be reunited with their souls, and the material universe itself will be transformed. The just will reign with Christ forever in heaven, and the unjust will be separated from God in hell.<sup>258</sup>

---

<sup>252</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 366, 1016.

<sup>253</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 1213, 1987.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.* 646, 994.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.* 1021-1023.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.* 1034-1035, 1056-1057.

<sup>257</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1684-1690.

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.* 1016, 1038-1048, 1059-1060.

## LESSON MATERIAL ON THE LAST THINGS

The Last Things are addressed in *Alive-O* 2, 3 and 4 in the following lessons: A2-T1L7b - Let's Remember; A3-T1L6 - We Remember Together; A4-T1L6 - The Feast Of All Saints.

The approach in all three lessons is similar, so they are analysed here together.

The principal focus of the lessons is on the Feasts of All Saints and All Souls. This is a very suitable approach which provides a good opportunity to teach pupils about the Catholic understanding of the Last Things.

It would be helpful if the lesson material distinguished clearly between these two great Feasts, but the approach tends to treat them as if they were one feast with the same meaning. This is exemplified in the words of a poem: 'Remember those this special time who live with God above, All Saints, All Souls, and all our own who live with God in love'.

The focus is very much on remembering all those who have died, with the implication that they are all in heaven, as exemplified in the poem above and in the prayers: 'We ask God to care for those who have died. We know that they are with God', and 'Today let us remember people who have died and who are now with God in heaven'.

The lessons also lead the pupils in praying for those who have died: 'Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord. May they rest in peace'. It is good to teach pupils to pray for the dead, but it would be helpful to give some teaching on the Communion of Saints and Purgatory so that the pupils would understand why we pray for the dead.

The Last Things are also addressed in *Alive-O* 6 and 8 in the following lessons:

Lesson: A6-T1L9 - Happy Ever After, has a poem titled, 'A Letter to Grandad', in which a boy hopes his dead grandfather is happy in heaven, but also tells that he misses his grandad so much. A poem by Seamus Heaney poignantly recalls the death of a four-year old brother, who was knocked down by a car. The video for this lesson is about a boy called Stephen who was tragically killed in an accident; the sensitive presentation brings out the trauma of the experience for Stephen's parents and brothers, while at the same time there is Christian joy and hope. The poems and video are deeply touching, with the potential to stir the emotions of the pupils, especially if they have experienced a family bereavement themselves.

The Worksheet asks each pupil to remember someone who has died and to write down things about that person, in order to explore the experience of bereavement and loss. The pupils are then led to share in open class about their own experience of the death of a family member, and what happened afterwards – the wake, the coffin, the funeral. Teachers are advised that this could be traumatic and that pupils could become emotional, which may be difficult to handle. To help the teachers there is a Bibliography of 24 books, only one of which appears to be Christian.

It might be preferable to teach pupils more about the Catholic understanding of the Last Things, rather than putting them through exercises with risk of emotional distress.

The lesson includes prayer for the dead and speaks of a purification after death, which is good. However, the wording could give the impression that this purification is automatic, immediate and painless, which hardly gives reason why we should pray for the dead. It might

be helpful to mention Purgatory, and give the Church's teaching of a purifying fire for lesser faults, during which our offerings can bring the dead some consolation <sup>259</sup>.

There is an excellent quotation from 1 Corinthians 2:9, which tells of the wonder of heaven.

The story, 'Life after Death', says that because the disciples met Jesus after his resurrection they were sure God wanted to do the same for everyone. It might be helpful to clarify that the hope of our resurrection rests on our salvation from sin won through Jesus' death on the Cross.

Lesson: A8-T3L8 - In the Kingdom – Forever, covers many aspects of the Last Things: God invites all to live in the Kingdom here on earth, loving God and one another, and to live with him forever in heaven; heaven is a state of happiness much greater than we can possibly imagine; how we live our lives on earth affects whether or not we will enjoy heaven when we die; all are invited to heaven, but that invitation may be rejected, cutting oneself off from God the Father's love; hell involves separation from God's love; after death there is a final purification called Purgatory.

There are some ways in which the teaching may be strengthened. The horizontal dimension of living in the Kingdom on earth, involving loving one another, is well emphasised, but the vertical dimension of loving God could be brought out better, in particular a commitment in faith to Jesus as Lord and Saviour. Jesus is presented as the one who showed us how to live and who was raised to new life by God the Father; it would be important to bring out that Jesus is both God and man, who came to Earth to give his life on the cross for our salvation from sin, which opens to us the gates of heaven. It would also be important to say that Jesus

---

<sup>259</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1031-1032.

will be our Judge according to our works and faith, immediately after death and again at the General Judgment at his Second Coming at the end of time, with clarification on the nature of these judgments.

It is good to say that hell involves separation from God's love, but it would also be good to be explicit that hell is a state of eternal unhappiness and suffering, to which one consigns oneself through dying in un-repentant mortal sin. It would be helpful to say more than God purifies those in Purgatory with his love, to better reflect the Church's teaching that Purgatory involves a cleansing fire, during which our prayers can help the souls in Purgatory.

It would also be helpful to note that everyone has a spiritual immortal soul, which separates from the body at death, but will be reunited at the final Resurrection at the end of time (only God knows the day and the hour). The material universe will then also be transformed in a way which we do not understand, and the just will reign with Christ forever in heaven

### **3.4 CELEBRATION OF CHRISTIAN MYSTERY**

#### **3.4.1 Liturgy & Seasons of the Church**

##### INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

There is information for teachers on the liturgy of the Church in Teacher's Book 3 page XVIII, and Teachers Book 4 page XX, under the heading 'Liturgical and Sacramental Initiation', and in the other Teacher's Books under the heading 'Liturgical Education' on the following pages: Alive-O 5: [19]-[20]; Alive-O 6: [19]; Alive-O 7: [16]; and Alive-O 8: [17].

The Information states that parents, priests, and teachers must all play a role in liturgical and sacramental education, if such education is to be fully effective. Faith is needed to understand and respond to the liturgy, and at the same time participation in the liturgy helps deepen faith.

The Information also states that the Programme allows time for the main events of the liturgical year, as follows: Feast of All Saints; Commemoration of the Faithful Departed; Feasts of our National Patrons; Advent; Christmas; Ash Wednesday; Lent; Easter; Holy Week; Pentecost; Ordinary Time.

This Information for teachers is helpful, but it might be even more helpful if expanded to include the following:

The liturgy is the public prayer of the Church, in which she celebrates above all the death and resurrection of Christ which accomplished our salvation. The members of the Church come together, usually in the church building, and all participate. The Holy Spirit helps us to pray with Jesus to God the Father, uniting us to God and to one another. Liturgical celebration can include sign and symbol, words and actions, song and music, and sacred art.<sup>260</sup>

The liturgy is led primarily by Jesus Christ, our redeemer. Bishops, priests and deacons act in the Person of Christ the Head in leading the prayer and worship.<sup>261</sup>

Sunday, the "Lord's Day," is the principal day when the Church assembles for prayer, especially the celebration of Mass, because Sunday is the day of the Resurrection. Sunday is the day of the Christian family, and the day of joy and rest from work. Sunday is the foundation and kernel of the whole liturgical year.<sup>262</sup>

---

<sup>260</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1067, 1071-1073, 1145, 1153, 1156, 1159.

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid.* 1142, 1188.

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.* 1193.



In the course of the year, the Church celebrates the great events of salvation history and the whole mystery of Christ from his Incarnation and Nativity through his death, Resurrection and Ascension, to Pentecost and the expectation of the second coming of the Lord.<sup>263</sup>

The Church celebrates the season of Advent, in preparation for the first coming of Jesus Christ, whose birth we celebrate at Christmas. In Advent we also look forward to Jesus' second coming at the end of time.<sup>264</sup>

Easter is the greatest feast of the year, when we celebrate the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus, which accomplished our salvation. We prepare for Easter during Lent, a season of penance leading to conversion, with prayer, fasting, sacrifices and alms-giving to those in need.<sup>265</sup>

At Pentecost the Church celebrates the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the beginning of the age of the Church.<sup>266</sup>

By keeping the feast-days of the saints -- first of all, the holy Mother of God, then the apostles, the martyrs, and other saints -- on fixed days of the liturgical year, the Church gives glory to Christ for the saints and encourages the faithful to follow their example.<sup>267</sup>

Other liturgical celebrations include: sacramentals, especially blessings; popular piety and devotions, including pilgrimages, processions, stations of the cross, the rosary, medals and relics; Christian funerals.<sup>268</sup>

---

<sup>263</sup> Ibid. 1095, 1168-1171, 1194-1195.

<sup>264</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 522-526.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid. 540, 1134-38, 1169, 2043.

<sup>266</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 731, 1076.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid. 1172-1173, 1195.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid. 1667-1679.

## LESSON MATERIAL ON LITURGY & CHURCH SEASONS

The Seasons of the Church Year are addressed in many lessons of the Programme, and in each of the eight years of the Programme, which is very good. The principal Seasons are revisited many times, which is entirely appropriate in order to go into greater depth and detail corresponding with the growing ability of the pupils and their understanding.

The Lesson A7-T1L12-14 - Waiting in Joyful Hope, gives a reasonable summary of the Church's Liturgical Year. It is helpful to state that the Liturgical Year follows the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, but it would be more helpful to show that the Liturgical Year celebrates the full sweep of salvation history from Creation right through to the Second Coming of Jesus at the end of time, of which the life, death and resurrection of Jesus forms the heart and summit.

### Feast of All Saints, and Feast of All Souls.

These two great feasts of the Church are addressed several times in the Programme, which is very good in principle. They have been analysed above in Section 3.3.6 Mary and the Saints, and Section 3.3.7 The Last Things (Eschatology).

### Advent.

In the Lesson A1-T1L13 - Simeon and Anna Wait, it is good that the waiting of Simeon and Anna is related to the time of Advent, when we wait for the birth of Jesus at Christmas. However, it would be helpful to bring out better what Simeon and Anna were actually waiting for in the context of salvation history, which is the foundation for understanding the true meaning of Advent.

Lesson A2-T1L14 - Preparing for the Birth of Jesus, addresses Advent in an indirect way with stories about the preparation for the Birth of Jesus in the city of Bethlehem, the shepherd, the Angels, the Magi, and Mary and Joseph. The approach is reasonable, but it might be more helpful if it were directly related to Advent, and also if the stories were less reliant on imagined material.

There are three lessons which focus on the Magi preparing to travel and then journeying to Bethlehem: A3-T1L14 - Watching, Waiting, Wondering; A4-T1L12 - The People Who Walked In Darkness; A4-T1L13 - From Darkness To Light. The concept is good as a way of teaching the meaning of Advent. It would be helpful if the relationship to Advent were made explicit. It would also be helpful if it were brought out that the Magi were representative of the Gentile or non-Jewish peoples, so that it can be taught that Jesus came as more than a Messiah to the Jewish people, but as the Saviour of the entire human race from sin.

Lesson A5-T1L9 - Mary Wonders -- Who Is the One Who Is Coming? introduces and explains the Advent wreath, with the recommendation to teachers to use the Advent wreath for all the prayer times this year in Advent. This is very good. It is also helpful that the lesson indicates that violet (or purple) is the colour that the Church uses for Advent, but it might be more helpful to note that purple as a penitential meaning and is therefore also used in Lent, rather than saying only that violet means 'looking forward'.

In one of the prayer times in the Teacher's Book there is mention that 'Jesus will come in glory' and 'we look forward to his return in glory'. It is good that there is some reference to the Second Coming of Jesus, but it would be good to explain and develop this explicitly that Jesus will return at the end of time from his place at the right hand of the Father, as divine Judge, to restore all things in heaven and on earth. It would also be good to have a teaching

on the Second Coming in a prominent position in the Pupil's Book, rather than as a minor item in the Teacher's Book only.

The three lessons A7-T1L12-14 - Waiting in Joyful Hope, are devoted principally to Advent. There is much good material here, including an emphasis on watchfulness, readiness, being alert and prayer, while waiting for the coming of Jesus at Christmas. This is related right back to the Jewish people and their waiting and expectation of a Saviour. The story of Anna and Simeon is retold, with their expectation of the coming of a Saviour. There is an emphasis that Jesus Christ is the Son of God our Father and that he is our Saviour.

While there is much good material in the three lessons there is also scope for strengthening. It is good to mention that Jesus is our Saviour, but it would be helpful to develop the context of salvation history, starting with the Fall of our First Parents. The lesson mentions that the Jews expected 'a Saviour who would be their path to the Tree of Life and to God', but this is not a satisfactory Christian explanation of salvation. The lesson would need to develop the context of the Fall and Original Sin, and the mission of Jesus to be our divine Saviour from sin, who would break the power of Satan and open to us the gates of Heaven, in order to give an authentic Christian meaning to the coming of Jesus at Christmas, the Incarnation, and the season of Advent that precedes it.

In general this analysis would indicate that there is much good material on Advent in the lessons. However, there is also scope for strengthening, most particularly in bringing out the context of salvation history and the nature of salvation. This should include clarifying Jesus' divinity as well as his humanity and highlighting that in Advent we look forward to two comings of Jesus: his first coming as a baby in Bethlehem at Christmas, and his Second

Coming in power and glory at the end of time. It would also be helpful to bring out the penitential nature of Advent, in which the Church stresses prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

### Christmas

The Season of Christmas has been adequately analysed above in Sections 3.3.3: Jesus, and 3.3.6: Mary and the Saints.

### Lent.

The theme of Lent is addressed in the following lessons: A3-T2L4 - Lent- Turning Time; A4-T2L4 - Lent - Re-connecting; A5-T2L5 - Lent -- Endings and New Beginnings; A6-T2L6 – Lent; A7-T2L6 – Lent and A8-T2L7 – Lent.

Lesson A3-T2L4 - Lent- Turning Time, focuses on Lent as a time for withdrawal from ‘too-busy-ness’ and distractions for the purpose of quiet reflection and turning towards God. It should be helpful to show that quiet reflection might be a benefit of the prayer that is encouraged at the season of Lent, it is not the essence of Lent. It might not be too early to introduce the pupils to the central meaning of Lent as a season of penance leading to conversion, turning away from sin and towards God, in preparation for Easter.

It is good that Jesus' time of forty days in the wilderness after his baptism is presented as a model and inspiration for the season of Lent, in lessons A5-T2L5, A6-T2L6 and A7-T2L6. However, these teachings might be strengthened in a number of ways. Jesus' time in the desert is presented as a time of reflection and closeness to God, during which he determined that his mission would be to tell people about the love of God for them, and that they should love one another. It might be more helpful to follow scripture and say that the Spirit drove Jesus into the desert to be tempted by the devil, which occurred after he had fasted for 40

days. It must be assumed that already Jesus knew well that his primary mission was to save the human race from sin through his sacrifice on the cross. It might also be helpful to note the Church's understanding that the forty days of Lent are also prefigured in the forty days of Noah and his family in the Ark during the Flood, the forty days that Moses spent in prayer with God on Mount Sinai, and the forty years that the Israelites spent wandering in the desert.

The Church teaches that Lent is a season of penance, especially prayer, fasting and almsgiving, leading to conversion in relation to self, God and others <sup>269</sup>. The theme of fasting is addressed principally in lesson A6-T2L6 – Lent. The Teacher's Book says that 'Christians fast for two reasons: to increase the level of their attentiveness to the presence of God in their lives, and to grow in their willingness to do good for others', and there is reference to fasting as a way of providing the resources to help others. It might be helpful to mention penance as the major theme of Lent, of which fasting is a part, and that fasting helps us to acquire mastery over our instincts and freedom of heart <sup>270</sup>. It is good that the Teacher's Book mentions that there are two days of fast in the Church Year: Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, and the video mentions the fast of one hour before Holy Communion. It might be helpful to explain what the fast involves, that it is a Precept of the Church, and to put this information on fasting in the Pupil's Book.

Lesson A7-T2L6 – Lent, also addresses the theme of fasting but in the context of training for sports and physical activities, which may be difficult for the pupils to relate to the Christian practice of fasting.

The themes of repentance and conversion are extremely important in the Church's understanding of Lent, so it is good that these themes are addressed in some of the lessons.

---

<sup>269</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1434, 1438.

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.* 2043.

Lesson A4-T2L4 - Lent - Re-connecting, addresses these themes in the context of feeling connected or disconnected with God and other people. As pupils in this stage are being prepared for the Sacrament of Penance, it might be more helpful to be more explicit and to present the theme in terms of sin, repentance for sin, and the forgiveness of Jesus. Lesson A5-T2L5 - Lent -- Endings and New Beginnings, presents the theme in the context of a secular spring clean, and general tidying up of one's life by keeping what is good and getting rid of what is no longer useful. Again, a more straightforward presentation might be more helpful to the pupils who should be able to understand the theme using the language of sorrow for sin, repentance and conversion. The lessons present a kind of examination of conscience and check list of sins to turn away from, which is helpful, but it might be more helpful if this list included sins against God and self, and was not limited to wrong behaviour towards one's neighbour.

It is good that the distribution of ashes on Ash Wednesday as the beginning of Lent is addressed in lessons: A4-T2L4; A5-T2L5; A6-T2L6; A7-T2L6; and A8-T2L7. All these lessons present classroom rituals written by the Programme in which the teacher will preside and distribute the ashes, with only lesson A4-T2L4 showing distribution of the ashes in a church in an illustration in the Pupil's Book and the video. It might be more helpful for the pupils to focus on and encourage them to attend the beautiful liturgy of the Church in the Blessing and Distribution of Ashes at the Mass of Ash Wednesday.

Lent as a preparation for the great feast of Easter is well treated in lesson A8-T2L7 – Lent, using the parallel in the early Church of the time of Lent with the preparation of the catechumens to enter the Church at Easter. It might also have been helpful to note the practice in the early Church of Lent as a time of reconciliation of penitents, and to have

introduced this theme of preparation for Easter much earlier than the last year of the Programme.

#### Easter.

The Season of Easter is analysed in Section 3.3.3: Jesus Christ.

#### Pentecost.

The Season of Pentecost is analysed in Section 3.3.4: The Holy Spirit.

#### Sunday, the Lord's Day.

It might be helpful to have teachings about Sunday, the Lord's Day, and its importance for the Church's liturgy, especially the Eucharist. It would also be helpful to amend the song, 'Monday Morning' (A1-T1L3: Settling In), so that Sunday is not presented as just like Saturday when the children can 'play all day'.

### **3.4.2 Sacraments**

#### INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

The Information for teachers addresses 'Grace', (which is central to an understanding of Catholic teaching on sacraments), on the following pages: Alive-O 3: XVI-XVII; Alive-O 4: XVIII; Alive-O 5: [17]; Alive-O 6: [17]; Alive-O 7: [14]; Alive-O 8: [15].

The Information states that the Programme will not recognise sanctifying grace or actual grace, which are described as terms or concepts, but will recognise the key underlying reality that we are God's friends and children, share in the risen life of Jesus, and that the Holy Spirit



dwells in us and helps us to live like Jesus. Might this convey the impression that 'grace' is simply the helpful presence of God through the Holy Spirit, which is essentially the same for all people at all times, circumstances and situations?

It might be helpful to make clear that in the teaching of the Church grace, sanctifying grace and actual graces are more than terms or concepts, but realities in themselves. (There is a reference to sanctifying and actual grace under the subheading 'Moral Formation' in Alive-O 5-8, but the Church's teaching on grace is not developed). An understanding of Grace is central to understanding the Sacraments, so one might suggest inclusion of the following information for teachers:

The sacraments are given to the Church by Jesus. In the sacraments Jesus gives us grace, the life and love of God.<sup>271</sup>

Grace is favour, the free and undeserved help that God gives us to respond to his call to become children of God, adoptive sons, partakers of the divine nature and of eternal life. Sanctifying grace is the stable gift of the Holy Spirit into the soul to heal it of sin and to sanctify it.<sup>272</sup>

Actual graces refer to God's interventions, among which are sacramental graces, gifts proper to the different sacraments.<sup>273</sup>

Each sacrament has its own special outward signs (words and actions) and minister, which are an essential part of giving the sacrament and cannot be changed. Each sacrament has its own particular grace and the outward visible sign helps us understand this grace.<sup>274</sup>

---

<sup>271</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1114-1116.

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.* 1996, 1999-2000, 2023.

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.* 2000, 2003, 2024.

<sup>274</sup> *Ibid.* 1129, 1131, 1189.

The Information for teachers addresses the Sacraments in general: under the heading 'Sacraments and Liturgy' in Alive-O 1 page XI and Alive-O 2 page XI; under the heading 'Liturgical and Sacramental Initiation' in Alive-O 3 page XVIII and in Alive-O 4 page XX; and under the heading 'Liturgical Education' in Alive-O 5 page [19]-[20], Alive-O 6 page [19], Alive-O 7 page [16] and Alive-O 8 page [17].

In Alive-O 1 and Alive-O 2 the Information states that children are helped to recognise the presence and action of God in the world and in their interpersonal relationships, to prepare them to recognise and respond to God's presence in the sacraments. Might it be more helpful for teachers to introduce the Church's definition and understanding of sacrament as the sovereign grace of Christ, so that the teachers could help children understand the later teachings on the sacraments themselves?

Alive-O 3 through 8 state that priests, parents and teachers all need to play a significant role in the sacramental preparation of children; this is good. They also stress that faith is needed for meaningful participation in the sacraments, and that the sacraments in turn build and strengthen faith, which is good; Alive-O 8 adds that the sacraments do not work automatically, irrespective of our dispositions and faith, but demand a personal response of faith and a desire to deepen one's faith. It might be helpful to clarify that the grace of the sacrament is available merely by being performed (*ex opere operato*) but the fruits also depend on the disposition of the one who receives the sacrament<sup>275</sup>; it might also be helpful to clarify that more than faith may be needed for receipt of sacraments, e.g. one must be in a state of grace to receive many sacraments, especially the Eucharist.

---

<sup>275</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1128.

Alive-O 3 through 8 state that the Programme will 'explore with the children the human values and attitudes which are central to an understanding of and meaningful participation in the sacraments'. Alive-O 3 and 4 list several human (i.e. non-spiritual) attributes of children, and even though Alive-O 5 through 8 add in some spiritual attributes to the list, (such as the sense of God's presence, prayerfulness, and being gifted by the Holy Spirit), nevertheless non-spiritual attributes predominate; might the impression be given that it is principally non-spiritual factors that give meaning to the sacraments? It might be helpful to clarify that the signs and symbols used by the Holy Spirit in the Sacraments, which relate to creation, human life and the history of salvation, become bearers of the saving and sanctifying action of Christ, which is the central meaning of the sacraments<sup>276</sup>. Human values, signs and symbols, can help understanding of the sacraments, but it is the grace of Christ that is central to each and every sacrament.

It is helpful that Alive-O 5 through 7 add that the sacraments of Baptism, Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation are actions of Christ, which make his salvation visible, accessible and efficacious. Alive-O 8 has further helpful information on the sacraments: the sacraments are more than signs, they bring about what they signify; we meet the risen Jesus in the seven sacraments, which prolong his deeds and gestures; in the sacraments Christ meets us at important moments of life and make these encounters occasions of salvation. While this information about the nature of the Sacraments is good and helpful, it would be of further help and benefit to clarify the nature of salvation in Christ, and to introduce this information much earlier in the Programme.

---

<sup>276</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1152, 1189.

The Information would also benefit from treatment of the ministers of the sacraments, focusing on the central importance of the ordained ministerial priesthood to the whole sacramental economy.<sup>277</sup>

It might also be helpful to have a simple definition or explanation of what a sacrament is, which might include the following elements: The seven sacraments were instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church to give grace, which is divine life won for us by the death and resurrection of Christ. Each sacrament has a minister and an outward sign which signifies and makes efficaciously present, by the action of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, the grace proper to each sacrament.

#### LESSON MATERIAL ON SACRAMENTS IN GENERAL

Alive-O 8 has four lessons devoted to the Sacraments in general, which is good in principle. It might have been helpful to include such lessons on Sacraments in general and the nature of a Sacrament much earlier in the Programme, which could have enhanced understanding of teachers and pupils of the individual sacraments as addressed over the course of the Programme.

The following lessons are devoted to the Sacraments in general: A8-T1L7 - Coming Together and Rituals; A8-T1L8 – Symbol; A8-T1L9 - Conversations and Stories; A8-T1L10 – Sacramentality. The first three of these lessons deal with meetings and rituals, signs and symbols, conversations and stories, mainly from a secular point of view but also including a Christian dimension. The fourth lesson then seeks to show how these elements apply to

---

<sup>277</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1115, 1110-1120, 1132, 1142.

sacraments and sacramentality in general.

Lesson A8-T1L7 deals with secular meetings and meetings of Jesus with the two women who anointed his feet and anointed his head. There is reference to secular rituals and to rituals in church.

Lesson A8-T1L8 addresses the meaning and use of symbols, both secular and Christian, and presents the story of Jacob's Stone.

Lesson A8-T1L9 addresses secular and Christian meetings. The meeting of Jesus with the Samaritan woman at the well is featured, which is good; it might have been helpful to show that the living water that Jesus spoke about was a symbol for the grace of eternal life which Jesus gives in the Sacraments.

Lesson A8-T1L10 – Sacramentality, seeks to apply the elements from the previous three lessons to the Sacraments, which is very good in principle; however, there are a number of ways in which the presentation might be strengthened.

Under the heading of, 'We Celebrate in Church', there is helpful information about the special nature of celebrations of the Church. However, to say that all celebrations in the church building are called sacraments might be confusing, and could detract from a proper understanding of the special nature of the seven Sacraments of the Church.

In the prayer headed, 'Lord Jesus, You Are With Us', there is reference to Jesus being with us in all sorts of circumstances, times and ways, including the celebration of the sacraments. This is of course true, but no differentiation is made between any of the ways in which Jesus is present, so it may detract from an understanding of the special nature of the presence and action of Jesus in the seven Sacraments.

Under the subheading, 'Celebrating in Faith', there is reference to the importance of faith in responding to Jesus, which is good. However, the statement, 'But our celebrations of the sacraments cannot be occasions when we meet the Risen Jesus unless we have faith', may detract from the Church's teaching that the sacraments act *ex opere operato*, by the very fact of being performed, by virtue of the saving work of Christ, accomplished once for all <sup>278</sup>.

It is good to have teaching under the subheading, 'Church as Sacrament', because the CCC teaches that the Church can indeed be understood as a sacrament. The lesson says that in the sacraments we meet and merge with the Risen Jesus, like water mixing with paint, and this is why we sometimes speak of the Church as a sacrament. Presentation on the Church as Sacrament might be strengthened by drawing on the following elements: Through the liturgy Christ, our Redeemer and high priest, continues the work of our redemption in, with and through his Church. The Church's liturgy fully reveals and communicates the divine blessing, which is the plan of salvation, in which Jesus, Son of God, by his death and resurrection has freed us from the power of Satan and from death, and brought us into the Kingdom of his Father. The liturgy is the common work of the Holy Spirit and the Church. The sacraments are of the Church, for she is the sacrament of Christ's action at work in her through the mission of the Holy Spirit. Since Pentecost, it is through the sacramental signs of his Church that the Holy Spirit carries on the work of sanctification. <sup>279</sup>

While it is good to have information on signs and symbols, it would be helpful to clarify that, in relation to the seven Sacraments, there are particular signs that do more than symbolise the meaning of the sacrament but are actually efficacious and essential in performing the

---

<sup>278</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1128.

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.* 1069, 1079, 1082, 1086, 1091, 1118, 1152.

sacrament. It will also be helpful to clarify and distinguish these essential efficacious signs from other signs and symbols that the Church may use in her sacramental rites to help convey the meaning, but are not absolutely essential for the performance of the sacrament. For example, it would help pupils' understanding of the sacrament of Baptism to know that the essential and efficacious sign is the pouring of water while saying, 'I baptise you in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit'; other symbols, such as the candle, oil of chrism, and white robe are aids to understand the full significance of the sacrament, but are not essential efficacious signs for the performance of the sacrament.

It would be helpful to clarify that each sacrament has a minister, which in most cases is an ordained priestly minister, who is spiritually empowered to perform the sacrament by virtue of his own sacramental ordination. It would also be helpful to note that the essential elements of each sacrament cannot be changed by the Church, because they have been established by Christ himself.

The additional material noted above in relation to Information for teachers might also be helpfully included in lesson material for the pupils on the Sacraments, especially a clear and concise definition of what a sacrament is.

### **3.4.3 Baptism**

#### INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

The Information for teachers addresses Baptism on the following pages: Alive-O 3 page XX; Alive-O 4 page XXII-XXIII; Alive-O 5 page [21]; Alive-O 6 page [21].

There is a strong emphasis on Baptism as the ritual by which a person becomes a member of the Church, drawing on the analogy of joining a human group, such as home, school, friends, neighbourhood, and on the Celebration of Enrolment in the class. Baptism leads the children to know God's love, that they are children of God and brothers/sisters of Jesus, share in the life of the Risen Jesus whose spirit is with them as they try to live as Jesus lived. Baptism is the sacrament where the Christian community gathers to welcome a new member.

The Information says that Baptism is not a once-off experience, but rather a process that we live every day. It is good to stress that Baptism continues through life, but it would be helpful to clarify that baptism is *both* a once-off experience (most emphatically and dramatically so) *as well as* a lifelong experience; Baptism places a spiritual mark on the soul, so we can only be baptised once.<sup>280</sup>

The Information states that the lessons will introduce pupils to the symbols of Baptism: 'candle, oil, water, and white garment'. It would be helpful to clarify that the essential rite of Baptism consists in immersing in water or pouring water on the person's head, while calling on God the Holy Trinity, saying 'I baptise you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit'. The other parts of the rite of celebration of the Sacrament help us understand the meaning and graces of Baptism.<sup>281</sup>

While the Information says much that is relevant about the Sacrament of Baptism, it might be helpful to include the following, in addition to the suggestions noted above:

---

<sup>280</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1280.

<sup>281</sup> *Ibid.* 1234-1245, 1278.



Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist are the sacraments of Christian initiation, and lay the *foundations* of every Christian life.<sup>282</sup>

The graces of Baptism, which come from the saving death of Christ on the cross and from his resurrection, bring forgiveness of original sin and all personal sins, birth into the new life as children of God the Father, and members of the Church, the Body of Christ.<sup>283</sup>

Baptism gives us special graces of the Holy Spirit to love and serve God, to grow in faith, hope and charity, and to live a good Christian life.<sup>284</sup>

Most people are baptised as babies; the parents and god-parents make the baptismal promises on the baby's behalf.<sup>285</sup>

At Baptism each person is given a Christian name, which is usually the name of a saint, who can be a model and example. God knows each of us by name, as a unique person.<sup>286</sup>

Baptism is usually given by the priest, but in emergency, any person can baptize.<sup>287</sup>

### LESSON MATERIAL ON BAPTISM

There are eight lessons that address the Sacrament of Baptism. One lesson, A5-T1L4 - Beginning Again in Baptism, is devoted entirely to Baptism, while the other seven address the Sacrament secondarily, sometimes very briefly.

Lesson A3-T1L5 - We Belong Together, has a prayer service to which parents are invited, and in which the children are enrolled for First Penance and First Communion. In the course

---

<sup>282</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 1212.

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid.* 1213, 1225, 1260, 1279.

<sup>284</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1266.

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.* 1250-1252, 1282.

<sup>286</sup> *Ibid.* 2156, 2158.

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid.* 1284.

of the service the parents are invited to renew the Baptismal Promises on behalf of the children, which is good. It might be helpful if the Promises were presented in full, that is, to include the three-fold renunciation of Satan, and if the children were invited to join in the renewal of their own Baptismal Promises.

Lesson A4-T3L9 - The Spirit of God In Us, teaches that when we are baptised we share in the new life of the Lord Jesus, and that at the ceremony the priest pours water on the baby's head and says, 'I baptise you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit', which is good. Pupils are introduced to symbols of Baptism: white shawl, oil, water and candle; water is presented as a symbol of growth. A Ceremony of Baptism is well presented on the video.

In presenting the symbols of Baptism it would be helpful if the unique character of the water were explained, relative to other symbols, and the symbolism of the water better presented in line with the teaching of the Church, as analysed further in the lesson below.

Lesson A5-T1L4 - Beginning Again in Baptism, is fully devoted to Baptism.

The illustration in the Pupil's Book indicates 'things used during Baptism', and shows, without explanation, a white shawl, two candles, an ivy-covered tree stump, what looks like a small garden birdbath, and two small jugs, one of which appears to contain oil. It might be more helpful to show the things used in Baptism, with explanation, in a normal church setting, giving due prominence to the Baptismal font, where the essential rite of Baptism is performed. The Baptismal Trinitarian statement of faith is presented. The questions and answers state that in the sacrament of Baptism we become followers of Jesus, members of the Church, and receive the Holy Spirit.

In the Teacher's Book the topic of choosing a baptismal name is addressed, which is good. However, it would have been helpful to give information about Christian names and their significance, rather than just questions in the optional discussion session, ' Chatting '.

Other optional 'Chatting' sessions address the symbols of Baptism: the candle is a reminder that the light of Christ will always be with the newly baptised baby; the water is a sign that the child has the new life of the Risen Jesus; the white garment is a sign of the new life that comes to the baby in Baptism; the oil reminds us that the baby has become a member of the Church, a follower of Jesus Christ; the Sign of the Cross reminds us that the baby is now a follower of Jesus.

It would be helpful if the teaching about the symbols of Baptism were given greater prominence than the optional discussion sessions, and more fully reflected the mind of the Church.

The Church teaches that pouring or plunging in water is not just one symbol among many, but it is the essential rite of Baptism. Plunging in water symbolises burial into Christ's death, from which one rises up by resurrection with him as a new creature<sup>288</sup>. The water symbolizes a bath in which sin is buried and we are washed by the Holy Spirit<sup>289</sup>. The water of Baptism also symbolizes: life and fruitfulness; the Flood in which Noah's Ark prefigures salvation; the sea as a symbol of death signifying communion with the death of Christ; the crossing of the Red Sea by the Israelites liberated from slavery in Egypt which prefigures our salvation in Christ; and the crossing of the Jordan River by which the Chosen People received the gift of the Promised Land which is an image of eternal life<sup>290</sup>. The water of Baptism also

---

<sup>288</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1214.

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid.* 1215-1216.

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid.* 1218-1222.

symbolizes the water that flowed with blood from the pierced side of the crucified Jesus, so that we could be born of water and the Spirit in order to enter the Kingdom of God <sup>291</sup>. It may be unwise to attempt to include all these meanings of the water of Baptism in the lessons, but it would be helpful to at least teach pupils that water is essential to Baptism and, with the Sign of the Cross, symbolizes new life through the salvation from sin won by Jesus on the cross.

The Church also teaches that the anointing with oil signifies the gift of the Holy Spirit, which incorporates us into Christ, who is the anointed priest, prophet and king <sup>292</sup>. The white garment symbolises that the baptised person has put on Christ and has risen with Him. The candle, lit from the Easter candle, signifies that Christ has enlightened the baptised person, who is now the light of the world. <sup>293</sup>

The Rite of Baptism is not presented or explained in Pupil's or Teachers Book's, but there are five prayer rituals on, 'Remembering Our Baptism'. These rituals contain readings and prayers, some of which are very similar to the Rite of Baptism. For example, the children are led to repeat their 'baptismal promises', which includes a profession of faith, but excludes the three-fold renunciation of Satan that is part of the Church's Rite of Baptism <sup>294</sup>. The pupils are led to make the sign of the cross on each other with holy water, and pray that this will 'cleanses us from sin', but they are not taught that Baptism cleanses from sin. There is a helpful prayer, 'We put on Christ, in whom we have been baptised. By God's gift, through

---

<sup>291</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 1225.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.* 1241.

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.* 1243.

<sup>294</sup> The threefold rejection of Satan and sin parallels the threefold profession of faith, and recalls the three temptations that Jesus experienced in the desert after his Baptism; Jesus' temptations in the desert do not appear anywhere in the Programme. The importance and significance of the parallel threefold rejection of Satan and the threefold profession of faith is well developed by Joseph Ratzinger in *Introduction to Christianity*, p.87-90. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990, 2004.

water and the Holy Spirit, we are reborn to everlasting life'. While there are elements in these five Alive-O para-sacramental rituals that might possibly be helpful, there also appears to be scope for confusion about the nature of Baptism. A clear presentation and explanation of the Church's own liturgy for the Rite of Baptism would probably be more helpful.

The Video for this lesson has three segments on Baptism, showing the Baptism of an infant, and then a seven-year-old boy and three teenage girls talk about their baptism. These are well presented and helpful.

The following five lessons touch briefly on the Sacrament of Baptism:

Lesson A6-T2L3 - The Body of Christ – The Church, has a question and answer which states that, 'In the sacrament of Baptism we became followers of Jesus and members of the Church'.

Lesson A8-T1L10 – Sacramentality, states that, 'In Baptism we are reborn into the Church'.

Lesson A8-T1L11 - Sacraments of the Church, states that, 'When a new baby is baptised the family rejoices again because now the baby is being welcomed into God's family. At Baptism the Risen Jesus gives us the new life of God's children. He helps us to grow as children of God. Baptism is received only once; it cannot be repeated'.

There is a prayer ritual titled, 'Remembering Baptism', which resembles the prayer rituals in Lesson A5-T1L4 above. Each child makes the sign of cross on his/her forehead with holy water, as the group says, 'You have been washed in the water of life'. As in Lesson A5-T1L4 there appears to be scope for confusion concerning the nature of Baptism.

Lesson A8-T2L1 - Fan the Flame, has a teaching on Jesus' birth and 'rebirth' at his baptism by John the Baptist. This concept, which could be confusing, has been sufficiently analysed

above in Section 3.3.3 Jesus Christ.

Lesson A8-T2L5 - Celebration of Confirmation, includes the Rite of Renewal of Baptismal Promises, as part of the celebration of Confirmation, which is good. It is also good that the rejection of Satan is included, but it would have been better to follow the Church's Rite with three separate questions and rejections, rather than just one rejection. The three-fold rejection of Satan mirrors the three-fold confession of Faith, and also the three temptations of Christ in the desert.

In summary, there is much that is useful in the lesson material on the Sacrament of Baptism. It would be helpful to present substantive teaching on Baptism earlier than Year 5 of the Programme, in particular during the years of preparation for First Penance and First Communion, which would help pupils understand these other Sacraments. The lessons could be further strengthened by including material which is not covered, as follows:

It should be made clear that the essential rite of Baptism consists in immersing in water or pouring water on the person's head, while calling on God the Holy Trinity, saying 'I baptise you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit'. The principal symbolisms of the water of Baptism, as understood by the Church, should be presented.

It should also be made clear that the other parts of the Rite of Baptism, including the use of oil of anointing, candle and white garment, are full of meaning and significance, but are not essential to the Sacrament. The symbolism of the oil of chrism could be better presented.

It would be helpful to present clearly and explain the various parts of the Church's Rite of Baptism.

Baptism confers graces, which come from the saving death of Christ on the cross, and it is by those graces that Baptism brings forgiveness of original sin and all personal sins, birth into the new life as children of God the Father, and incorporation into the Church, the Body of Christ.

Baptism also gives special graces of the Holy Spirit which empower the baptized to love and serve God, to grow in faith, hope and charity, and to live a good Christian life.

Baptism places a spiritual mark on the soul, which is why we can only be baptised once.

At Baptism each person is given a Christian name, which is usually the name of a saint, who can be a model and example. God knows each of us by name, as a unique person.

Baptism is usually given by the priest, but in emergency, any person can baptize.

### **3.4.4 Confirmation**

#### INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

The Sacrament of Confirmation is addressed in the Information for teachers in Alive-O Teacher's Book 7 on pages [17]-[18], and in Alive-O Teacher's Book 8 on pages [18]-[19].

The Information states what should have been achieved with the pupils prior to the Sacrament of Confirmation, how the lessons on Confirmation are structured and how they should be used by the teachers. It might have been helpful to the teachers to have included information on the Sacrament of Confirmation itself, which could include the following:

Confirmation is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as was given to the apostles on the day of Pentecost.<sup>295</sup>

Confirmation completes the grace of Baptism. The Sacrament of Confirmation gives us the Holy Spirit and his grace to bind us with Christ and with the Church, and strengthen us to bear witness to Christ and to spread and defend the faith in word and deed.<sup>296</sup>

Confirmation, like Baptism, puts a permanent spiritual mark on the soul, so we can receive Confirmation only once.<sup>297</sup>

A candidate for Confirmation must have attained the age of reason, professed faith, be in the state of grace, have the intention of receiving the sacrament, and be prepared to be a disciple and witness to Christ.<sup>298</sup>

The Confirmation sponsor provides spiritual help, and may be one of the baptismal God-parents.<sup>299</sup>

The Bishop normally administers the Sacrament of Confirmation; this shows clearly that the sacrament unites us closely with the Church, because the bishops are the successors of the apostles. The bishop may delegate the administration of Confirmation to a priest.<sup>300</sup>

Confirmation helps strengthen the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord, and the fruits of the Holy Spirit:

---

<sup>295</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1302.

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid.* 1285, 1316.

<sup>297</sup> *Ibid.* 1317.

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.* 1319.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.* 1311.

<sup>300</sup> *Ibid.* 1313.



love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, and chastity.<sup>301</sup>

The Liturgy of Confirmation begins with the renewal of baptismal promises and profession of faith by those being confirmed. The essential rite of Confirmation is anointing the forehead with sacred chrism, together with the laying on of the bishop's hand and the words: Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit.<sup>302</sup>

### LESSON MATERIAL ON CONFIRMATION

Lesson A7-T2L3 - Christian Community, contains quotations from young people in Chile who had been prepared for the Sacrament of Confirmation, including the following: 'Confirmation invites me to respond to the call of Jesus, to open myself to the power of the Spirit, to live as a disciple of Jesus, to communicate his word and teaching to other youth. Confirmation was the time to affirm my own personal faith in Jesus. Through Confirmation I receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and publicly accept a personal call of Jesus to follow him. Through Confirmation I can help other young people grow in their faith and come to know a Jesus who gives life'. These are all helpful to teach pupils the meaning of Confirmation.

The three lessons A7-T2L7 - Enkindling the Spirit, A7-T2L8 - Spirit Wind, and A7-T2L9 - Breath of the Spirit, have rituals to be performed in the local Parish Church during the Sunday Eucharistic Liturgy so that the local community can express support for the pupils preparing for Confirmation. The intention is good, but one might question how effective it would be in practice. The first ritual, to be performed at a Vigil Mass, seeks to express the

---

<sup>301</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 1845, 1832.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.* 1298, 1320.

symbol of the Holy Spirit as fire, but resembles the ceremony of the Paschal Fire of the Holy Saturday liturgy, and may be confused with it. The second ritual, which seeks to express the movement of the Spirit, has the pupils processing up the church with protest placards and then taking up a collection for a local charity, which again might be difficult to relate to the Sacrament of Confirmation. The third ritual initially features brightly coloured balloons, intended as an expression of the symbol of the Holy Spirit as 'Breath', but which may be confused with symbols of a birthday party; the children then sprinkle themselves with holy water, followed by 'Affirmations' – loosely based on the renewal of baptismal promises – which might convey a re-enactment of Baptism.

One might also question if a parish would find these three rituals practical or appropriate; the rituals are not part of the Church's liturgy, are quite complex, would require much organisation, and might be found intrusive in the Sunday Mass liturgy, requiring perhaps fifteen minutes or more of additional time.

Lessons A7-T2L10-11: Ceremony of Confirmation (1)&(2) are for pupils who will be receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation in Fifth Class. There is good treatment in the Pupil's and Teacher's Books of the following: the history of the Sacrament of Confirmation; renewal of Baptismal Promises; Confirmation names and sponsors; the rite of administration of the Sacrament by the Bishop, including the anointing with oil, laying on of hands, and the words spoken; gifts and fruit of the Spirit. The accompanying video has good presentations of the Blessing of the Oil of Chrism, and the celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation itself.

One might offer some suggestions on how these three lessons might be strengthened.

The video voice-over explains why the Bishop is the one who administers Confirmation:

Bishops are the successors of the apostles, they have received the fullness of the Sacrament of Holy Orders, and bishops are a sign of the Universal Church. It would be helpful if this information were also included in written form in the Pupil's and Teacher's Books.

The history of Confirmation helpfully presents the practice of the early Church in which the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist were linked together in Christian initiation. However, the presentation of Baptism could be strengthened, and while it is correct to state that after the fourth century the Sacrament of Baptism and Confirmation tended to be separated, it is incorrect to state that the Eucharist was also separated at this stage, because the Eucharist was celebrated separately from the earliest days of the Church.<sup>303</sup>

It is good to present the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, but it might be more helpful to use the translation from CCC 1845: 'Counsel' is more accurate and means something different to 'Right Judgement'; 'Piety' is better than 'Reverence', because it makes clear that the gift involves respect and obedience to God, and not the meaning the Lesson gives to 'Reverence' as the 'sacredness of the Earth'; 'Fear of the Lord' means more than 'Wonder and Awe in God's presence' - there is a legitimate concern to avoid teaching a craven fear of God, but a genuine 'Fear of the Lord', properly understood, is very important, so that we will shun serious offence against God and its eternal consequences<sup>304</sup>. The 'Spirit Flow-Chart' is unduly complex and its 'Conclusions' give the impression that with the Gifts of the Spirit we can do whatever we feel and think is acceptable, while the following prayer time, 'The Sevenfold Gift', is similarly limited.

It is also good to present nine Fruits of the Spirit, but the explanations given could be much strengthened. It might also be helpful to use the list in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*,

---

<sup>303</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1290-1292; Acts 2:42.

<sup>304</sup> Matthew 10:28.

which adds generosity, modesty and chastity<sup>305</sup>, all especially important in modern society.

It is good to present the significance of the Oil of Chrism and its use in the Rite of Confirmation, but the additional rituals in which children, parents and sponsors bless and anoint each other with oil could detract from the special significance of the anointing of the Sacrament. In particular, one might question the ritual in which pupils lie on the floor in a darkened room with soft music and the burning of perfumed oils, after which they anoint each other saying, 'May the fragrance of Christ fill your life', followed by the prayer, 'Come, Holy Spirit'.

The two rituals proposed for performance during a parish Sunday Mass raise similar questions to those previously noted in relation to lessons A7-T2L7/8/9, and there are additional questions over the treatment of the Gifts and Fruit of the Spirit noted above.

The Church teaches that Confirmation completes the grace of Baptism, and gives us the Holy Spirit and his grace to bind us with Christ and with the Church, strengthen us to bear witness to Christ, and to spread and defend the faith in word and deed<sup>306</sup>. It is good therefore that the following four lessons seek through the medium of drama to help the pupils understand how to live their lives as Christians after receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation. However, the analysis below indicates scope for strengthening the teaching about post-Confirmation Christian life for young people, especially in relation to evangelisation and defence of the Faith.

Lesson A7-T3L3-6 - Where Do We Go From Here (I)?, has a drama based on the boy

---

<sup>305</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1832.

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid.* 1285, 1316.

Eutychus, who fell from the window and was brought to life again by the prayers of St Paul (Acts 20:7-12). The drama is largely imagination-based, and may be difficult for pupils to relate to post-Confirmation life as a Christian.

Lesson A7-T3L3-6 - Where Do We Go From Here (2)?, has a drama based on Acts 5:12-42, which tells of the arrest and trial of Peter and John. The drama is well constructed and presented.

Lesson A7-T3L3-6 - Where Do We Go From Here (3)?, has a drama which aims to show the impact of early Christianity on the pagan world of Greece and Rome, which is good in principle. The drama is, however, very complex, with imagined conversations with various Greek and Roman gods. The drama highlights negative aspects of contemporary pagan religion and culture, but could helpfully also show positive aspects of the highly advanced Greco-Roman culture, and in particular Greek philosophy and its resonance with Christianity. The drama's portrayal of St Paul as formerly a Roman officer who followed the pagan gods does not conform to Scripture, and should be amended.

The subsequent prayer time is very good in highlighting the importance of Jesus' forgiveness in setting us free, but it would be helpful to include that this forgiveness was won through Jesus' salvific death on the cross.

Lesson A7-T3L3-6 - Where Do We Go From Here (4)?, has a drama which introduces several early Irish saints, and seeks to show how young people can live as Christians today. The drama, however, is complex with many imagined conversations. The lesson has a few lines with advice to young people for living the Christian life today: continue with the Eucharist; show God's love in word and deed; look after one another, especially those in need; ask questions to challenge and bring about change where change is needed.

Appendix 3 of Teacher's Book 7 has a 'Prayer Service of Light' (repeated in Teacher's Book 8) for pupils preparing for Confirmation, along with their parents and sponsors. There is much good in the Service but one might raise some questions and suggestions. The focus is on the light of Christ, which of course is good in itself, but as it is a preparation for Confirmation might it have been more appropriate to focus on the Holy Spirit and the many symbols of the Spirit?<sup>307</sup> It would have been helpful to mention Grace, because Grace is the greatest gift of the Spirit, and is fundamental to understanding all the Sacraments.

The Service says that faith is the most precious gift we can pass on to our children, which is good, but it would be helpful if the Service contained a basic statement of that faith, the *Kerygma*, which is our salvation through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, God the Son. It is good to state that after Confirmation the children will work for a world of truth, justice, peace and love; however, this is only the horizontal dimension, and it would be important to introduce and prioritise the vertical dimension of our relationship with God, which is fundamental to the Christian life. It is good to mention the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, but it would be more helpful to use the translation from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.<sup>308</sup>

Appendix 4 of Teacher's Book 7 has 'Notes on the Celebration of Confirmation' (repeated in Teachers Book 8) which are well presented and helpful.

Lesson A8-T1L11 - Sacraments of the Church (1), has a brief reference to Confirmation, as follows: 'In Confirmation the Holy Spirit helps us to continue to spread, in word and deed,

---

<sup>307</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 694-701.

<sup>308</sup> *Ibid.* 1831.

the good news of God's kingdom of peace, justice, truth and love. In Confirmation the Holy Spirit strengthens us to live lives full of love for God, for others and for ourselves'.

This is not unreasonable, but it would be helpful to include that Confirmation strengthens us to proclaim the basic Christian *Kerygma*, that Jesus Christ, God the Son, became man and gave his life on the cross and rose again, saved us from sin and the power of Satan, made us children of God and heirs to the Kingdom of Heaven, to which we can look forward to in hope at the General Resurrection at the end of time, when Jesus will come again to renew all things in heaven and earth.

Lesson A8-T2L1 - Fan the Flame, has another pre-Confirmation ritual for performance at a parish Saturday evening Vigil Mass, involving use of the Paschal Candle and individual candles for the pupils. This ritual is not part of the Church's liturgy and might be found intrusive in the parish liturgy; the ritual might be confused with the Easter liturgy and the Sacrament of Confirmation itself, rather than providing understanding of the Sacrament.

Lessons A8-T2L4 - Celebration of Confirmation (1) and A8-T2L5 - Celebration of Confirmation (2), are almost entirely repeats of lessons A7-T2L10 and A7-T2L11, for the benefit of pupils that will be taking the Sacrament of Confirmation in Sixth Class. The additional material is A8-T2L5 'Moment Four', which is a kind of leaving-school rite of passage ritual, which is given a secular flavour with emphasis on secular meanings of the word 'confirm', but also spiritualised with sprinkling of holy water, anointing with oil and prayers to 'God's Spirit'. Might pupils see this as an alternative rite of 'confirmation', which might detract from appreciating the unique and special nature of the Sacrament?

In summary, the Lesson Material contains much that is helpful on Confirmation, but, in addition to suggestions made above, might be strengthened by inclusion of the following:

Confirmation completes the grace of Baptism. The Sacrament of Confirmation gives us graces of the Holy Spirit, which bind us with Christ and with the Church, and strengthen us to bear witness to Christ and to spread and defend the faith. Confirmation, like Baptism, puts a permanent spiritual mark on the soul, so we can receive Confirmation only once.<sup>309</sup>

A candidate for Confirmation must have attained the age of reason, professed Christian faith, be in the state of grace, have the intention of receiving the sacrament, and be prepared to be a disciple and witness to Christ.<sup>310</sup>

### **3.4.5 Eucharist and the Mass**

#### INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

Information on the Eucharist and Mass is presented in the Teacher's Books on the following pages: Alive-O 3: XIX; Alive-O 4: XX-XXII; Alive-O 5: [20]-[21]; Alive-O 6: [20]; Alive-O 7: [16]-[17]; Alive-O 8: [18].

All the Teacher's Books open with a list of attitudes that will help pupils to participate in the celebration of Eucharist. The list, which is progressively expanded from Alive-O 3 through Alive-O 8, starts with human attitudes, such as, 'an ability to work with symbol', 'a sense of being with and coming together with others', 'a sense of gratitude and thanksgiving'. The list then has items which are relevant to the Christian life, such as, 'a sense of the Church as the Body of Christ', 'an awareness of the continued presence of the Risen Jesus with us', 'an

---

<sup>309</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1285, 1316-1317.

<sup>310</sup> *Ibid.* 1319.



ability to reflect on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ', 'an awareness of the Holy Spirit who empowers us to live as God calls us to', 'listening to the Word of God'. Alive-O 7 and 8 introduce items which are specifically relevant to the Eucharist: 'an awareness that Jesus is really present at Mass under the appearances of bread and wine', and 'an awareness that Jesus is present at Mass in the Word, in the assembly and in the ministers'.

There is much that is good in the above lists. However, it might be especially helpful to add items specific to the essential nature of the Eucharist as the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross for our salvation, the Paschal mystery which is the heart of salvation history.

All the Teacher's Books have a quotation which stresses the 'human values involved in the eucharistic celebration', and the need 'to ensure that the children have some idea of God and the supernatural'. Might it not be reasonable, over the eight years of a Catholic religious education programme, to expect pupils to have developed spiritual values and a basic knowledge of the Catholic Faith, i.e. much more than 'human values' and 'some idea of God and the supernatural'?

The structure of the Mass is addressed in Alive-O 3 and 4, which is good in principle. Alive-O 3 gives the structure as:

- Shared Story.
- Shared Meal.
- Shared Memory.
- Shared Living.

Alive-O 4 gives the structure of the Mass as:

- The Christian community gathers together.

- Listening to the Word of God.
- Remembering Jesus' love for us.
- Giving thanks.
- Celebrating the forgiveness of God our Father.
- Sharing in the Bread of Life.
- Going in peace to be like Jesus.

It might be more helpful to give just one structure, rather than two different structures, and that, in harmony with Church teaching, the structure presented could include the following<sup>311</sup>:

- ❖ The *Liturgy of the Word*, with the gathering of the people and penitential rite, followed by the Scripture readings, homily and general intercessions;
- ❖ The *Liturgy of the Eucharist*, with the presentation of the bread and wine, consecration by the priest (which is the heart of the Eucharistic celebration), communion and concluding rite.

The Information refers to the Word of God which is read at Mass, and Jesus' presence in the Word, which is good. However, it would be helpful to state that the readings at Mass are more than 'stories which were told by Jesus', but are drawn from the entire Bible: Old Testament including the Psalms; New Testament readings from the Epistles, Acts and Revelation; the full four Gospels. Jesus is present in the entire Bible (which gives the full sweep of salvation history, of which Jesus is the centre), and not only in the 'stories' that he told while on earth.

---

<sup>311</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1333, 1346, 1348-1355, 1408.

In relation to the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, Alive-O 4 states, 'It is the Risen Jesus who is present in the consecrated bread and wine'. Later Books strengthen this statement, and Alive-O 8 states, 'Jesus is really present at Mass under the appearances of bread and wine that have been consecrated into the body and blood of Christ', which is good. The statements on the Real Presence might be strengthened further by including the following:

When the priest says the words of consecration spoken by Jesus during the Last Supper: "This is my body which will be given up for you. . . . This is the cup of my blood. . . .", the bread and wine are changed into the Body and Blood of Christ. Christ himself becomes present in a true, real, and substantial manner: his Body and his Blood, his soul and his divinity; this change is called 'transubstantiation'. Christ is present whole and entire in both the bread and the wine, and their parts; breaking the bread does not divide Christ. Only ordained priests can preside at the Eucharist and consecrate the bread and wine so that they become the Body and Blood of Christ.<sup>312</sup>

In relation to the Eucharist and the Last Supper, the Information states that the Eucharist has the character of a celebratory meal, that what Jesus did at the Last Supper, he told his disciples to do in memory of him, and that when we come together to celebrate the Eucharist, we remember the Last Supper. This is good, but it might be helpful to make explicit that Jesus instituted the Eucharist (the Mass) at the Last Supper.<sup>313</sup>

In relation to the Eucharist and the sacrifice of the Cross, the Information states that: at the Last Supper Jesus 'wove together his life of love and service and his approaching death'; at Mass 'we remember and make present in a special way the actions of Jesus at the Last Supper

---

<sup>312</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1373-1381, 1411-1413.

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid.* 1323, 1337-1340.

and on the cross', and 'we recall the life, death and resurrection of Jesus'; there is a 'link between the Last Supper and Calvary'; Mass is a sacrifice and 'makes present for us the offering by Jesus of himself to the Father for us'. There appears scope for a more explicit statement such as the following: The Eucharist / Mass is a continuation of the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross for our salvation; the same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody manner on the cross is offered in an unbloody manner on the altar at Mass.<sup>314</sup>

It is good that the Information refers to the community dimension, and that pupils 'are helped to see the Eucharist as the action of the community'. The perspective might helpfully be broadened to embrace the whole Church (communion of saints), which is united with Christ, who himself offers every Eucharistic sacrifice, acting through the ministry of the priest.<sup>315</sup>

There is much good information for teachers on the Eucharist, but it might be helpful, in addition to the suggestions above, to include the following:

The Eucharist completes Christian initiation, and is the source and summit of the Church's life, because it contains Jesus, God the Son, himself.<sup>316</sup>

Anyone who desires to receive Christ in Eucharistic communion must be in the state of grace. Anyone aware of having sinned mortally must not receive communion without having received absolution in the sacrament of Penance.<sup>317</sup>

---

<sup>314</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1323, 1362-1367, 1409.

<sup>315</sup> *Ibid.* 1368-1372, 1410-1411.

<sup>316</sup> *Ibid.* 1322, 1324.

<sup>317</sup> *Ibid.* 1415.

Receiving the Eucharist gives grace which increases our union with Jesus, forgives our venial sins, preserves us from grave sins, and strengthens the unity and love of the members of the Church.<sup>318</sup>

The faithful are obliged to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days. The Church encourages more frequent, even daily, attendance at Mass and reception of Holy Communion.<sup>319</sup>

The Church encourages the greatest respect to be shown to the Eucharist, including genuflecting and visits to the Blessed Sacrament for prayer and adoration.<sup>320</sup>

### LESSON MATERIAL ON EUCHARIST AND THE MASS

Alive-O 1 has five Eucharistic-like prayer rituals in Lessons A1-T1L6, A1-T3L1, A1-T3L2 and A1-T3L3. The teacher presides at a prayer service over a meal, during which the pupils thank God, then hold up their food and drink in a gesture of offering while praying, 'May this food and drink you give us nourish this class body and soul. Blessed be God forever'. The Programme intends this ritual to teach pupils an understanding of the Eucharist. Might this ritual overemphasise the Eucharist as meal – not the essential meaning of the Sacrament – and also detract from an understanding of the unique nature of the Eucharist relative to other meals with prayers?

Lesson A3-T1L10 – Jesus - Sharer of Bread, is intended to teach pupils about Jesus as the Bread of Life. The lesson features 'The Magic Loaf', a story about a wicked fairy who has bread that she will not share with hungry people, but the bread turns magic, flows out the door of her house and the people come and help themselves. Might pupils find it hard to relate this unusual story with the Eucharist, might they conclude that the Eucharist is all

---

<sup>318</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 1416.

<sup>319</sup> *Ibid.* 1389, 1417.

<sup>320</sup> *Ibid.* 1378-1381, 1418.

about magic, or might they think that the Eucharist is just as fictional as this story?

The lesson has prayer rituals presided over by the teacher with the pupils gathered around a table on which is placed their bread and a lighted candle. The pupils come up and take their bread from the table and then eat it, praying, 'May we be nourished by this food and filled with God's spirit'. Other aspects resemble the Mass, including the teacher praying: 'Blessed are you, God of all Creation, through your goodness we have this bread to offer, work of human hands', and the repeated response, 'Blessed be God forever'. Will these rituals help pupils understand the Mass, or might the pupils conclude that Mass-like classroom rituals presided over by the teacher are not essentially different from Mass celebrated in the church and presided over by the priest?

Lesson A3-T2L9 - Time For Joy, has another Eucharistic-like classroom prayer ritual, using unleavened bread which is placed on a table with a lighted candle. The teacher presides and leads the prayers, some of which resemble the Mass, including: 'We remember how Jesus took bread and gave God thanks and praise. Then Jesus broke the bread and gave it to his friends..... Bless this bread. May it nourish us body and soul', while the pupils respond, 'Blessed be God forever'. The unleavened bread is then passed around, each pupil takes a piece and eats it in silence. As in the earlier lessons, the question arises as to whether pupils will derive an increased understanding of the Eucharist, will they conclude that there is no real difference between the classroom rituals and the real Mass, or something else?

Alive-O 3 has a set of four lessons on the Mass, following the structure given earlier in its Information for teachers: sharing stories; sharing meals; sharing memories; and sharing life.

Lesson A3-T3L2 - A Time To Share Stories, focuses on Jesus as story-teller and the stories that he told. It might have been helpful at this point to introduce pupils to the *Liturgy of the Word* as the first of the two main parts of the Mass. Also to explain that the readings at Mass are drawn from the Bible as a whole – Old Testament reading, Psalm, New Testament reading, and Gospel – and not only stories Jesus told.

Most of the material in Lesson A3-T3L3 - A Time To Share Meals, is devoted to meals in a secular sense. There is a brief account of the Last Supper, but without explanation of the meaning and significance. Pupils are introduced to Jesus as the Bread of Life: 'We share a meal, we share food – the Bread of Life which is the Risen Jesus'. There is a prayer ritual which is very similar to that in Lesson A3-T2L9 above.

Most of the material in Lesson A3-T3L4 - A Time To Share Memories, relates to secular memories. There is also a reference to remembering Jesus' life, death and resurrection, which is relevant to understanding the Mass. However, explanation of the meaning of Christ's death and resurrection and how they relate to the Mass is limited. It is reasonable to use a Memorial Acclamation to help explain, but the one selected ('Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again') is not as helpful as other Acclamations, e.g. 'Dying you destroyed our death, rising you restored our life. Lord Jesus, come in glory'.

Lesson A3-T3L5 - A Time To Share Life, is intended to show pupils how they can go out from the Eucharist to share their lives in memory of Jesus. The intention is good but may not be achieved by the lesson material, which largely involves living life in a secular way, along with an imagined conversation between Jesus and his friends, Lazarus, Martha and Mary.

Alive-O 4 has a set of seven lessons devoted to teaching about the Mass, following the structure given earlier in its Information for teachers: The Christian community gathers together; Listening to the Word of God; Remembering Jesus' love for us; Giving thanks; Celebrating the forgiveness of God our Father; Sharing in the Bread of Life; Going in peace to be like Jesus.

Lesson A4-T3L2 - We Gather Together To Celebrate, addresses the coming of the people to attend Mass, especially the Sunday liturgy. There is information on the importance of celebrations in general, and then on coming to Sunday Mass. The video has a helpful visit of children to a church, with good explanations by the priest who is conducting the visit. This is well supported in the text in the Teachers Book, including genuflecting to show respect for Jesus in the Tabernacle. There is some good information on the Consecration, but its value is probably limited by inclusion in this lesson among discussion starter questions in the optional 'Chatting' section, rather than in a prominent position in the later lesson where it would naturally belong.

Lesson A4-T3L3 - We Listen To The Word Of God, addresses the Liturgy of the Word. The initial material is all about listening in general in a secular way, and then there is mention of the Bible as a special book; however, in answer to the question, 'What do we listen to at Mass?' the answer is simply, 'At Mass we listen to the words of Jesus'. There is a story based on the raising to life of the daughter of Jairus, though imagined additions largely obscure the Scripture original. It would have been helpful in this lesson to develop the *Liturgy of the Word* as the first the two major parts of the Mass, and to show how the readings are carefully selected from the entire Bible, followed by the homily in which the ordained celebrant breaks open the Word of God.



In Lesson A4-T3L4 - We Celebrate Jesus' Love For Us, the Q&A says, 'At Mass we remember Jesus' love for us'. There is material on love in a secular sense. The major teaching is in the form of a story titled, 'The Crucifixion', which is a reasonable account, but does not develop or explain the greatest expression of God's love for us, which is that while the human race was still lost in sin, Jesus Christ, God the Son, became man in order to lay down his life for us to redeem us from sin and open to us the gates of Heaven. There is one reference to the salvation won for us by Jesus in one of the prayer times, which has the traditional response from the Stations of the Cross, 'By your cross and resurrection you have set us free. You are the saviour of the world'.

It would be helpful in this lesson to introduce the second major part of the Mass, the *Liturgy of the Eucharist*, and to explain its major components. The Consecration of the Mass should be mentioned and given great prominence, because it is the heart of the entire Eucharistic celebration. This would also be the appropriate place to teach that the Mass is the same sacrifice as that of the Cross.

Lesson A4-T3L5 - We Give Thanks, teaches the importance of giving thanks to God, especially for Jesus, which is good. It would be helpful if the lesson taught the most important reason for being thankful for Jesus, which is central to the meaning of the Mass, i.e. that Jesus, God the Son, became man and gave himself up to death in order to redeem the human race from its state of sin, resulting from the Original Sin of our First Parents, Adam and Eve.

Lesson A4-T3L6 - We Celebrate God's Forgiveness, seeks to teach that at the Eucharist we celebrate the gift of God's forgiveness. The intention is good and particularly relevant to the Eucharist, but one might suggest amendments to better achieve the intention. It would be

good to mention that the forgiveness of God was won by the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, of which the Eucharist is the re-enactment. It is reasonable to include the Lord's Prayer, the Lamb of God, and a sign of peace in the lesson prayer times, but it would be helpful to relate these to the Mass, in particular to the Rite of Communion where they belong. It is reasonable to include the Confiteor, but it would be helpful to mention and complete the Penitential Rite, to which the Confiteor belongs, and to re-locate it appropriately in the Introductory Rites of the Mass.

Lesson A4-T3L7 - We Share Jesus, The Bread Of Life, teaches that in Holy Communion we receive Jesus, who is the Bread of Life. This is good, but one might suggest ways for making the teaching more explicit and complete, and for amending aspects which detract from the effectiveness of the teaching.

It would be helpful to mention the Rite of Communion, and its location in the *Liturgy of the Eucharist*.

The Q&A says, 'The Lord Jesus comes to us in Holy Communion to help us love God our Father and to love one another'. It would be helpful to add that receiving the Eucharist gives grace which increases our union with Jesus, forgives our venial sins, preserves us from grave sins, and strengthens the unity and love of the members of the Church.<sup>321</sup>

The Lesson states that, 'At Mass, Christ is present in the people gathered, ... in the Gospel that's read, ... in the priest, ... in the consecrated wine and bread'. It would be better to state that Christ is present under the *appearances* of bread and wine, and it would also helpful to explain the significant differences in these four ways in which Christ is present.

---

<sup>321</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1416.

The significant attention to eating, food and meals, followed by the statement that, 'When we gather together to celebrate the Eucharist, we share a meal, we share food, we share the Bread of Life, and also share our lives, our thoughts, our worries and our stories', could detract from the unique nature of receiving Holy Communion. Also, numerous genuflections during a classroom prayer time could detract from the significance of genuflection in the church before the Blessed Sacrament.

There is a good statement on the Consecration, but it would be more helpful to give this a prominent position more appropriately located in Lesson A4-T3L4 above, rather than in this Lesson amongst the discussion starter questions in an optional 'Chatting' section.

In a Eucharistic-like 'Shared Meals Celebration' ritual (one of thirteen such lessons in the Programme) the teacher presides at a table on which is placed bread and a lighted candle, and leads in Mass-like prayers which include: 'Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have this bread to offer. Work of human hands. ... Bless this food. May it nourish us, body and soul'. Pupils file up to the table, the teacher hands each a piece of bread, which the pupils then all eat together. Might this ritual be confused by the pupils with the real Eucharist?

Lesson A4-T3L8 - Go In Peace, features the great prayer, starting, 'Lift up your hearts', and ending, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest'. It would be more helpful to give this prayer its appropriate location at the beginning of the Eucharistic Prayer, and not in this lesson at the end of the Concluding Rite of the Mass.

Alive-O 5 has two lessons on the Mass titled, 'Celebrating the Risen Jesus at Mass'. Might emphasis on 'the Risen Jesus' convey an impression that Mass is essentially celebrating the Resurrection, rather than that the Mass celebrates the Resurrection and the sacrifice of the Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus which he instituted at the Last Supper to perpetuate the sacrifice of the cross throughout the ages until his return in glory?

Lesson A5-T3L2 - Celebrating the Risen Jesus at Mass (1), has Notes for the teacher and Chaplain on getting ready for the Class Mass. These Notes follow the structure of the Church's liturgy of the Eucharist, which is good. The Notes are mostly helpful, but some aspects could be strengthened, especially the Eucharistic Prayer, the very heart which gives Mass its meaning.

The lesson material is presented in five parts:

1. We gather to celebrate.
2. We celebrate God's forgiveness.
3. We listen to the Word of God.
4. We give thanks.
5. We receive Holy Communion.

It might be helpful if the presentation more closely followed the Church's liturgy, in both structure and nomenclature, especially bringing out the two major parts of the Mass: the *Liturgy of the Word* and the *Liturgy of the Eucharist*.

1. We gather to celebrate. It might be helpful if the focus on secular celebrations and the Resurrection were expanded to bring out the full meaning of the Mass and its centrality in the life of the Church.

2. We celebrate God's forgiveness. It would be better to use the Church's title, 'Penitential Rite', with the focus on seeking the mercy and forgiveness of God. The Eucharistic Prayer is the place for celebrating and thanking God for the forgiveness won for us by Jesus on the cross.
3. We listen to the Word of God. It would be helpful to use the Church's term, *Liturgy of the Word*, and to mention that the 'Word of God' refers to the whole Bible, not only the Gospel. It might also be helpful to clarify for pupils the difference between the Word of God in Scripture, and the word of God in their hearts.
4. We give thanks. This part approximates to the Eucharistic Prayer. The primary focus in the presentation is on giving God thanks for secular things, and secondarily for Jesus 'who showed us how much God loves us'. It would be more helpful to use the term 'Eucharistic Prayer', to bring out its significance as the re-enactment of the redemptive sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross, and its centrality in the *Liturgy of the Eucharist* and in the Mass as a whole.
5. We receive Holy Communion. The presentation has good information on the Consecration among the discussion starter questions in the optional 'Chatting' section. It would be more helpful to have information on Holy Communion in this part, and to present the information on Consecration prominently in the Eucharistic Prayer, where it occurs.

Lesson A5-T3L3 - Celebrating the Risen Jesus at Mass (2), focuses on the meeting of Jesus with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, which is an excellent choice to help pupils understand the Mass. It would be helpful if the lesson material explained to pupils the

connection between the Emmaus incident and the Eucharist. It would also be helpful if the lesson's story kept closer to the Scripture original, without making the following departures:

In the Gospel when Jesus asks the disciples what has been happening, they say of Jesus that he 'proved he was a great prophet by the things he said and did in the sight of God and of the whole people..... Our own hope had been that he would be the one to set Israel free'. In the lesson the disciples say that Jesus was 'the teacher who taught us about God's love'.

The Gospel gives Jesus' response to the disciples as: "'You foolish men! So slow to believe the full message of the prophets! Was it is not ordained that the Christ should suffer and so enter into his glory?" Then, starting with Moses and going through all the Prophets, he explained to them the passages throughout the Scriptures that were about himself'. In the lesson Jesus' response is, "'Why you should you be so surprised? Don't you remember the great stories of God's love from the past?"', and he went on to remind them about Abraham and Moses and many others'.

Lesson A6-T3L2 - The Sacrifice of the Mass, presents the text of the 'Eucharistic Prayer for Children II', in the Pupil's Book. It would also have been helpful to include explanation and development of the meaning of this Eucharistic Prayer and the full liturgy of the Mass in the Pupils Book. Might it have been more helpful to use one of the normal Eucharistic prayers, helping pupils to understand the Mass they will experience in their parish, in the process strengthening links between home, school and parish?

The Lesson has Notes for teacher and Chaplain, with associated lesson material, for a Class Mass, which is very similar to that in Lesson A5-T3L2 - Celebrating the Risen Jesus at Mass

(1), above. The lesson additionally addresses the theme of the Mass as sacrifice, which is excellent in principle, but could be strengthened, as suggested below:

The Lesson materials, including the examples given, focus on sacrifice as doing without things and doing good to others. This concept of sacrifice is then extended to Jesus' sacrifice. The story, 'The Last Supper', says that Jesus spent his whole life looking after people; he cared for them, he fed them, he taught them, he healed them, he forgave them, he shared his whole life with them. The Pharisees and others grew to hate Jesus so much that he knew they would kill him if he didn't stop, but he loved his Father and us so much that he would not stop. This led to his death on Calvary, and in this way he gave up his life for us. The Q&A says, 'We call the Mass a sacrifice because at Mass Jesus Christ offers himself to God the Father and we offer ourselves with Jesus to him'. It would be helpful to develop the redemptive nature of Jesus' sacrifice, which saved the human race from sin, made us sons and daughters of the Father and opened to us the way to new life in heaven, which had been lost by the sin of our First Parents, Original Sin.

Lesson A7-T3L2 - The Risen Jesus is Present at Mass, re-visits the liturgy of the Mass. It is helpful to teach that as we come together for Mass we are the 'Body of Christ', and Jesus is present in our midst. It is good to say that Jesus is present in the Word of God; it might be helpful to explain how Jesus is present in all parts of the Bible, because pupils can readily relate to the presence of Jesus in the Gospels, but may find it difficult to understand how Jesus is present in the Old Testament, and other parts of the New Testament. It is good to say that Jesus is present in the celebrant at Mass, but it will also be helpful to relate this to the Sacrament of Holy Orders. It is good that under the heading 'To Be Learned' Jesus is noted to be present 'soul and divinity', in addition to 'body and blood'.

It would have been helpful for the lesson to bring out the central character of the Mass as making present Jesus' redemptive sacrifice on the cross.

Lesson A8-T1L11 - Sacraments of the Church (1), touches briefly on the Eucharist, saying:

'The parish faith community gathers together to celebrate Eucharist. They listen to the challenge of Jesus, they offer themselves with the Risen Jesus to the Father, they share the bread of life and they celebrate because they know that the Risen Jesus is with them, helping them to live as his followers. At Mass the Risen Jesus comes to us to nourish and strengthen us, to help us to grow in God's love and in the love of others'.

In summary, the lesson material contains much relevant information about the Eucharist and the Mass, but might be strengthened by including the following:

A clear and simple presentation to the pupils of the structure of the Mass, in harmony with Church teaching, involving<sup>322</sup> -

- ❖ The *Liturgy of the Word*, with the gathering of the people and penitential rite, followed by the Scripture readings, homily and general intercessions;
- ❖ The *Liturgy of the Eucharist*, with the presentation of the bread and wine, consecration by the priest (which is the heart of the Eucharistic celebration), communion and concluding rite.

Clarification that the Word of God read at Mass is drawn from the entire Bible: Old Testament including the Psalms; the four Gospels, and other New Testament books –

---

<sup>322</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1333, 1346, 1348-1355, 1408.



Epistles, Acts and Revelation. Explanation of how Jesus is present in the entire Bible, and not only in the Gospels.

The term ‘transubstantiation’ best describes the change of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood, soul and divinity, of Christ. Christ is present whole and entire in both the bread and the wine, and their parts; breaking the bread does not divide Christ.<sup>323</sup>

Only priests, who have validly received the Sacrament of Holy Orders, can preside at the Eucharist and consecrate the bread and wine so that they become the Body and Blood of Christ.<sup>324</sup>

The Mass is a continuation of the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross for our salvation. The same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody manner on the cross is offered in an unbloody manner on the altar at Mass.<sup>325</sup>

Every Eucharistic Celebration involves, not only those present, but the whole Church (communion of saints) united with Christ.<sup>326</sup>

The Eucharist is the source and summit of the Church’s life, because it contains Jesus, God the Son, himself.<sup>327</sup>

Anyone who desires to receive Christ in Eucharistic communion must be in the state of grace. Anyone aware of having sinned mortally must not receive communion without having received absolution in the Sacrament of Penance.<sup>328</sup>

---

<sup>323</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 1377, 1413.

<sup>324</sup> *Ibid.* 1411.

<sup>325</sup> *Ibid.* 1323, 1362-1367, 1409.

<sup>326</sup> *Ibid.* 1368-1372.

<sup>327</sup> *Ibid.* 1322, 1324.

<sup>328</sup> *Ibid.* 1415.

Receiving the Eucharist gives grace which increases our union with Jesus, forgives our venial sins, preserves us from grave sins, and strengthens the unity and love of the members of the Church.<sup>329</sup>

The faithful are obliged to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days. The Church encourages more frequent, even daily, attendance at Mass and reception of Holy Communion.<sup>330</sup>

The Church encourages visits to the Blessed Sacrament for prayer and adoration.<sup>331</sup>

### **3.4.6 Penance**

#### INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

Pupils are prepared for the Sacrament of Penance in Years 3 and 4 of the Programme. There is Information for teachers on the Sacrament in Teacher's Books 3: page XX and 4: page XXII. The Information teaches that human beings in general, most especially children, are all good. God always loves us, and Jesus gives a good example of the love of God. We need to be connected to other people in order to attain our full potential. We may fail to live up to our own goodness, hurting others, and becoming disconnected from other people, from God and from our true selves. By saying sorry we can become aware of the steps necessary for reconciliation to take place.

It would be helpful to give some information for teachers on the Sacrament of Penance. It might also be helpful to include that, though created in original blessedness and goodness by God, mankind fell from grace through the sin of our First Parents, that all human beings

---

<sup>329</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 1416.

<sup>330</sup> *Ibid.* 1389, 1417.

<sup>331</sup> *Ibid.* 1378-1379, 1418.

suffer from the effects of original sin, and that Jesus is our divine Saviour from sin. It might also be helpful to teach that Christian morality is centred primarily on God and our relationship with him, rather than on ourselves and our own human self-fulfilment.

The Information for teachers on the Sacrament of Penance in the Years 5 through 8 is similar and is therefore analysed here together. The Information appears in Teacher's Books 5: page [21], 6: page [20], 7: page [17] and 8: page [18].

The Information states that: Baptism calls us to leave sin and do good, and initiates us into membership of the Church, the Body of Christ, where we can develop our full potential. We can grow in God's covenant love, and learn from the story of Zacchaeus who changed his ways due to the unconditional love of Jesus. Reconciliation involves our relationship with God and with others. The story of the Prodigal Son teaches us the unfailing love of God who is always waiting to welcome us back. The Ten Commandments are pathways to life from the slavery of sin.

In relation to the Sacrament of Penance itself, the information refers to the importance of 'narrative' and concludes that 'we should be sensitive about the requirement of confession according to number and species'. Narrative certainly has a part to play, probably an essential part, in the confession of sins, but 'narrative' should not change the Church's teaching about confessing our sins. The Church teaches the requirement for confession of each and every mortal sin. The Church also teaches that it is not a necessity, but a strong recommendation, that there should be confession of venial sins<sup>332</sup>. It is to the benefit of the penitent to be as complete as possible in the examination of conscience and confession of venial sins, in order

---

<sup>332</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1493, 1497.

to grow in virtue and holiness. A good understanding of the penitent's situation on venial sins should also help the confessor to give the most appropriate words of advice. Therefore, confession of sins according to number and species should greatly benefit both penitent and confessor.

In addition to the point noted above, the Information for teachers might helpfully include the following concerning the Sacrament of Penance:

God wants us to be sorry for our sins. When we are truly sorry for our sins and ask God's forgiveness, he will forgive us in his merciful love, through the merits of Jesus' redemptive sacrifice on the cross and the sending of the Holy Spirit. Jesus asks us to seek his forgiveness in the Sacrament of Penance (also called Reconciliation or Confession).<sup>333</sup>

The priest in the sacrament of Penance stands in the place of Christ. Through the grace of the sacrament of Holy Orders, he gives us Jesus' forgiveness when he says the words of absolution.<sup>334</sup>

Turning back to God, called conversion, repentance or contrition, means we are truly sorry for offending God and others, and we are determined to turn away from sins we have committed, and not to sin again.<sup>335</sup>

Before Penance we should examine our consciences to come to know our sins, reflecting on the Word of God, especially the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes.<sup>336</sup>

In the Sacrament of Penance the main requirements of the penitent are:

- ❖ To have sincere repentance

---

<sup>333</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 982, 1486.

<sup>334</sup> *Ibid.* 986, 1495.

<sup>335</sup> *Ibid.* 1490.

<sup>336</sup> *Ibid.* 1454.

- ❖ To confess sins to the priest
- ❖ To make reparation by carrying out the penance given by the priest, and making all reasonable efforts to repair any harm done to others by sins committed, e.g. return of stolen goods, restore reputation of someone slandered.<sup>337</sup>

In Penance we are bound to confess all mortal sins that have not previously been confessed, which remains the only ordinary means of reconciliation with God and the Church. The confession of venial sins, without being necessary in itself, is nevertheless strongly recommended by the Church.<sup>338</sup>

In addition to forgiveness of sins, the graces of the Sacrament of Penance reconcile us with God and the Church, bring peace, give spiritual strength to live a good Christian life and to avoid sin.<sup>339</sup>

The Church requires that we go to the sacrament of Penance at least once per year, but regular more frequent confession (monthly is a good guideline), even of venial sins only, is strongly recommended by the Church.<sup>340</sup>

The ordinary celebration of the Sacrament of Penance (Rite 1) involves: a blessing and exhortation to repentance by the priest, reading from the Word of God (if time allows), the confession of sins and prayer of contrition by the penitent, the giving of a penance and absolution by the priest, and ends with the priest's blessing and dismissal.<sup>341</sup>

---

<sup>337</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1450-1460, 1491.

<sup>338</sup> *Ibid.* 1493, 1497.

<sup>339</sup> *Ibid.* 1496.

<sup>340</sup> *Ibid.* 1457, 1458.

<sup>341</sup> *Ibid.* 1480.

The Sacrament of Penance may also be celebrated communally (Rite 2), in which individual confession of sins and absolution are inserted into communal celebration of readings and homily, examination of conscience, request for forgiveness and thanksgiving.<sup>342</sup>

### LESSON MATERIAL ON PENANCE

Some schools celebrate First Penance in Year 3 (First Class) and others in Year 4 (Second Class). The Lessons that prepare for First Penance – A3-T2L8: I Was Lost, I Am Found, and A4-T2L8 - Reconciliation Rite – are very similar and so are analysed here together.

Pupil's Book 3 says, 'In the Sacrament of Penance God Our Father forgives us'. This is not unreasonable, but it would be helpful to reflect the full Trinitarian and Church dimensions of the prayer of absolution, 'God, the Father of mercies, through the death and resurrection of his Son has reconciled the world to himself and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins; through the ministry of the Church may God give you pardon and peace, and I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit'.

Pupil's Book 4 has nothing for Lesson A4-T2L8. It would have been helpful for the pupils and their parents if there had been appropriate material in the Pupil's Books to help in preparation for First Penance, including an explanation of the meaning of the Sacrament, the essentials of the celebration of the Sacrament, and the form of words that would be used by priest and penitent.

---

<sup>342</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 1482.

In Teacher's Books 3 and 4, Day Five of the Lessons is allocated for the Rite for Reconciliation. Days Three and Four are allocated for preparation, but no material is provided for the teachers to help them in preparation of pupils for the celebration of the Sacrament of Penance; it would have been helpful if such material had been provided for the teachers.

For Day Five two Rites are presented, with precedence given to Rite 2 over Rite 1. Time would not allow both Rites to be presented to pupils, nor are teachers advised to present both Rites, therefore it seems most likely that teachers will follow the Programme's preference for Rite 2, and Rite 1 will be omitted. It must surely be preferable to present Rite 1 only to the pupils at this stage, because it is the normal way of the Church for celebration of the Sacrament of Penance, and the one that the pupils will usually encounter in their parishes. Rite 2 might helpfully be presented to the pupils in later years of the Programme, when they are fully familiar with the normal form, which is Rite 1.

The Lessons provide a format and script for celebration of Rite 2 of the Sacrament of Penance, which follows the general outline given by the Church, but which could be helpfully amended in a number of ways. The Liturgy of the Word features the Parable of the Lost Sheep, Luke 15:3-7, but the final verse 7 which gives the meaning of the parable ('In the same way, I tell you, there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one repentant sinner than over ninety-nine virtuous men who have no need of repentance') is omitted. A script is provided for the priest's homily, but the lost sheep is not likened to a repentant sinner but only someone who is accidentally lost (further analysis of this Parable is given in Section 3.3.3: Jesus Christ, above).

It is good that there is an Examination of Conscience, but it would have been helpful if it were based on the Ten Commandments, as recommended by the Church. It would also have been helpful for the pupils to have received teaching on the meaning of 'conscience'.

In relation to the individual confession and absolution, the script only requires that the pupils acknowledge their sinfulness, while confessing sins is optional. It would be helpful to follow the teaching of the Church that Rite 2 does not dispense from the normal requirement for full confession of sins. If confessing sins, pupils are encouraged to use the drawings of their bad behaviours from earlier lessons (A3-T2L6, A3-T2L7, A4-T2L6, A4-T2L7); this infringes on Church teaching that confession of sins should be oral (auricular confession), not written, and may compromise the secrecy of the Sacrament of Penance<sup>343</sup>.

In the prayer of absolution the script first presents the words, 'God our Father forgives you', and then later, 'I absolve you from your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen'. It would be better to follow the form of words given by the Church, because the separation above might be interpreted that God has forgiven the penitent first anyway, and the words, 'I absolve you .....' are merely confirmatory, rather than the very means by which God's forgiveness is given to the penitent.

It is good that Book 4 mentions the penance given by the priest; it would be helpful to explain the connection between the act of penance and the essential duty of reparation of the harm done through sins committed.

After the pupils have received absolution from the priest, they receive a hug from their parents as a sign of the parents' forgiveness, and the parents bless the children on the ears and

---

<sup>343</sup> See Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *Circular Letter Concerning the Integrity of the Sacrament of Penance*, 2. 20<sup>th</sup> March 2000. [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va)



on the mouth. This is not part of the Church's liturgy and may cause confusion between the role of priest and parent. The parent can only forgive the child for offences against the parent, not for the child's sins in general.

The Lessons in Teacher's Books 3 and 4 provide a script for the celebration of the Sacrament of Penance according to Rite 1. The structure and format given for the Rite are reasonable, apart from the form of absolution and the penance given by the priest (as noted above). It might be helpful to indicate that the reading of the Word of God is optional, because it is generally omitted (presumably due to time constraints) when the Sacrament is celebrated in our churches.

Lessons A5-T2L8: Reconciliation, and A6-T2L8: God's Never-Ending Love, address the Sacrament of Penance in a way similar to Years 3 and 4 above, but with some changes.

The Pupil's Books say, 'In the Sacrament of Penance, God Our Father forgives us through the words and actions of the priest'. It is good to include the role of the priest, which is an improvement over Book 3, but it would still be helpful to include the full Trinitarian dimension, as noted above.

The Teacher's Books repeat the Rites for Reconciliation - Rites 1 and 2 from Books 3 and 4, but with some changes. The Scripture readings selected for Rite 2 are the conversion of Zacchaeus and the Parable of the Prodigal Son, which are both reasonable.

Teacher's Book 5 continues to give precedence to Rite 2 over Rite 1. However, Book 6 gives priority to Rite 1 by keeping it in the main lesson material, and moving Rite 2 to an appendix, which is good. It would be helpful to teach that Rite 1 is the normal form for celebration of

the Sacrament, and that Rite 2 is for special occasions and circumstances. In Teacher's Book 5 'the celebrant invites the child to acknowledge that it is his/her second/third confession'; this presumes that the pupils are only receiving the Sacrament of Penance once per year, which could result if celebrating the Sacrament through Rite 2 alone, but is contrary to the Church's guidance on frequency of the Sacrament. In Book 6 the celebrant simply asks pupils to say the time of their last confession, which is good.

The Sacrament of Penance is addressed in Lessons A7-T1L11 - Commandments, A7-T2L4 - Christian Morality, and A7-T3L5 - Where Do We Go From Here? Each of these lessons has a 'Reconciliation Service', which is to include individual confession; no text is provided to cover the individual confessions. The Teacher's Books note that these services are 'based on the Rite for Reconciliation - Rite 2'. The Services resemble the Church's liturgy for Penance according to Rite 2, but depart from the Church's liturgy in a number of ways. This could be quite confusing for the pupils, because it would be hard for them to see that the Services are not actually part of the Church's liturgy. The presentation of three Rite 2-like Services reinforces the Programme's undue preference for Rite 2 over Rite 1. It would be reasonable to present Rite 2 during Year 7 of the Programme, but it should be presented in full harmony with the liturgy of the Church.

The principal way in which the three 'Reconciliation Services' depart from the Church's Rite 2 is the omission of the 'Examination of Conscience'. There are sometimes lists of prayers which approximate to an examination of conscience, but the Church's preferred structure of the Ten Commandments is not used, though it should be particularly helpful for primary school pupils.

The Reconciliation Service in Lesson A7-T1L11 has a Scripture reading based on Exodus 20:1-17, which is good in principle. However, the text used is an abbreviated paraphrase; it would be helpful to use a text which better reflects the Scripture original.

The Reconciliation Service in Lesson A7-T2L4 has a Scripture reading from Matthew 5:1-12, the Beatitudes, which is satisfactory. However, the prayers in the Service do not draw directly on the Scriptural Beatitudes, but on a Programme-written list which resembles the Beatitudes in some ways, but is less satisfactory. It is also unhelpful that the Service includes prayer with the clay 'Beings' that were made by the pupils, then sprinkled with holy water and prayed over.

The Reconciliation Service in Lesson A7-T3L5 dispenses with a Scripture reading and substitutes a Programme-written passage about the ancient Greeks and Romans, from which it develops a list of behaviours that need to be forgiven. The Service concludes with a series of prayers based on the Fruit of the Spirit, which are reasonable.

The Sacrament of Penance is addressed in two lessons in Year 8.

Lesson A8-T1L6 - In Relation to Reconciliation, has another Reconciliation Service 'based on the Rite of Reconciliation of a Number of Penitents - Rite 2', and a Ritual of Forgiveness (non-sacramental). Teachers are invited to choose between these two services.

The Reconciliation Service is similar to the three services analysed above for Year 7. A Scripture reading is presented, which is the Parable of the Prodigal Son, which is good. There is no Examination of Conscience, and much of the prayers are based on a psychological concept of healing spaces in relationships. The Service also includes an activity, 'Let us

Endeavour', in which the pupils move small stones around a circle while chanting a mantra, which appears to have neither Christian significance nor connection with the Sacrament of Penance.

The Ritual of Forgiveness (non-sacramental) has prayer for forgiveness which is related again to healing the spaces in relationships, and also includes taking stones and piling them into a mound as a sign of forgiveness. The Ritual does not refer to the Sacrament of Penance, and does not appear to contribute to an understanding of the Sacrament.

Lesson A8-T1L11 - Sacraments of the Church, has a paragraph on the Sacrament of Penance, which states that, 'We know that God our Father is ready to forgive us when we say sorry. We celebrate this forgiveness in the Sacrament of Penance', reinforced in the following prayer-time by, 'No matter what happens, we are always forgiven and loved by God when we express sorrow'. These statements are not entirely satisfactory, because merely saying sorry is not sufficient, we must have true contrition, a firm purpose of amendment, which includes repairing harm done where possible. Also, the statement might give the impression that God forgives us anyway, and in the Sacrament of Penance we merely celebrate that we have been already forgiven. It might also be helpful to state that the Sacrament of Penance remains the only ordinary means for forgiveness of mortal sins.

In the subsequent prayer time, 'Remembering Reconciliation', the pupils form two circles, one inside the other. Each pupil is then to say to the pupil opposite, 'I'm sorry. I forgive you. Peace be with you'. This ritual aims to promote reconciliation within the class, but pupils may find it somewhat unrealistic, because randomly selected pairs of pupils may have no reason to seek or give forgiveness to each other. In any case, this ritual hardly contributes to an understanding of the Sacrament of Penance.

Several suggestions are listed above for inclusion in the Information for teachers. The items suggested might also be helpfully incorporated into the lesson material for pupils.

### **3.4.7 Anointing of the Sick**

#### INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

Alive-O Teacher's Book 6 page [21] has the following information on The Anointing of the Sick: 'The children are introduced to the Anointing of the Sick in the context of the care that Jesus had for all those who are suffering. In the Anointing of the Sick, the Church continues to express the care of Jesus for those who are sick today'.

This information is good, but might be strengthened by adding the following:

The Anointing of the Sick was instituted by Christ as a sacrament, which gives a special grace to those suffering serious illness or in old age.<sup>344</sup>

Each time a person falls seriously ill they may receive the Anointing of the Sick, and also again if the illness worsens.<sup>345</sup>

Only priests and bishops can give the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, using oil blessed by the bishop.<sup>346</sup>

The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick is a liturgical and communal celebration: the priest lays his hand on the sick person, anoints the forehead and hands, and prays for the special graces of this sacrament.<sup>347</sup>

---

<sup>344</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1511, 1527.

<sup>345</sup> *Ibid.* 1529.

<sup>346</sup> *Ibid.* 1530.

<sup>347</sup> *Ibid.* 1519, 1531.

The special grace of the Anointing of the Sick: unites the sick person to the Passion of Christ; brings strength, peace, and courage to endure suffering in a Christian manner; forgiveness of sins. The Sacrament may bring healing from the illness, but if not, it helps prepare the person for passing over to eternal life.<sup>348</sup>

### LESSON MATERIAL ON ANOINTING OF THE SICK

Lesson A6-T2L1 - A Healing Community, has a brief description of the Anointing of the Sick in Pupil's and Teacher's Books: the people gather with someone who is seriously ill and pray for the sick person; the priest blesses everyone present and a passage from Scripture is read; the priest anoints the sick person with the Oil of the Sick and prays for the grace of the Holy Spirit, that the Lord will save, raise up and comfort the sick person; afterwards the sick person may receive Holy Communion.

While the description covers much of the administration of the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick, there are some ways in which the teaching might be strengthened for the pupils:

It would be good to mention that the ceremony is a Sacrament of the Church, which was instituted by Christ. While it is good to mention the participation of the community, it could be made clear that it is the priest (or bishop) who confers the Sacrament through the grace of Holy Orders, and not the Christian community as a whole. It would be good to note that old age may also be a reason for seeking the Anointing of the Sick, and that a seriously ill person may receive the Sacrament repeatedly each time the illness worsens.

---

<sup>348</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 1532.

It would be important to state that the Sacrament has a special grace, which unites the sick person to the Passion of Christ, brings strength, peace, and courage to endure suffering in a Christian manner, and brings forgiveness of sins if the person has been unable to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The grace of the Sacrament may bring healing from the illness, but if not, it helps prepare the person for passing over to eternal life<sup>349</sup>.

Lesson A8-T1L11 - Sacraments of the Church (1), has a brief and helpful paragraph on the Anointing of the Sick, which is described as a Sacrament, 'in which the Risen Jesus comforts and blesses the sick person and prepares those who are dying for heaven. This sacrament is given to those who are seriously ill and it may be repeated as often as is seen fit'.

### **3.4.8 Holy Orders**

#### INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

In Teacher's Book 8 page [17] in the section 'Liturgical Education for the Senior-Primary Schoolchild' there is reference to Holy Orders as one of the two sacraments at the Service of Communion, but no other information.

#### LESSON MATERIAL ON HOLY ORDERS

In Lesson A8-T1L12 - Sacraments of the Church (2), one day is devoted to the Sacrament of Holy Orders. There is good information presented about the Sacrament, but one might also suggest ways in which the teaching could be strengthened.

---

<sup>349</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1532.

The priesthood is so important to the life of the Church that the Sacrament of Holy Orders would have merited more extensive treatment than just one day in eight years, and introduced earlier in the Programme. It would have been particularly helpful to have teaching on the nature of ministerial priesthood and the sacramental powers of priest and bishop when teaching about the other Sacraments, especially Eucharist, Penance, Confirmation and Anointing of the Sick, and about the Church.

The Lesson states that some men feel called to be priests. It might be helpful to add that this call comes from God, and must be submitted to the judgement of the Church who will decide on their suitability to be ordained. It would be good to note that the Church is bound by the choice of Christ to ordain only men to the priesthood.<sup>350</sup>

It is good to say that priests try to live as Jesus lived. It would be helpful to add the Church's understanding that it is Christ himself who is present through the ordained minister; the priest acts in the person of Christ our Saviour, the Head of the Church.<sup>351</sup>

The Lesson commends the priest's life of outstanding dedication and service; it might be helpful to also mention the gift of celibacy. Bishops and priests are normally not married, so they can give themselves entirely to God and the people they serve. Celibacy is also an imitation of Christ.<sup>352</sup>

It is reasonable for the Lesson to say that 'in the sacrament of Holy Orders the man is anointed with the Spirit of God so that he will be able to live out his life as a priest'. It would be helpful to mention that the Sacrament gives grace to serve the Church, and was instituted

---

<sup>350</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1578, 1598.

<sup>351</sup> *Ibid.* 1548.

<sup>352</sup> *Ibid.* 1551, 1579-1580, 1599, 1618.



by Christ at the Last Supper, when he established the Twelve Apostles as the bishops to lead and take care of the Church.<sup>353</sup>

The Lesson states that after ordination the new priest promises to lead the community in celebrating the sacraments, preaching the Gospel and teaching the faith. It would be helpful to add that through the grace of the Sacrament the ordained ministers receive sacred power to serve the People of God through teaching the faith, administration of the sacraments and divine worship, and by leading the Church.<sup>354</sup>

The essential rite of the Sacrament is well described: the bishop lays his hands on the man's head and prays that he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, and then anoints his hands with oil. It might be helpful to add that Ordination, like Baptism and Confirmation, can be received only once.<sup>355</sup>

The Lesson states that priests 'make God's presence real in the world'. This is reasonable, but it would be good to also include the eternal perspective, because the priesthood serves above all to help the people of God on our journey to heaven, our ultimate home.

Video 8 has a good presentation on priesthood and the ordination ceremony, which should expand pupils' understanding of the lesson material.

The Lesson's information relates to priesthood only: it would be helpful to cover all three degrees of the ordained ministry: bishop, priest and deacon.<sup>356</sup> An explanation of the three degrees of ordination might include the following:

---

<sup>353</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*,. 1536, 1548.

<sup>354</sup> *Ibid.* 1592.

<sup>355</sup> *Ibid.* 1597.

<sup>356</sup> *Ibid.* 1593.

The bishop is a successor of the apostles and head of his diocese. He also shares in responsibility for the whole Church, under the authority and in union with the Pope, the successor of St Peter. The bishop has the fullness of priestly ordination, including the sacramental power to ordain priests, deacons and other bishops, and to administer Confirmation.<sup>357</sup>

Priests receive responsibility from the bishop to look after a parish or some other special work. Priests receive through ordination the gift of a 'sacred power' to celebrate Mass, proclaim the Gospel and consecrate the Eucharist, to forgive sins in Confession, and to administer the Sacrament of the Sick. Priests normally administer Baptism, and officiate at the Sacrament of Marriage.<sup>358</sup>

Deacons are ordained for tasks of service. Permanent deacons are men who may be married. They assist the bishop and priests.<sup>359</sup>

### **3.4.9 Marriage**

#### INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

In Teachers Book 8 page [17] in the section 'Liturgical Education for the Senior-Primary Schoolchild' there is reference to Marriage as one of the two sacraments at the Service of Communion, but no other information.

---

<sup>357</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 1576, 1594, 1600.

<sup>358</sup> *Ibid.* 1551, 1562-1567, 1595.

<sup>359</sup> *Ibid.* 1596.

## LESSON MATERIAL ON MARRIAGE

In Lesson A8-T1L12 - Sacraments of the Church (2), one day is devoted to the Sacrament of Marriage. There is a reasonable account on Marriage, which appears in both Pupil's and Teacher's Books. Some suggestions for strengthening the teaching are outlined below:

It might be helpful to note that by performing his first miracle at the wedding feast of Cana, Jesus gave a sign confirming Marriage as a Sacrament of the Church.<sup>360</sup>

It would also be helpful to clarify that the 'special help' given the couple are the graces of Christ particular to the Sacrament of Marriage, which spiritually aid husband and wife to love and care for each other, to bring each other closer to God on the way to eternal life, and to love and educate their children in the Catholic Faith.<sup>361</sup>

It is good to note that 'the life-story of husband and wife will tell of God's faithful love for all of us'. It would also be helpful to bring in the rich Scriptural image of Jesus' love for his Church as the model of love for all married couples.<sup>362</sup>

There is a good account of the marriage ceremony. It might be helpful to add that it is normal to celebrate a Catholic wedding during a Nuptial Mass, the couple are the ministers of the sacrament for each other, the priest blesses the couple and acts as a witness for the Church.

<sup>363</sup>

It might also be helpful to add that the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph in Nazareth is a model for the Christian family home, which is rightly called "the domestic church."<sup>364</sup>

---

<sup>360</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 1613.

<sup>361</sup> *Ibid.* 1660-1661.

<sup>362</sup> *Ibid.* 1661.

<sup>363</sup> *Ibid.* 1662, 1663.

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid.* 1666.

### **3.5 LIFE IN CHRIST – MORALITY**

The teaching on Christian morality in the Alive-O Programme is analysed below following the structure of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The first sub-section, 3.5.1 Life in the Spirit, addresses the Church's general understanding of morality as life in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. The second sub-section, 3.5.2 The Ten Commandments, addresses the moral law of God through the framework of the Decalogue.

#### **3.5.1 Life in the Spirit**

##### INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

The Introductory information for teachers addresses morality under the heading 'Moral Education' in Alive-O 1 through 4. The Information is in two parts, the second of which has a sub-heading, 'Moral Education Related to God'.

In Teacher's Books 1: page XII-XIII, and 2: page XII-XIII, the Information opens with, 'Through baptism we share in the life and love of God. Christian living is an expression of this life'. This is good.

The Information then goes on to stress personal and emotional development. Children develop their initial moral sense in response to the rules, precepts and expectations of adults. They are then later helped to develop Christian values, mainly through the example of parents and teachers. These values include love, respect, tolerance, generosity, forgiveness, self-sacrifice, sympathy, self-discipline, perseverance, determination, patience, fair play and consideration of others. These values help the children to develop self-confidence and self-acceptance.

The Information states that developing a Christian conscience is a lifelong task, to which parents contribute most. It is good to refer to conscience, but it would be helpful to clarify that conscience is not essentially something that human beings develop; conscience is primarily a gift of God, part of human nature, but which requires formation.

It is good there is reference to obedience to rules and observance of certain standards of behaviour in the classroom. It might be helpful to refer to the beneficial effect of rules and standards of behaviour at home, as well as in school. It is true to state that the school may have to supply what parents/guardians have neglected, or correct wrong attitudes already formed; however, it would be equally true that parents sometimes have to make up for matters neglected or wrong attitudes formed in school.

There is reference to stories in the Programme as a means of moral education. One might raise the question as to the effectiveness of fictional stories, because it may be difficult to know what lessons the pupils will draw from them.

The Information relates moral education to God, but seems to give God a secondary role. Pupils 'are being helped to know themselves, to accept themselves, to appreciate their human abilities and to have more confidence in themselves. This develops their capacity to relate to the world, to others and to God'. Allusions to God and his law seem more discouraging than positive: 'Knowledge is not sufficient for moral development. ... To teach rules and commandments is not sufficient. .... God should never be used to threaten the children or to coax them to do what is required of them'. Some re-balancing would be helpful to give primacy to God and his law of love as the source and foundation of moral education and formation.

Alive-O 3 and Alive-O 4 prepare pupils for the Sacrament of Penance. The Information for teachers on 'Moral Education' in Teachers Books 3: page XX-XXII, and 4: page XXIV-XXVI, is mostly the same as Alive-O 1 and 2, but with some additions, which are analysed below.

Pupils are to be given the opportunity to write their own Class Code. While it is good to encourage pupils to take some responsibility for their own behaviour, might it be encouraging a self-generated approach to morality in the absence of teaching on the commandments of God?

There is emphasis on the individual goodness of the pupils, and the linking of sin with not living up to this inner goodness. There is a degree of truth in this, in that human beings were created good, in the image and likeness of God. However, referring only to human goodness omits the fundamental Christian understanding that our initial goodness is damaged by original sin, restored by the redemptive sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, but that the effects of original sin still persist. The Information focuses on our own personal inner goodness as the source of our good behaviour, which could take away from looking to God as the source and way of right behaviour.

Sin is described as weakening the connection between ourselves and God, a distancing from God, while conversion is restoring of our relationship with God. It would be helpful to include the essential nature of sin as an offence against God who is all good, and that sin is any thought, word, deed or omission contrary to God's law.

It is helpful to state that sin should always be set in the context of freedom and conscience, linked with conscious and deliberate choices. It might also be helpful to include the Church's teaching on the meaning of conscience.

The Information commends the moral development theories of Jean Piaget, Lawrence Kohlberg and Carol Gilligan, specifically for showing that moral development is a gradual process, in which 'children of six or seven years of age need to be encouraged to emerge from their self-centred perspective, to acknowledge the perspective of those around them and to move towards more co-operative, mutual interaction with others'. It might be helpful to include a note of caution about these moral development theories, especially Kohlberg who has been highly influential on Catholic catechesis, because they have a purely secular basis and exclude the Christian context <sup>365</sup>. Kohlberg's theories have not escaped criticism from other psychologists, both secular and Christian <sup>366</sup>.

Lawrence Kohlberg based his theories on the work of Jean Piaget in the fields of intellectual and moral development. Piaget's scheme of moral development is much simpler than Kohlberg's, with three stages, which parallel his stages of intellectual development. While Piaget's work is interesting, a note of caution might helpfully be included in the context of

---

<sup>365</sup> Kohlberg, Lawrence, *The Philosophy of Moral Development – Moral Stages and the Idea of Justice*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981. Kohlberg's six stages of moral development depend on the individual's rational and intellectual progression, while responding to norms of behaviour of family and society. The highest stage of development involves rational commitment to universal ethical principles, which are essentially liberal secular values: justice, equal rights, and respect for the dignity of individuals. Children are to be encouraged to construct for themselves logical and ethical principles. Virtue is knowledge of the good; he who knows the good chooses the good. This secular approach to morality omits key Christian elements, e.g. there is no recognition of original sin or its effects, God or his laws, conscience, love, redemption, grace or eternal perspective. P.17-19, 30, 95, 407-412.

<sup>366</sup> See Vitz, Paul C. "Moral Education: A Comparison of Secular and Religious Models." In *Catechetical Instruction and the Catholic Faithful*, by George A Kelly - Editor, p.101-120. Boston: St Paul Editions, 1982. Criticisms have related to: the validity of the six stages; the reliability of the moral judgment scale based on moral dilemmas; lack of correlation between scores on the Moral Development Scale and moral action; lack of support for concept that the sequence of stages is invariable; counter-evidence to assumption that moral development is basically a form of natural intellectual maturation; consequence of moral relativism; bias in favour of Kohlberg's own liberal atheistic ideology.

Christian morality, because Piaget's perspective is secular, and excludes much of importance to the Christian understanding of morality.<sup>367</sup>

The Information helpfully introduces an explicitly Christian dimension. Jesus is put forward as a model for how the pupils should live; it would be helpful to also include that Jesus is our divine Saviour from sin. Also included is Jesus' summary from the Old Testament that we should love God with all our hearts, and our neighbour as ourselves<sup>368</sup>; it would be helpful to include the New Testament fulfilment, that we should accept and believe in Jesus as our Lord and Saviour<sup>369</sup>, and love one another as he has loved us<sup>370</sup>.

The Information states that the Programme does not mention the commandments of God at this stage, but stresses 'the values underlying the commandments'. It would be more helpful to follow the Church's practice of using the Ten Commandments as the best framework for teaching the Law of God, which would also underline the point that God's law is a matter of 'command', and not just fostering of values.

---

<sup>367</sup> Howard Gruber, Editor. *The Essential Piaget*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977. p.43-50, 96, 185, 380-386. Piaget posited three major stages of intellectual development in childhood and adolescence: sensimotor, concrete operations, and formal operations. He also observed three types of rules made up by children themselves which helped to understand the developing moral judgement of the child: motor rule, which merges into a habit; coercive rule, which begins with unilateral respect; and rational rule, which is based on mutual respect. Piaget did not recognise original sin or anything equivalent, positing that from the moral as from the intellectual point of view the child is born neither good nor bad, but master of his destiny. Piaget did recognise religion, but saw it as having a psychological rather than a spiritual basis: living in groups gives rise to respect, which is the source of all religion and morality. Filial piety is the psychological source of the religious sense, which initially produced primitive religions; later developed religions had gods of moral purity, showing that liberation of mind can raise the moral level of the gods.

Piaget also posited that the whole is society and the part is the individual, and their equilibrium becomes morality. Science gives knowledge of good and evil, which is the basis of morality, while faith gives meaning to life. God is a concept, while faith speaks of values, and leads to action. Science and faith together produce social salvation.

<sup>368</sup> Mt.22:36-40; Dt.6:5; Lv.19:18.

<sup>369</sup> John 6:29, 8:24; 1 John 3:23.

<sup>370</sup> John 13:34.



In Alive-O 5 through 8 the Introductory information for teachers on morality appears in the Teacher's Books under the heading 'Moral Formation' as follows: Alive-O 5: page [22]-[24]; Alive-O 6: page [21]-[23]; Alive-O 7: page [19]-[20]; Alive-O 8: page [20]-[21]. The Information is in two parts, the second of which has the sub-heading, 'Christian Moral Education'.

The first part of the Information is very similar to the equivalent part in Alive-O 1 through 4, with the following additions:

The pupils are helped to develop morally by showing how Mary, the saints and other good people responded to the call of Jesus to love God and others. This is good.

The Information notes that parents' love and affection for each other helps children to develop a positive attitude towards the human body and sexuality. This is good, but there also should be comprehensive teaching in the Programme itself on the Christian understanding of sexuality, in harmony with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. (See analysis below of the Sixth Commandment in Section 3.5.2 The Ten Commandments).

It is good that there is reference to the importance of peer groups, and their potential positive and negative influences. However, the opportunity for group work and common decisions is presented in a wholly positive way, and could benefit from a caution about potential negative outcomes. The Information helpfully notes that pupils' capacity to respond to others in a positive way may only develop gradually.

The second part of the Information, 'Christian Moral Education', presents a summary of key points in relation to the Christian understanding of life in Christ / morality, and affirms that Christian moral teaching is based on Revelation. While this summary is very good, it is also

very brief, and the meaning could helpfully be developed and expanded for the benefit of teachers. For example, there is reference to 'the consequences of original sin'; it would be helpful to explain what original sin is, and to state what its consequences are.

One might suggest the Information for teachers on morality should include the following expansions, additions or clarifications:

The source of our moral life is our dignity as human persons created in the image of God. Though wounded by original sin, the divine image is restored by Jesus' salvation and the grace of the Holy Spirit, making it possible for us to lead good lives.<sup>371</sup>

Even though we have been redeemed by Jesus, original sin still leaves us inclined to do wrong, open to make mistakes, and subject to temptation by Satan. Temptations are not wrong in themselves, only giving in to temptation can lead to sin.<sup>372</sup>

We look in faith to Jesus, who is 'the way, the truth, and the life'. At the heart of Jesus' preaching are the Beatitudes, which are the way to happiness, and our response to God's call to know, love and serve him here on earth and enjoy eternal life with him in heaven.<sup>373</sup>

God has given each person free will and the power to choose to do good or to do wrong.<sup>374</sup>

Feelings or emotions (such as love and hatred, desire and fear, joy, sadness and anger) are neither good nor bad in themselves. They are good when they contribute to a good action, and bad when they contribute to a bad action.<sup>375</sup>

---

<sup>371</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1691-1692, 1701-1702, 1714-1715.

<sup>372</sup> *Ibid.* 1707-1708, 2846-2847.

<sup>373</sup> *Ibid.* 1698, 1715-1721.

<sup>374</sup> *Ibid.* 1745, 2022.

<sup>375</sup> *Ibid.* 1767-1768, 1773.

God has given us the gift of conscience, which is a moral judgment and a moral imperative of reason that guides us to do good and to avoid evil. We must always follow our conscience, but we also have an obligation to form our conscience, so that it leads our actions towards God.<sup>376</sup>

A virtue is a firm habit to do good. The four principal or *cardinal* human virtues are: prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. The three theological virtues are faith, hope, and love.<sup>377</sup>

Sin is any thought, word, deed or omission contrary to God's law. Sin is an offence against truth and a failure in love towards God and neighbour.<sup>378</sup>

We should avoid all sins, whether serious (mortal) or less serious (venial) sins. Mortal sin requires grave matter, full knowledge, and deliberate consent. God desires eternal life for all in heaven, but mortal sin destroys love and sanctifying grace in us, and, if unrepented, leads to the eternal death of hell. It can be forgiven in the ordinary way in the Sacraments of Baptism and Penance. Venial sin involves breaking God's law in a less serious matter, or in a serious matter but without full knowledge or consent. Venial sin hinders the soul's progress, deserves punishment, and can lead to more serious sin.<sup>379</sup>

God is merciful and wants to forgive our sins, but we must first admit our faults and ask God's forgiveness.<sup>380</sup>

---

<sup>376</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1713, 1777, 1796, 1798.

<sup>377</sup> *Ibid.* 1833-1844.

<sup>378</sup> *Ibid.* 1849-1850, 1871-1872.

<sup>379</sup> *Ibid.* 1854-1862, 1874-1875.

<sup>380</sup> *Ibid.* 1846-1848.

Vices, opposite of the virtues, are bad habits which result from the repetition of sins. The worst vices are called the capital, or deadly, sins: pride, avarice, envy, anger, lust, gluttony, and sloth.<sup>381</sup>

Our vocation is not just personal; love of neighbour is inseparable from love of God. We should work for the common good of society, especially the communities we belong to and the state, with due respect for legitimate authority and law. We should seek to reduce excessive and unjust social and economic inequalities throughout the entire human family, with particular care for the poor and needy.<sup>382</sup>

God, to help and guide us, gives us the moral law so we can follow the ways that lead to true happiness, and avoid the evil ways that turn us away from His love. God's moral law is the law of love: to love God and to love one another as Jesus loved us.<sup>383</sup>

God's moral law is also the law of grace. Jesus our Saviour sends us the Holy Spirit, who gives us the free gift of God's life and love. We call this life "grace", which we need to help us choose what is right, resist Satan's temptations and avoid doing wrong.<sup>384</sup>

Sanctifying grace is the stable gift of the Holy Spirit into the soul to heal it of sin and to sanctify it.<sup>385</sup>

Other kinds of graces are: actual graces (gifts for specific circumstances), sacramental graces (proper to each sacrament), special graces or charisms (gifts intended for the good of the

---

<sup>381</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1865-1866, 1876.

<sup>382</sup> *Ibid.* 1877-1880, 1943-1948.

<sup>383</sup> *Ibid.* 1950, 1970.

<sup>384</sup> *Ibid.* 1715, 1972, 2017, 2020-2022.

<sup>385</sup> *Ibid.* 1999-2000, 2023.

Church) among which are the graces of state of life and for particular ministries in the Church.<sup>386</sup>

The faithful have the right to receive and the duty to follow the Church's moral teaching<sup>387</sup>, along with a more clear and positive linking of morality with the teaching of the Church.<sup>388</sup>

### LESSON MATERIAL ON LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

Alive-O 2 has a set of three lessons on the theme of 'caring'. Lesson A2-T1L9 – Caring, has a good presentation on caring for others, being kind and thoughtful, and appreciating care received. Lesson A2-T1L10 - They Care For Me, has a good presentation on appreciating care received from others: shopkeeper, doctor, priest, teacher, and postman. Lesson A2-T1L11 - I Care For Them, focuses on how pupils can give care to toys, pets, and wild-birds; it might have been more helpful for teaching Christian morality if this lesson had developed the ideas from the earlier Lesson A2-T1L9 about caring for other people.

Lesson A2-T2L4 - Peace Within Me, has a story based on the nursery rhyme Jack and Jill, in which Jack and Jill fight and treat each other badly, but which ends with their father teaching them to say sorry, to promise not to hurt each other again and shake hands, after which the brother and sister are the best of friends. The story should be helpful in teaching pupils about Christian morality.

Lesson A3-T2L2 - My Goodness, promotes the natural goodness of children, which is commendable. However, the view is conveyed that children are entirely good in themselves,

---

<sup>386</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2003-2004, 2024.

<sup>387</sup> *Ibid.* 2032, 2037, 2049-2051.

<sup>388</sup> A range of moral issues of particular interest to young people are well developed and constructively related to the teaching of the Church as set out in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, by George Pell, *Issues of Faith and Morals*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996.

limited only by the negative influence of adults: 'Most children are good at being friends. ... Their natural openness and spontaneity in this area is tempered only by the cautionary influence of adults'. It would be helpful to note that, while children are indeed good in themselves, they also suffer the negative influences of original sin, and they need the wisdom and guidance of adults. Experience of working with young children reveals their endearing natural goodness, but also their ability to behave very badly towards each other, requiring the prudent intervention of adults to maintain peace and harmony.

This Lesson introduces the making of 'little Beings'. Each pupil is invited to make a 'being' from plasticine, which can be anything the pupil imagines: human, animal, vegetable, inanimate, spiritual, fictional, or other. The illustration and poem in the Pupils Book visualises trees, leaves, peas, and stars as all 'beings'. Each pupil is invited to give a name and personality to their 'little Being', to be known only to the pupil and to no one else. Among the 'little Beings' shown on Video 3, and those seen by this author in one school, are some that look non-human and strange.

The pupils' 'little Beings' also appear in Lessons A3-T2L6, A3-T2L7, A4-T2L2, A4-T2L6, A4-T2L7, and A5-T2L6. Pupils are invited to relate to and put their 'little Beings' on display in the classroom. Pupils are invited to talk to, tell their wrong behaviours, and then listen to their 'little Beings'. Pupils are invited to pray in front of their 'little Beings' or while holding the 'Beings' in their hands, sometimes in a detached mental state of interior meditation. The lessons do not relate these exercises to any accepted practice of Catholic catechesis, and one might envisage potential dangers, especially considering the possible negative nature of the 'little Beings' imagined by some pupils, and the secrecy involved.

Lesson A3-T2L2 then has two stories involving 'little Beings' which promote the view that

children like being friends and bubble with energy. The lesson proposes that pupils can relate well to stories involving 'little Beings', but one must raise the question as to whether this is in fact the case, particularly considering the unknown, and some possibly unhelpful, nature of the 'little Beings' made by pupils.

Lesson A3-T2L3 - We Are The Greatest, reinforces the view that children are all good, without suffering any negative consequences of original sin, because Jesus taught that children are the greatest in the Kingdom of God. This teaching of Jesus is analysed above in Section 3.3.3: Jesus Christ, showing that it is child-like humility that makes one great in the eyes of God, rather than the physical fact of being a child.

Lessons A3-T2L5 - The Good Shepherd, and A4-T2L5 - The Good Shepherd, both include the Parable of the Lost Sheep to help teach pupils about Christian morality. The choice of parable is excellent, but the teaching could be strengthened by following the Scripture original in likening the lost sheep to a repentant sinner. This parable is analysed in greater detail above in Section 3.3.3: Jesus Christ.

Lessons A3-T2L6 - Losing My Way, and A3-T2L7 - Time To Change, are complementary and so are analysed here together.

The Lessons introduce an 'Act of Sorrow', which is reasonable in many respects, but which might be helpfully replaced by the 'Act of Contrition' below, for the following reasons: sorrow for sin is good, but is insufficient of itself, and must be accompanied by determination to make amends and not to sin again, which are implied by the term 'contrition'; the proposed 'Act of Contrition' includes the essential nature of sin which is offence against God; it includes the firm resolution not to sin again and to avoid whatever might lead one to sin (the Act of Sorrow's request for help not to sin again falls short of a firm purpose of amendment);

the proposed 'Act of Contrition' explicitly recognises that we need the grace of God to live a good life; it is close to the prayer traditionally used in the Church in Ireland and also to that proposed in the *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which should serve to strengthen the links between home, parish and school.

*Act of Contrition: O my God, I am heartily sorry for all my sins because they offend You, my God, who are all-good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve with the help of Your grace to sin no more and to avoid whatever leads me to sin. Amen.*

The Pupil's Book shows firstly children physically ill-treating one another, and then making amends and being friends. This is good, but the text puts the focus on feelings: feeling angry leads to the bad behaviour, and then feeling sad leads to regretting and making up for the offence. This may give pupils the impression that good and bad behaviour are all a matter of feelings, whereas the Christian understanding is that feelings of themselves are neither right nor wrong, it is what we do or think resulting from feelings that is right and wrong. It might also be helpful to put good and bad behaviour on an objective footing, in the context of the law of God, in this case the Fifth Commandment.

The Teacher's Book has a series of stories in which a 'little Being' behaves badly and then later comes to have a change of heart, with the apparent aim of teaching pupils that certain behaviours are wrong and that we should say sorry and make up with those we have offended. The wrong behaviours in the stories are: being destructive; being violent and losing one's temper; being selfish; and being jealous. These stories may be helpful in drawing attention to certain sinful behaviours, and the need for repentance, forgiveness and making amends. However, one might suggest ways in which the lessons might be more effective.



As in the Pupil's Book the emphasis is very much on feelings, and it would be helpful to distinguish between feelings, which are neither right nor wrong in themselves, and the ensuing thoughts and actions, which can be right or wrong. One might question the effectiveness of using 'little Beings' in the stories, as noted above. These stories may come across as somewhat idealised and unrealistic, in that there is always a dramatic and complete change of heart in the misbehaving 'little Being', brought about through feeling sad about what happened and then feeling the love and acceptance of friends or parents. It would be helpful to give students a context, authority and objectivity to the wrong and right behaviours in the stories, by relating them to the law of God, (the structure of the Decalogue is especially helpful), in harmony with the practice of the Church.

The Worksheet asks pupils to write about a time when they did something wrong for which they had to say sorry. The Teacher's Books have several Art Activities in which pupils are to draw times when they were careless, destructive, aggressive and hurtful, lost their temper, and acted out of selfishness and jealousy. As the writing and drawings are to be done in open class, might they violate pupils' privacy?

Lessons A4-T2L6 - Not Being Bothered, Not Being True, and A4-T2L7 - Being A Bully, Being Unfair, Being Selfish, are linked and so are analysed here together.

The Pupil's Book has a picture of a group of children gossiping about and bullying another child who looks utterly miserable. There are two sets of questions, one of which asks about the feelings of the people involved, the other which asks what might be done in that situation, including asking for a story or prayer that might be helpful. It might be more helpful if the lesson material had stated what was wrong in the situation and why, and then what should be

done about it, rather than merely posing questions with an emphasis on feelings.

The Teacher's Book has a number of stories about 'little Beings' who have a change of heart after doing wrong things: not being bothered; being untrue; being a bully; being selfish; being unfair. These stories are similar to those in Lessons A3-T2L6 and A3-T2L7 which have been analysed above, and the same comments apply as noted above, along with the following additional comments:

Some of the stories are quite complex and it may be difficult for pupils to draw meaningful conclusions from them. The term 'Not being bothered' could have several different meanings, not all of which are wrong, while the story seems to give the meaning of some combination of selfishness and laziness; (the 'Not being bothered' story is repeated in Lesson A7-T2L4 - Christian Morality). In the story 'Being Untrue' the 'little Being' is lazy, selfish, deceitful, disobedient, insolent, blames others for its own wrongdoing and tells lies, but when the father displays some crossness about this, it is the father who repents and apologises to the 'little Being'; it would be helpful to show that it would be loving for a parent or person in authority to give a stern reprimand for such seriously out of order behaviour. In one of the stories there is reference to a 'Something Inside', which has some resemblance to the voice of conscience but is not identified as such; it would be helpful if pupils were given a clear teaching on conscience and its role in Christian moral life.

Similar to Lessons A3-T2L6 and A3-T2L7, a Worksheet asks pupils to write down when they were a bully, selfish and unfair. The Teacher's Books again have several Art Activities in which pupils are to draw times when they were too lazy to help at home, failed to keep promises, did not do what parents asked, told lies, bullied others, were selfish and unfair to others. As these writings and drawings are to be done in open class, might they be intrusive

into pupils' privacy? Again, pupils are to 'confess' their bad behaviour to their 'little Beings'; how might this affect pupils' understanding of 'little Beings' and Confession?

Lessons A5-T2L6 - God's Love Counts Us In, and A5-T2L7 - God's Love Helps Us to Love the World, include the story of Zacchaeus, based on Luke 19:1-10, which is a suitable choice of Scripture to teach about morality. It would have been good for the Lessons' stories to include verse 10, 'for the Son of Man has come to seek out and to save what was lost', in which Jesus explains his mission in general and in particular his call to Zacchaeus to conversion.

It would have been helpful if the Lesson material had majored on Zacchaeus' repentance from the sins of greed and dishonesty, rather than on social-exclusion – the people's exclusion of Zacchaeus because he was a tax-collector and short in stature. The Lesson also has three fanciful 'little Beings' stories on the theme of social exclusion on the basis of colour. There is certainly merit in teaching not to exclude others simply because they are different in some way. However, this is not the principal meaning of the story of Zacchaeus, so it would be better to seek some other more relevant Scripture passage for a teaching on social exclusion.

The Lessons also include the theme of care for the Earth, which is good in itself. However, the means adopted might helpfully be amended. There is a fanciful story in which Zacchaeus goes back to the sycamore tree, which comes alive and converses with Zacchaeus, ending with a hint towards ecology. There are also three inconclusive 'little Being' stories on 'Being Ecological'.

The final Questions and Answers are helpful: the world we live in is a gift from God, a sign of his love and power, which we should treat with respect and love.

Lesson A6-T1L8 - God Sent the Holy Spirit to Nourish Us, has an account of a very poor boy in Nicaragua, and the help given to him and other poor children who scavenged for a living on the city dump. The story is further developed well in Video 6. It is good to present this practical example of helping those in desperate need, which is an example of the Christian corporal works of mercy. It would also be helpful to present examples of the spiritual works of mercy<sup>389</sup>, especially the work of evangelisation, spreading the Faith, which is the primary task of the Church. The spiritual works of mercy should even be given priority, in harmony with Scripture: 'Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God'<sup>390</sup>; 'Set your heart on the Kingdom of God first, and on his righteousness, and all these other things will be given you as well'<sup>391</sup>.

Lesson A7-T1L9 - The Garden Story, has been analysed above in Section 3.2 Revelation. In the context of this Section on Christian morality, it seems appropriate to repeat that the Lesson would benefit from clarification on original sin, its nature and effects, and on the salvation from sin won for us by Jesus' redemptive death on the cross.

Lesson A7-T2L4 - Christian Morality, repeats the making of little 'Beings', this time from clay and intended to represent the pupils themselves. The pupils then have two Blessing Rituals in which they sprinkle their clay 'Beings' with holy water and place night-lights in front of them, while praying, 'Bless our Beings, the work of our hands!' The 'Beings' feature, again with holy water and lighted candles / nightlights, in a Reconciliation Service based on

---

<sup>389</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2447.

<sup>390</sup> Matthew 4:4.

<sup>391</sup> Matthew 6:33.

the Church's Rite for Reconciliation – Rite 2. It is not clear how making and praying with clay 'Beings' contributes to the pupils' understanding of Christian morality.

The Lesson presents the Beatitudes (Mt.5:1-12), which is very relevant to the theme of Christian morality. However, the major focus in the Lesson is on the Programme's alternative beatitudes-like list, titled, 'Be Blessed', which is not without some merit but could distract attention away from the Beatitudes as taught by Jesus. It would be more helpful if the alternative 'beatitudes' were omitted, and attention given to teaching the pupils the authentic Gospel version of the Beatitudes.

Lesson A7-T2L5 - Christian Love, has a very complex presentation on what it calls 'Creative Relationship', a term which is not found in Scripture or the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The presentation uses the language of secular psychology, with just a brief mention of 'faith in God' but nothing specifically Christian, so that it could hardly promote an authentic understanding of Christian Love. The presentation says that in a creative relationship between two people neither can leave any part of themselves outside the relationship; this is strange, because the one and only human relationship in which two people give themselves totally to one another is the relationship of marriage. It would be helpful if this Lesson had a presentation on Christian Love which is based on Scripture and the teaching of the Church.

The Lesson closes with the 'Golden Rule', which is good. It might also be helpful to give the relevant Scripture references <sup>392</sup>, and to clarify that the Golden Rule is a guideline from the Old Testament, fulfilled in Jesus' command, 'Love one another as I have loved you' <sup>393</sup>.

---

<sup>392</sup> Tobit 4:15; Matthew 7:12

<sup>393</sup> John 13:34

Lesson A8-T2L2 - Spirit-Filled Life, includes 'Praise for Concern Volunteers', which is good, because the Concern organisation does very good charitable work with the poorest of the poor in the Third World. There is also a positive report on the L'Arche community. It would also be helpful to draw out the spiritual dimension of the work of L'Arche, and to include examples of the spiritual works of mercy.

Lesson A8-T3L2 - Kingdom Children, recalls Jesus' teaching that all people without exception are equally loved by God, are equal in dignity and value in the eyes of God, and should be so treated by Christians; this is good. However, the statement that in Jewish society at the time of Jesus children were treated as of lesser value than slaves is not borne out by Scripture. Throughout the Old Testament one sees that children were considered a great blessing from God, to be welcomed and cherished<sup>394</sup>. In any case, a blanket comparison with the status of slaves is necessarily an undue simplification, because the institution of slavery at the time of Jesus was very complex, with considerable variations in status, legal rights, and conditions of life between different types and categories of slave.

There are two stories which address Jesus' relationship with children, 'Gabrielle's Story', and 'Ishvah's Story'. However, the stories are loosely based on Scripture and are mostly imagined additions, so do not contribute greatly to understanding Jesus' relationship with children.

Lesson A8-T3L4 - Kingdom Friends, promotes the idea of friendship, which is good in principle, but does so in terms which are predominantly human and secular. It would be helpful if the concept of friendship were developed in a fully Christian context.

---

<sup>394</sup> Cf. Gen.30:1-8; Jud.10:34-35; 1Sam.1:19-28; Ps.128:3,6; Pr.17:6.

Lesson A8-T3L5 - Kingdom Justice, encourages people in the richer developed world to help those who are poor in the Third World, which is very good in principle. The economic analysis presented on the reasons for the poverty of the Third World represents a point of view, but the situation is very complex and development economists have a range of different views on the causes of and solutions for Third World poverty. It might be more helpful to focus on the principles of charity and justice which are foundational, irrespective of which economic analysis one favours.

Lesson A8-T3L7 - Kingdom Ecology, promotes care and respect for creation, which is good.

Might the presentation of environmental ecology in a prayer format of ten 'Earth Commandments', detract from the special and sacred nature of the Ten Commandments? Might it also be helpful to include 'human ecology', such as respect for life from conception to natural death, and respect for marriage and family<sup>395</sup>?

Several suggestions are listed above for inclusion in the Information for teachers. The items suggested might also be helpfully incorporated into the lesson material for pupils.

### **3.5.2 Ten Commandments**

#### INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

The Ten Commandments are not mentioned explicitly in the Introductory Information for teachers under the headings of Moral Education or Moral Formation. The 'commandments of God' are mentioned in Teacher's Book 3: page XXII, as follows: 'We do not mention the

---

<sup>395</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate* – On Integral Human Development in Charity and Truth, 51, 2009.

commandments of God at this stage. However, the values underlying the commandments are stressed throughout the programme'.

In view of the important place in Catholic catechesis accorded by the Church to the Ten Commandments (notably in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*)<sup>396</sup>, it seems appropriate to provide relevant information for the teachers on the Decalogue and also address the Precepts of the Church. The Information might include the following:

The Ten Commandments were revealed by God to the people of Israel. Jesus himself used the Ten Commandments (also called the Decalogue – literally ‘Ten Words’) and the Church has followed his example ever since, taking the Decalogue as a framework for moral teaching, interpreted in the light of Jesus’ teaching to love God and love one another as he loved us.<sup>397</sup>

The Ten Commandments show how to love God (first three) and neighbour (other seven): a path for a happy life freed from the slavery of sin.<sup>398</sup>

The Ten Commandments express grave obligations, enjoining certain thoughts, words and actions, and forbidding others.<sup>399</sup>

The Precepts of the Church link the moral life to the liturgical life, to guarantee the very necessary minimum in the spirit of prayer and moral effort, in the growth of love of God and neighbour.<sup>400</sup>

---

<sup>396</sup> The importance of the Ten Commandments in Christian catechesis is also highlighted by Pope Benedict XVI. (Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, p.131. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987).

<sup>397</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2054-2056, 2064-2068.

<sup>398</sup> *Ibid.* 2067.

<sup>399</sup> *Ibid.* 2068, 2072-2073, 2081-2082.

<sup>400</sup> *Ibid.* 2041.



## LESSON MATERIAL ON THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

This analysis first addresses the lesson material on the Ten Commandments in general, and then on each individual Commandment. The analysis concludes with the Precepts of the Church.

### The Ten Commandments in general:

The *Giving of the Decalogue by God to Moses* for the people of Israel is addressed in Lesson A5-T2L2 – Moses and the People -- Loved by God, in the story ‘Moses and the Commandments’, which is repeated in Lesson A6-T1L10 - Loving God. The story covers the main events at Sinai – the giving of the Ten Commandments by God, the covenant, the people’s apostasy and worship of the Golden calf, Moses’ anger and his return to the mountain to receive the second pair of stone tablets.

Lesson A7-T1L10 - Commandments (1), also addresses the giving of the Ten Commandments to Moses by God, and expands the story to give the context of the people of Israel in Egypt and the Exodus, which is helpful. This Lesson addresses the historicity of the book of Exodus, but is unhelpful in that the only historical facts recognised are that the Jewish people *believed* certain things about God, but not that any event related to the Ten Commandments actually happened.

The stories in these three lessons could be strengthened by setting them in the context of salvation history, and by following Scripture more faithfully (see Section 3.2 Revelation, above for further analysis).

The *text of the Decalogue* is presented in Lessons A7-T1L10 - Commandments (1) and A8-T2L2 - Spirit-Filled Life. In view of the great importance attached by the Church to the Decalogue it would seem reasonable to introduce the Ten Commandments much earlier in the Programme, especially to help pupils prepare for the Sacrament of Penance.

The Decalogue is presented in the Pupil's and Teacher's Books in three different versions. The first is the Programme's own version, which is described as 'modern'. The second version is an abbreviated paraphrase of Exodus 20:1-17. The third version is the version which appears in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which the Programme describes as 'traditional'; the CCC describes this version as 'A Traditional Catechetical Formula'.

The Programme gives priority to its own version of the Decalogue, to be learned by the pupils, including in the form of a song, which should assist memorisation. The Programme-version is satisfactory in many respects, but one might consider a number of reasons why the CCC version would be preferable.

The Programme-version of the Decalogue is different to that learned by the pupils' parents, grandparents and priests, and could detract from unity between school, home and church. The Programme-version is generally less faithful to Scripture, in some cases departing from the Scriptural format, which is expressed as best case / worst case 'headlines' for different areas of morality, which are then expanded in the Mosaic Law, and fulfilled in the New Testament. It would appear better to respect the integrity of the Scriptural format, in harmony with the approach of the CCC. Additional suggestions in relation to the Programme's expression of particular Commandments are:

- The Programme's Fourth Commandment states, 'Honour your parents'; might the substitution of 'parents' for 'father and mother' introduce equality with same-sex

'marriage'? It would seem preferable to affirm 'father and mother' in support of the Christian understanding of marriage.

- The Programme's Fifth Commandment states, 'All life is in God's hands; do not destroy life'. The use of the term 'all life' could be interpreted to include animal and vegetable life, as well as human life. It would seem preferable to use the wording in Scripture and the CCC, 'You shall not kill', which in the context of the Mosaic Law and the New Testament clearly refers to human life.
- The Programme's Sixth Commandment states, 'Be faithful in marriage'. This is not unreasonable, but on the other hand there seems to be no good reason for changing from Scripture and the CCC, 'You shall not commit adultery'.
- The Programme's Eighth Commandment states, 'Do not speak falsely of others'. Again, this is not unreasonable, but it would seem preferable to remain faithful to Scripture and the CCC, 'You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour'. The Scripture here expresses the 'worst case' lie, which is to give false witness against another person in court, which could lead to that person's execution.
- The Programme's Ninth Commandment states, 'Do not desire a person who already belongs with another', which appears unduly open to wide interpretation, which might include boy-friend/girl-friend, or 'partner' of other or same sex. It would seem preferable to remain faithful to the Scriptural and CCC expression of the 'worst-case' of sexual desire, 'You shall not covet your neighbour's wife'.

The second version of the Decalogue presented to pupils in the Programme is an abbreviated paraphrase from Exodus 20:1-17, giving thirteen 'commandments'. This might confuse the pupils by presenting too many versions of the Decalogue. It would seem preferable to give

pupils the references for the original expressions in Scripture, Exodus 20:2-17 and Deuteronomy 5:6-21.

The third version of the Decalogue presented in the Programme is that used by the CCC and traditional in Catholic catechesis. This version is entirely faithful to Scripture, and could hardly be considered not 'modern', in that the language is straight-forward, understandable, and not at all archaic. For the sake of clear understanding, and to avoid the confusion of competing versions, it would seem preferable that this is the only version of the Decalogue to be presented to the pupils for their study and memorisation. Using the CCC version would also serve to strengthen links between home, school and parish.

The *Status of the Decalogue* is generally addressed by the Programme in indirect ways.

Lesson A6-T1L10 - Loving God, asks how the commandments would help God's people, and then asks if there are other rules, guidelines, pieces of advice, or codes of behaviour that could help pupils in their life with others. This seems to put the commandments of God in the same category as rules, guidelines, advice and codes of behaviour.

Lesson A7-T1L10 - Commandments (1), has a 'Ten Commandments Quiz', involving multiple choice questions, some of which might help towards understanding individual Commandments. However, the general structure and conclusions of the Quiz suggest helpful guidelines for living a good life on earth, rather than grave obligations before God, with potential consequences for eternal life.

The Programme also puts forward several codes of behaviour, guidelines and commandments, which are treated with no less respect and validity than the Decalogue, as follows:

In Lesson A3-T1L1 - We Begin Together, the pupils are invited to draw up a 'Class Code', consisting of the principles of how they should behave towards one another. It is good to promote a sense of responsibility among the pupils, but what if the principles they draw up at this young age, and before they have received any significant teaching on Christian morality, conflict with the principles of God on how they should behave towards one another? Might it not be better that such a 'Class Code' would come in later years, to consist of practical ways of relating to each other based on the principles of God, after they have been taught such principles?

Lesson A6-T1L10 - Loving God, presents the following list of 'Guidelines': *Love God; Respect God's name; Pray; Respect myself; Respect others; Be truthful; Be honest; Share with others; Wish everybody well*. There is no explanation as to the source or status of these 'Guidelines'. The Programme gives the Guidelines considerable attention; pupils are lead to pray with them and write them out on posters to be displayed in the classroom and brought home. The Guidelines are not unreasonable in themselves (except perhaps the final one may appear to conflict with James 2:16). However, might the Guidelines come across like a competing version of the Decalogue, leading to confusion of the pupils and equating the Decalogue with a set of guidelines?

In Lesson A6-T1L10 - Loving God, the Ten Commandments are considered to be only for adult Jews, so pupils are assigned the task 'to write the Ten Children's Commandments, ten guidelines that will help you to live as God's children', even though pupils have not yet seen

the text of the Ten Commandments. The 'Ten Children's Commandments' are incorporated into the subsequent prayer time; might this convey some divine approval or blessing for their self-chosen Commandments in the minds of the pupils? Pupils are asked to compare their 'Ten Children's Commandments' with the Programme's 'Guidelines' above, but are not asked to make any resulting change in their own 'Commandments'.

Lesson A7-T1L11 - Commandments (2), sets pupils the task of preparing a class set of 'Ten Commandments for Young People'. The Lesson asks the question, 'In what ways are these the same as/different from the Ten Commandments God gave to Moses?' However, there is no suggestion that the pupils' Commandments should be in harmony with the commandments of God, or that there might be a problem if they are opposed to God's Commandments. Might this exercise be encouraging self-chosen morality and moral relativism in the pupils?

Lesson A8-T2L2: Spirit-Filled Life, says that the first Christian community described in the Acts of the Apostles 'followed certain guidelines for Christian living'; there is no mention that the first Christians followed any Commandments, only 'guidelines'. The Lesson then sets the class the task of preparing their version of 'Early Church Guidelines for Christian Living'. The teacher is not asked to verify whether or not the pupils' Guidelines conform with the law of God; the Guidelines are to be accepted as written, and prominently displayed in the classroom. Each pupil is then invited to choose one or two specific tasks, and add these to their personal copy of the class Guidelines, which is then to be signed by the parents or Confirmation sponsors. The class 'Guidelines for Christian Living' subsequently form the centrepiece of a major prayer Ritual in the local church. In this way the approval and support of both home and parish are enlisted for the pupils' self-selected Guidelines for Christian Living, without any check being made as to whether or not those guidelines are authentically

Christian. Might this be encouraging and supporting a self-chosen / relativist morality on behalf of the pupils?

In conclusion, might the Programme's putting forward many different equally-valued codes and guidelines for behaviour risk causing moral confusion among the pupils and undermining the special character of the law of God, especially as expressed in the Decalogue?

The Programme helpfully addresses how Jesus taught that the *Decalogue is a summary of the commandment to love God and neighbour*, for example, in Lessons A6-T1L10 - Loving God, and Lesson A6-T1L11 - Loving My Neighbour. While these teachings, based on Matthew 22:36-39, are good, it would also be helpful to bring out that Jesus was quoting the Old Testament<sup>401</sup>, and how this is fulfilled in the New Testament in the commandments to believe in and love Jesus Christ as God the Son, our Saviour, and to love one another as Jesus loved us<sup>402</sup>.

#### Lesson Material relating to Individual Commandments.

There are no lessons in the Programme dedicated explicitly to individual Commandments. It would be helpful for pupils to have lessons which would address and develop the meaning of each Commandment, in harmony with the practice of the Church, especially as expressed in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The Programme has some lessons dedicated to a different overall theme, which also directly or indirectly address certain Commandments, as outlined below:

The *First Commandment* is addressed in Lesson A5-T2L2: Moses and the People -- Loved by

---

<sup>401</sup> Dt.6:5; Lv.19:18

<sup>402</sup> 1Jn.3:23; Jn.15:12, 13:34.

God. The Lesson is devoted mainly to the call of Moses at the Burning Bush and the giving of the Ten Commandments by God to Moses at Mount Sinai. This is a reasonable context in which to introduce the First Commandment, which is given in full in the CCC version of the Decalogue, which is good. It would be helpful to develop and explain the meaning of this Commandment, more than a few questions in the optional discussion sessions 'Chatting'.

The First Commandment is most meaningful in the context of the full Decalogue, but pupils will have to wait two years (Lesson A7-T1L10 – Commandments) before they see the full Decalogue, and that will be the Programme-version which has a different wording for the First Commandment. It might be helpful to introduce the First Commandment in the context of the full text of the Decalogue in the CCC version.

It might also be helpful to teach progressively over the course of the Programme that the First Commandment calls us to believe in God, to hope in him, and to love him above all else; to adore, worship, and pray to him. The veneration of sacred images is not contrary to the First Commandment<sup>403</sup>, but the Commandment does forbid superstition, idolatry, various forms of divination (recourse to Satan and the occult, mediums and psychics, magic, tarot cards, horoscopes, astrology), sacrilege, simony and atheism.<sup>404</sup>

The Second Commandment is not addressed explicitly in the lesson material. It might be helpful to address explicitly the Second Commandment, and teach that it enjoins respect for the Lord's name, which is holy, and forbids improper use of God's name, blasphemy, false

---

<sup>403</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2134, 2135, 2141.

<sup>404</sup> *Ibid.* 2138-2140.



oaths and perjury.<sup>405</sup>

The *Third Commandment* is not addressed explicitly in the lesson material. It might be helpful to address explicitly the Third Commandment, and teach that it requires that Sundays and other holy days of obligation are to be kept holy, the faithful are bound to participate in the Mass, and forbids engaging in unnecessary work or making unnecessary demands on others that would hinder them from observing the Lord's Day.<sup>406</sup>

The *Fourth Commandment* is addressed in the following four lessons:

In the Lesson A1-T1L3 - Settling In, the song, 'At Home, at School' tells pupils that at school they must do exactly what the teacher tells them and listen to what the teacher says, but at home they can do whatever they want and be as untidy as they like. It is good to teach obedience to teachers in the classroom, but it would be even more important to teach obedience and respect for parents at home.

Lesson A1-T1L11 - This is Where I Belong, teaches pupils to appreciate and be thankful for the care and love they receive from parents and others at home, which is good. It is reasonable to encourage some discussion in the class by pupils about their home situations, but some of the discussion starter questions appear to be intrusive of the privacy of pupils and their families.

Lesson A4-T1L1 - Family Spirit, teaches pupils to appreciate their own family, and families in general, which is good. However, the model of family reflected in the centre-piece story

---

<sup>405</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 2161-2163.

<sup>406</sup> *Ibid.* 2175, 2190-2193, 2195.

'Star Families' is one of people coming together spontaneously to love and care for each other. There is good in this, but it also harmonises with a modern secular understanding of family as, 'a group of people bound together by ties of blood or affection'. It would seem important to affirm the Christian vision of family based on lifelong monogamous marriage.

Lesson A5-T2L3 - At Home with God's Love, focuses on teaching pupils to appreciate the love and care they receive at home from parents and guardians, which reflects the love of God; this is good. The descriptions of love and care received at home might be strengthened in a few ways. The care parents give their children is entirely 'horizontal', nothing spiritual is mentioned; it would be helpful to include spiritual care as well, such as, parents praying with and for their children, teaching them the faith, bringing them to Mass and sacraments, etc. The Lesson presents the care of parents as the same whether given by mother or father, often expressed as 'mothering/fathering'; it would be helpful to affirm the unique and complementary capabilities, characteristics and gifts that God has given to fathers and mothers for the benefit of their children.

This Lesson also explicitly addresses the Fourth Commandment, giving the CCC version, 'Honour your father and your mother', which is better than the Programme-version, 'Honour your parents' (see analysis above). It would be helpful if this Commandment were presented to the pupils in the context of the full text of the Decalogue, which the pupils will not meet for another two years (in Lesson A7-T1L10).

It is good that the Programme teaches pupils to appreciate the love and care they receive from parents and others in the home. It would important to also teach that the Fourth

Commandment enjoins children to give their father and mother obedience, respect and assistance; appropriate respect and obedience is also due to other legitimate authorities.<sup>407</sup>

The *Fifth Commandment* is not addressed explicitly in the lesson material. It might be helpful to address explicitly the Fifth Commandment over the course of the Programme, and teach that it enjoins respect for every human life, from the moment of conception until natural death, and forbids murder, violence, bullying, direct abortion, intentional euthanasia, suicide, and scandal (which leads others to sin gravely). Because of the evils and injustices that all war brings with it, we must do everything reasonably possible to avoid war.<sup>408</sup>

The *Sixth Commandment* is not addressed explicitly in the lesson material, but is indirectly addressed in Lesson A8-T3L3 - Kingdom Bodies. The Teacher's Book contains detailed physical sexual information to be given to the pupils, including development of the male and female bodies and sexual organs, reproduction, sexual intercourse, conception, the growth of the baby in the mother's womb, and childbirth. The text is supplemented with full-colour posters showing the male and female reproductive organs, sperm and ovum, the growth of a baby in the womb, and a picture of a boy and girl with cut-aways to expose their private parts. The moral dimension of human sexuality is touched upon briefly: 'Good attitudes: my body is a gift from God. I can look after it, honour it, use it for good, always use it in the chaste way. .... Because of their love for each other, a man and woman can share in God's power to create new life'. The meaning of 'chaste' is not given, neither is there mention that a

---

<sup>407</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2248-2253, 2255.

<sup>408</sup> *Ibid.* 2319-2327.

man and woman should be married, not simply in love, before having a baby. One might question the prudence of following the physical sex-education lesson, when pupils' emotions and imaginations may be greatly stirred, with a prayer-time meditation on babies in the womb, during which pupils all lie on the floor in a darkened room, with incense burning and soft music playing.

The Pontifical Council for the Family's document, *Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality* (TMHS) <sup>409</sup> helps parents and others provide young people with a positive and balanced education in sexuality. This document offers guidance which is relevant to education in sexuality for children at primary school age; relevant quotations are given below:

*'Human sexuality is a sacred mystery and must be presented according to the doctrinal and moral teaching of the Church, always bearing in mind the effects of original sin. ... Christians are called to live the gift of sexuality according to the plan of God who is Love, i.e., in the context of marriage or of consecrated virginity and also celibacy.'* <sup>410</sup> Teaching in human sexuality provided by the Programme should follow this advice of the Church.

*'Each child is a unique and unrepeatable person and must receive individualised formation, ideally from their own parents.'* <sup>411</sup>. One must question the wisdom of giving detailed physical sexual information to an entire class, especially if the class is co-educational, which would go against the principle of respecting the individuality of each pupil.

*'The "years of innocence" from about five years until puberty, is a period of tranquillity and serenity which must never be disturbed by unnecessary information about sex.... In some societies today, there are planned and determined attempts to impose premature sex*

---

<sup>409</sup> Pontifical Council for the Family. *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*. Oxford: Family Publications, 1996.

<sup>410</sup> Ibid. 64, 68, 122.

<sup>411</sup> Ibid. 65.

*information on children; such information tends to shatter their emotional and educational development and to disturb the natural serenity of this period of life..... Only information proportionate to each phase of their individual development should be presented to children and young people.... In late adolescence, young people can first be introduced to the knowledge of the signs of fertility, and then to the natural regulation of fertility’.* <sup>412</sup> This advice would indicate that it is premature to give detailed physical sex information to pre-adolescent primary school pupils.

It would be helpful for the Programme to address explicitly the Sixth Commandment, teaching the plan of God in creating human beings male and female, each with their own personal dignity and identity. The Commandment enjoins chastity for all, while married couples must be faithful to one another, keep their marriages indissoluble, and only use natural means of family planning. The Commandment forbids adultery, divorce, contraception, masturbation, fornication, pornography, prostitution, rape and homosexual practices. <sup>413</sup>

The Seventh Commandment is not addressed explicitly in the lesson material. It might be helpful to address explicitly the Seventh Commandment, and teach that it enjoins justice, charity and honesty in ensuring as far as possible that the good things of God’s creation reach everyone. Generosity to the poor is required by both justice and charity. The Commandment forbids all forms of theft, dishonesty, damage to other’s property, paying unjust wages, and

---

<sup>412</sup> *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality* 78, 83, 124-125.

<sup>413</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2393-2400.

enslavement of human beings. Justice requires the restitution of stolen goods, and reparation of damage done.<sup>414</sup>

The *Eighth Commandment* is not addressed explicitly in the lesson material. It might be helpful to address explicitly the Eighth Commandment, and teach that it enjoins truthfulness, respect for legitimate confidences, and moderation and discipline in the use of communications media, and forbids all forms of lying and untruthfulness, deception, hypocrisy, calumny and detraction. Offences committed against the truth require reparation.<sup>415</sup>

The *Ninth Commandment* is not addressed explicitly in the lesson material. It might be helpful to address explicitly the Ninth Commandment, teaching that it enjoins modesty and purity of heart, which are fostered through patience, decency, discretion and temperance, and forbids lustful desires.<sup>416</sup>

Similarly, it would be helpful to address the *Tenth Commandment*, teaching that it enjoins detachment from riches and trust in the providence of God, and forbids avarice arising from a passion for riches, and the envious desire to have another person's possessions for oneself.<sup>417</sup>

---

<sup>414</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 2451-2455, 2459-2362.

<sup>415</sup> *Ibid.* 2505-2512.

<sup>416</sup> *Ibid.* 2529-2530, 2533.

<sup>417</sup> *Ibid.* 2552-2556.

### The Precepts of the Church:

The precepts of the Church are presented in Lesson A8-T2L2 - Spirit-Filled Life, which is good. It should also be helpful to include some explanation for pupils about the Church's precepts, which might include: The precepts of the Church link the moral life to the liturgical life, to guarantee the very necessary minimum in the spirit of prayer and moral effort, in the growth of love of God and neighbour.<sup>418</sup>

## **3.6 PRAYER**

### INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

The Introductory information for teachers on prayer comes in two parts, one which addresses prayer in general, and the second which lists the Prayers to be used in each Year.

The first part, headed 'Prayer' or 'Teaching the Primary Schoolchild to Pray', has a similar structure through all eight Books of the Programme, and so will be analysed here together. This first part appears in the Teachers Books on the following pages: Alive-O 1 – XVI-XIX; Alive-O 2 – XVIII-XXI; Alive-O 3 – XXIII-XXVII; Alive-O 4 – XXVI-XXXI; Alive-O 5 – [25]-[29]; Alive-O 6 – [24]-[28]; Alive-O 7 – [21]-[24]; and Alive-O 8 – [22]-[25].

The opening paragraphs set out the Programme's general approach to prayer. The quotation from CCC 2559 is most appropriate; it might be also helpful to give the quotation which sets prayer in the context of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: 'Great is the mystery of the faith! The Church professes this mystery in the Apostles' Creed and celebrates it in the

---

<sup>418</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 2041.

sacramental liturgy, so that the life of the faithful may be conformed to Christ in the Holy Spirit to the glory of God the Father. This mystery, then, requires that the faithful believe in it, that they celebrate it, and that they live from it in a vital and personal relationship with the living and true God. This relationship is prayer'.<sup>419</sup>

The Information says that: prayer is given a central place in the Programme; faith is fostered in prayer and pupils learn to express faith as prayer; pupils are helped to communicate with God in prayer, to be able to talk to God and listen to God speaking to them in the silence of their own hearts. This is all good, but it might be helpful to note that God speaks in prayer in many ways other than in the silence of one's own heart: the Bible, the liturgy of the Church, and the virtues of faith, hope, and charity are all sources of prayer.<sup>420</sup>

The Information states that 'teaching children to pray is not the same as teaching definitions of prayer, nor is it as simple as teaching prayer formulas.... Teaching prayer begins by making an effort to foster certain attitudes in the children'. This seems somewhat negative towards teaching pupils an understanding of prayer and teaching them the great Christian prayers. Also, the 'certain attitudes' referred to are not developed or defined.

It might be helpful if the Information reflected the importance the CCC attaches to the great prayers of the Church. These prayers, mainly drawn from Scripture, are authentic expressions of Christian prayer, and also teach us how we can pray in a truly Christian way. The CCC gives particular emphasis to the Our Father prayer (the Lord's Prayer), which Jesus taught his disciples, and is the model of all Christian prayer.<sup>421</sup>

---

<sup>419</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2558.

<sup>420</sup> *Ibid.* 2653-2655, 2662.

<sup>421</sup> *Ibid.* 2759-2865.



Pope Benedict XVI recently emphasized the importance of the great prayers of the Church: 'Prayer ... must be constantly guided and enlightened by the great prayers of the Church and of the saints, by liturgical prayer, in which the Lord teaches us again and again how to pray properly'.<sup>422</sup>

It might also be helpful for the Information to set out other key dimensions of Christian prayer, including the following:

The Holy Spirit, recalling all that Jesus said, instructs the Church in her life of prayer, inspiring new expressions of prayer.<sup>423</sup>

Christian prayer is primarily Trinitarian; we normally pray *in* the Holy Spirit *through* Christ *to* the Father. We may also pray directly to Jesus or the Holy Spirit. We normally start and finish prayer with the Sign of the Cross.<sup>424</sup>

The subsection 'An Awareness of God's Presence' recognises the presence of God in the pupils, in people generally and in the natural created world; this is good. It would also be helpful to recognise that God is spiritual, that his presence transcends material creation and is available directly to the human spiritual soul. It would also be helpful to note God's particular presence in his spiritual creation of the angels, in the Word of God, and in the Eucharist, where Jesus is present body and blood, soul and divinity.

---

<sup>422</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter: *Spe Salvi* – On Christian Hope. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2007. 34.

<sup>423</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2644, 2661.

<sup>424</sup> *Ibid.* 2565, 2664, 2680-2681.

The subsection 'Atmosphere of Prayer' (and 'Place of Prayer', Books 1&2) is devoted mainly to what can be done in the classroom to support the prayer of the pupils; this is good. Priority is given to bringing in items from nature: water, clay, rocks, plants, flowers, etc. It might have been more helpful to give priority to Christian items and symbols.

Recommendations for music, songs, hymns, religious images, a lighted candle, the Bible, incense, and holy water are all helpful, as is the idea of a 'prayer corner' in the classroom. It might have been helpful to mention and give priority to a cross or crucifix, which is usually given pride of place in the Catholic tradition of prayer. There is also encouragement for children to create their own 'sacred space' or 'prayer corner' at home; the suggestion (Books 7&8) that this might encourage family prayer is particularly helpful.

It might also be helpful to mention the church as a special place of prayer, encouraging pupils to make visits and pray in the presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament; also to mention other places that might be available to pupils, such as: pilgrimage sites, mass rocks, monasteries and religious houses, and oratories.<sup>425</sup>

The subsection 'Witness' says, 'Watching Jesus pray awoke in the disciples the desire to pray'. While this is true, there is scope to develop further the role of Jesus in prayer. Jesus himself is our principal model and teacher in prayer; the Lord's Prayer (Our Father) which he taught his disciples is the greatest and model for all Christian prayers. When the disciples saw Jesus at prayer or were in his company they were actually participating in a prayer of

---

<sup>425</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2691, 2696.

contemplation, because Jesus himself is God. Jesus promised he is present whenever two or three gather in his name.<sup>426</sup>

It is good to note that children learn about prayer from watching adults around them pray, and to encourage teachers to model prayer for their pupils.

The subsection 'Different Expressions of Prayer' has a good quotation from CCC 2699, and encouragement for the three major expressions of Christian prayer: vocal, meditative and contemplative.

The subheading 'Vocal Prayer' focuses on individual personal expression: 'When we pray vocally we put words on our experiences of God in our lives. We need to express in words what we feel and believe'. This is not unreasonable, and the CCC also speaks about vocal prayer from personal experience. However, it would be helpful to reflect the fuller development of vocal prayer in the CCC, which says that vocal prayer unites body and soul, following Christ's example of praying to his Father and teaching the *Our Father* to his disciples. The CCC emphasizes vocal prayer in the context of liturgical and communal prayer.<sup>427</sup>

The subheading 'Meditative Prayer' opens with a good quotation from CCC 2708: 'Meditation engages thought, imagination, emotion and desire'. The focus then is on the world of imagination; the lessons provide a methodology whereby pupils can imagine themselves in a 'space', where they can talk to God, imagine themselves in a gospel story, and imagine a conversation with Jesus about how they think and feel.

---

<sup>426</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 1373, 2598-2616, 2620-2621, 2664.

<sup>427</sup> *Ibid.* 2700-2704, 2722.

While imagination has a role in meditation, it would be helpful to bring out that using imagination is not the centre and purpose of meditative prayer. Meditation has a very specific purpose. Meditation is above all a prayerful quest, seeking to know and understand the Christian life, with which one compares one's own life, in order to respond to what the Lord is asking and advance, with the Holy Spirit, to greater union with Jesus Christ. Meditation can be helped by reflection on Scripture, holy icons, spiritual writings, creation and life.<sup>428</sup>

The subheading 'Contemplative Prayer', Books 1-3, opens with a good quotation from CCC 2709: 'What is contemplative prayer? St Teresa answers: Contemplative prayer in my opinion is nothing else than a close sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with him who we know loves us'. The text continues this idea of communicating silently with God from deep within our hearts; this is in harmony with the CCC. In closing, there is reference to the ability to achieve a level of quiet and stillness from within.

Books 4 through 8 omit the CCC quotation, and the text is amended to focus predominantly on technique and skill to achieve deep inner stillness<sup>429</sup>. It would be helpful to restore the focus to communication with God, and to further develop the understanding of contemplative prayer given in the CCC, which might include the following:

Contemplative prayer is a gaze of faith fixed on Jesus, and in him, the Father, attentive to the Word of God, a silent love. The mystery of Christ is celebrated by the Church in the Eucharist, and the Holy Spirit makes it come alive in contemplative prayer. Inner stillness is not stressed, but the firm determination to make time for the Lord; one cannot always

---

<sup>428</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 2705-2708.

<sup>429</sup> An undue focus on mental and physical techniques could diminish the Christian dimension in favour of forms of meditation that are secular or with some non-specific religious dimension. Some people appear to derive benefit from such forms of meditation, with attention given to transforming the senses, achieving relaxation and detachment, control of breathing, training the mind to detach, visualise and use symbols. See Greer Allica, *Meditation Workbook*. London: Burns & Oates, 1991.

meditate, but one can always enter into inner prayer, independently of the conditions of health, work or emotional state.<sup>430</sup>

Books 4 through 8 introduce a subheading 'Prayer through Movement', which is not an expression of prayer mentioned in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The principal focus is on dance-like routines and formalised gestures to accompany the Our Father and Hail Mary, for which great benefits are claimed. These are analysed as part of the lesson material below. There is a quotation from *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, 30, but this does not refer to dance or dance-like routines, but rather to the kind of movement that is mentioned in Books 7 and 8: 'processing, making the sign of the cross, bowing, genuflecting, etc', which is a normal part of the Church's liturgy<sup>431</sup>.

The subsection 'Forms of Prayer', addresses prayers of petition, thanksgiving, praise, sorrow and repentance, and intercession, and is substantially in harmony with CCC 2623-2643.

It might be helpful if the examples given for prayers of petition, intercession and thanksgiving were extended from 'horizontal' or this-worldly matters to include spiritual matters, which are more important in relation to Christian prayer. It might also be helpful to refer to how prayers of petition and intercession have been answered, including examples from the Scriptures, shrines like Lourdes, and the many miracles that have been verified by the Church in the causes of canonisation of saints.

The subsection 'Prayer in the Classroom' (titled 'Personal Prayer & Communal Prayer' and 'The Language of Prayer' in Books 1 and 2) addresses a number of aspects of prayer for the

---

<sup>430</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2709-2711, 2724.

<sup>431</sup> *Ibid.* 1153-1155.

pupils. There are some variations from Book 1 through Book 8, but the material is very similar and so will be analysed here together.

Pupils are encouraged to pray in the classroom. They are encouraged to vocalise prayers in their own words: petition, praise, thanks, etc. Opportunities are provided for prayer in every lesson, including occasional prayer arising out of everyday events and prayer arising out of the context of each lesson. Suggestions for prayer throughout the school day (Books 7 and 8) include: morning and evening prayers at the beginning and end of the school day; reciting a prayer on the hour; the Angelus at midday; grace before and after lunch. All this is good.

There are also opportunities for celebration of particular events, Feasts or Seasons of the Church Year. Some of these special Prayer Services provide for inviting in parents or guardians to participate. While the concept of prayer celebrations is good in principle, might there be the risk that formalised rituals, which resemble the Church's liturgy, might distract and detract from the special nature of the liturgy of the Church?

In relation to the language of prayer, there is reference to spontaneous prayer and 'traditional prayer formulas'. Priority is given to spontaneous prayer. The value of traditional prayers is conceded, but nevertheless somewhat disparaged by giving them a secondary status and using terms like 'prayer formulas' and 'prayer language of adults'.

It would be helpful if the place of 'traditional prayer' were more fully developed, which would show a better balance relative to 'spontaneous prayer'. The Information applies the term 'traditional prayer formulas' to a very wide range of prayer; it would be helpful to distinguish between these various types of prayer and the approach that would be appropriate to each of them, which might include the following:

What might be termed the '*great prayers of the Church*' hold a special position in the prayer and catechetical practice of the Church. First of these is the Lord's Prayer, which has a special position all of its own, as it was the prayer taught by Jesus and is considered by the Church to be the fundamental Christian prayer and the model for all Christian prayer. Other great prayers would include the Hail Mary, the Glory be to the Father, the Creeds, the Confiteor. Several other prayers might be considered great prayers of the Church, such as the Angelus, and the Rosary. These prayers have a standard form and language throughout the Church. Children benefit from learning these prayers from a very young age, helped by teaching the meaning in a manner appropriate to their age and understanding, though the depth of understanding of these prayers will continue throughout their entire lives.

*Prayers from Scripture*, especially the Psalms and the great canticles from both Old and New Testaments. Primary school pupils can be introduced to these in a simple form, though they are more appropriate for adolescents and adults.

*The liturgical prayer of the Church*, especially the Mass. Children can learn these prayers from a very early age, though naturally the understanding grows progressively throughout life. The liturgical prayer of the Church should be treated as something which is very special, deserving great respect and in a different category to any other prayer service or ritual.

There are other prayers which are particularly important in the tradition of the Church, but there is not a standard wording, and the wording may vary in different places and times. Examples of these would include: the Act of Contrition, Acts of Faith, Hope and Charity, the Prayer to the Angel Guardian, the Morning Offering, etc. While some variation in the wording of these prayers is reasonable, the wording chosen should be in harmony with the tradition of the Church.

There are many other traditional prayers, which are important in building faith and relationship with God, but which may vary in wording and practice. Examples may include Grace before and after Meals, and simple prayers like, 'Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, I place all my trust in you'. Many of these prayers are especially suited to children.

In addition to the suggestions above, the Information for teachers on prayer might helpfully include the following:

The Christian family – the “domestic church” – is the first place for learning to pray, especially at family prayer times and going to the church as a family.<sup>432</sup>

We can experience difficulties and temptations in the practice of prayer, such as lack of faith, distractions and dryness. The remedy lies in faith, giving our hearts fully to God and persevering in prayer.<sup>433</sup>

The Virgin Mary is a great model for prayer - particularly expressed in the Hail Mary, the Angelus, the Magnificat and the Rosary – and we can also seek her intercession in prayer. The saints are also models and intercessors for prayer.<sup>434</sup>

Memorisation is important for catechesis in prayer, especially for children and young people, accompanied with explanation of the meaning of the prayers.<sup>435</sup>

Traditional forms of piety and popular devotions can be very helpful to the faithful, including: visits to sanctuaries, pilgrimages, processions, the stations of the Cross, medals,

---

<sup>432</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2685, 2694.

<sup>433</sup> *Ibid.* 2729-2732, 2742.

<sup>434</sup> *Ibid.* 2617-2619, 2622, 2673-2679, 2682.

<sup>435</sup> *Ibid.* 2688.



etc. These can be important forms of prayer and helps to prayer, especially for young people who respond very positively to them, and they help link school with home and parish.<sup>436</sup>

Each Teacher's Book has 'Prayers for the Year' on the following pages: Alive-O 1 – XXIV; Alive-O 2 – XXXII; Alive-O 3 – LI-LII; Alive-O 4 – LV-LVI; Alive-O 5 – [60]-[63]; Alive-O 6 – [62]-[66]; Alive-O 7 – [42]-[45]; Alive-O 8 – [42]-[46]. The Prayers for the Year also appear on the final pages of the Pupil's Books.

These include great prayers of the Church: Sign of the Cross, Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be To The Father, Confiteor, Apostles Creed, Nicene Creed. This is very good.

The 'Prayers for the Year' also include other prayers important in the tradition of the Church: Regina Coeli, Hail Holy Queen, Come Holy Spirit, St Patrick's Breastplate. The Angelus prayer is included, but it is somewhat altered, which is not helpful; the change is a dis-improvement, and could serve to separate pupils from home and church. Also included are a Prayer to the Guardian Angel, and Grace Before and After meals; these Programme-written prayers differ from and somewhat diminish the traditional versions, so it would seem more helpful to use with the traditional versions of these prayers, which will help link the pupils to home and church.

Also included are Acts of Sorrow, Faith, Hope and Love. The Act of Sorrow has been analysed above in the Section 3.5.1: Life in the Christ, with the proposal for a different 'Act of Contrition'. There are no 'standard' Church versions of the other three Acts, but there nevertheless tend to be common features, many of which are reflected in the *Compendium of*

---

<sup>436</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 1674-1675.

*the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCCC)*. One might suggest the following amendments:

The Programme's Act of Faith is good, but might helpfully be expanded in line with the CCCC:

*O my God, I firmly believe that you are one God in three divine Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I believe that your Divine Son became man and died for our sins and that he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe these and all the truths which the Holy Catholic Church teaches because you have revealed them, who can neither deceive nor be deceived.*

The Programme's Act of Hope is quite limited, and is made up mostly of the prayer from the Mass which follows the Our Father. One might suggest the following version which is more explicit:

*O my God, relying on your infinite goodness and promises, I hope to obtain pardon for all my sins, the help of your grace, and life everlasting, through the merits of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Redeemer.*

The Programme's Act of Love is good, but might helpfully be developed as follows:

*O my God, I love you above all things, with my whole heart and soul, because you are all good and worthy of all my love. I love my neighbour as myself for love of you.*

The 'Prayers for the Year' also include a large number of Programme-written prayers, as follows: Morning Prayer, Night Prayer, Holy Spirit I want to do right, Spirit of God in the heavens, Prayer to the Trinity, Abundance Prayer, Prayer before Playing, Prayer after Playing, Prayer before Communion, Prayer after Communion, Prayer for Forgiveness, Prayer

after Forgiveness, Care for me Lord, We are the Body of Christ, Prayer to Mary mother of Jesus, Prayer on Opening a Book, Prayer on Closing at Book, Prayer on Opening the Bible, Prayer on Closing the Bible, Journey Prayer.

Many of these prayers are reasonable, but others are somewhat limited from the point of view of Christian prayer. This large number of Programme-written prayers seems to run counter to the earlier Information for teachers which strongly favoured the spontaneous prayer of the pupils and was rather negative towards 'prayer formulas'. Might there also be a danger that these many Programme-written formal prayers could distract attention from the great Prayers of the Church? Might they also tend to separate pupils from family and parish, to whom these Programme-written prayers would be unfamiliar?

The 'Prayers for the Year' sections also include Responses and major prayers of the Mass, which is good.

There are some other prayers that are important in the tradition of the Church, which might be helpfully included in the 'Prayers for the Year': Prayer for the Faithful Departed (Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord), the Morning Offering, the Memorare, the Prayer to St Michael.

## LESSON MATERIAL ON PRAYER

### GREAT PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

#### Sign of the Cross:

It is good that both Pupil's and Teacher's Books introduce the Sign of the Cross in Year 1, and that prayer-times open and close with the Sign of the Cross. It might be helpful if Pupil's Books 1 and 2 (Junior and Senior Infants) had illustrations which demonstrated how to make

the Sign of the Cross and related it to the Blessed Trinity: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

#### Glory be to the Father:

It is also good that the Glory be to the Father is introduced in Year 1, and used quite often in prayer-times. Given the prominent place the 'Glory Be' enjoys in the prayer tradition of the Church, it might not be unreasonable to make it the concluding prayer of all prayer-times.

#### Our Father, the Lord's Prayer:

The full text of the Our Father appears in the lesson pages of Pupil's Book 2 (A2-T2L9: Spring) and Pupil's Book 3 (A3-T1L12: Jesus – Teacher). The Our Father also appears among the Prayers for the Year at the back of Pupil's Books 2 through 8.

The Our Father is introduced to the lesson material in Teacher's Book 2, and thereafter appears in the lesson Prayer-times (usually once, sometimes a number of days of the weekly lesson) of all Teacher's Books, as follows: Book 3, four lessons; Book 4, eleven lessons; Book 5, seven lessons; Books 6, 7 and 8, four lessons each. It seems reasonable to introduce the Our Father to pupils in Year 2 (Senior Infants). However, given the great importance the CCC attaches to the Lord's Prayer, it would seem reasonable to include this great Prayer in every lesson of the Programme thereafter, a number of days, if not every day, of each lesson.

There is no explanation of the meaning of the Our Father prayer in the Pupil's Books.

Teacher's Book 1, Lesson A1-T3L2: The Food We Eat, gives one line of the Our Father, 'Give us this day our daily bread', and expands this to mean bread with butter and jam, cakes,

buns, and toast with marmalade.

Teacher's Book 3, Lesson A3-T1L12 - Jesus – Teacher, has a story, 'Jesus Prays', in which the apostles ask, 'Jesus, teach us to pray. Tell us what you say'. Jesus then replies, 'This is how I pray', and then Jesus gives them the words of the Our Father. This differs, very significantly, from the relevant passage of Scripture, Luke 11:1-2, which reads, 'One of his disciples said, "Lord, teach *us* to pray, just as John taught his disciples". He said to them, "Say this when *you* pray"' (emphasis added).

Teacher's Book 7, Lesson A7-T1L11 - Commandments (2), says that, 'The Our Father offers us guidelines like the commandments, e.g. call God Our Father; honour God's name; help make God's Kingdom come; do God's will, etc. .... The Our Father contains a series of suggested activities for anyone trying to live as Jesus taught'. This might helpfully be amended to harmonise with the CCC. The CCC teaches that the Our Father has an initial invocation and then seven *petitions*<sup>437</sup>, rather than being comprised of '*guidelines*' and '*suggested activities*'. Also, the Lesson identifies 'the commandments' as just '*guidelines*', whereas the CCC teaches that the Ten Commandments are just that, '*commandments*'.

This Lesson goes on to say, 'Look at each command or suggestion contained in the Our Father and then try to state them in your own words, e.g. You are God, our Father! We respect your name! May everyone spread your love! Make sure everyone has food! Forgive! Don't allow us to be pushed too far! Save us from anything that would take us away from you! Write your own version of the Our Father in your journal'. This could helpfully be amended to harmonise with the CCC; as written might this teaching convey to pupils that the Our Father, and by extension anything in Scripture, may be freely rewritten in line with their

---

<sup>437</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2798, 2802-2903.

own thoughts and desires?

It would be helpful for the Programme to give greater prominence to the Lord's Prayer, in harmony with the CCC and Christian catechetical tradition<sup>438</sup>. It would also be helpful to encourage pupils to learn the Our Father by heart, and to teach them the meaning of the Our Father, the Lord's Prayer, which might include the following:

We can invoke God as 'Father' because Jesus, the Son of God made man, has revealed him to us.<sup>439</sup>

By asking, 'hallowed be thy name', we praise God.<sup>440</sup>

When we pray, 'thy Kingdom come', we look first to Christ's return and final coming of the Reign of God; also the growth of the kingdom of God here on earth.<sup>441</sup>

In the third petition, 'thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven', we ask our Father to unite our will to that of Jesus, to fulfil his plan of salvation.<sup>442</sup>

In asking, 'give us this day our daily bread', we express our trust in our heavenly Father. The 'daily bread' refers to all goods and blessings, both material and spiritual, and especially to the Bread of Life – the Eucharist.<sup>443</sup>

When we pray, 'forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us', we beg God's mercy for our offences, mercy which can penetrate our hearts only if we forgive our enemies.<sup>444</sup>

---

<sup>438</sup> Pope Benedict XVI emphasises the importance of the Our Father in the great tradition of Christian catechesis. (Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, p.131. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987).

<sup>439</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 2798.

<sup>440</sup> *Ibid.* 2858.

<sup>441</sup> *Ibid.* 2859.

<sup>442</sup> *Ibid.* 2860.

<sup>443</sup> *Ibid.* 2830, 2861.

When we say, ‘lead us not into temptation’, we ask God to give us the grace of the Spirit so that we do not take the path of sin.<sup>445</sup>

In the last petition, ‘deliver us from evil’, we pray to God for the victory, already won by Christ, over Satan and his evils.<sup>446</sup>

By the final ‘Amen’ we express our agreement with the prayer God has taught us: ‘so be it’.

447

### Hail Mary:

The full text of the Hail Mary appears in the lesson pages of Pupil’s Book 2 and 3, in Lessons A2-T3L2: Water is Fun and A3-T1L13: One Moment. The Hail Mary also appears among the Prayers for the Year at the back of Pupil’s Books 2 through 8. There is no explanation of the meaning of the Hail Mary prayer in the Pupil’s Books.

The Hail Mary appears in Teacher’s Books 2 through 8 in prayer-times of from one to six lessons per year. Year 2 (Senior Infants) seems a reasonable stage to introduce the Hail Mary to pupils. However, there appears scope to use the prayer in the pupils’ prayer-times much more frequently, even daily, considering the importance of the Hail Mary in the Church’s rich tradition of prayer, and how readily children take to, learn and come to love this beautiful and meaningful prayer.

The Annunciation and Visitation provide opportunities for teaching the meaning of the first part of the Hail Mary. The Annunciation is addressed in Lessons A3-T1L13, A3-T3L1, A5-

---

<sup>444</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 2862.

<sup>445</sup> *Ibid.* 2863.

<sup>446</sup> *Ibid.* 2864.

<sup>447</sup> *Ibid.* 2856.

T1L9, A5-T2L3, A7-T1L12, and A8-T2L6. Only in the final lesson does Teacher's Book 8 make a helpful connection between the words of the angel Gabriel and the Hail Mary prayer: 'Each time we say the Hail Mary, we begin with the words that the angel Gabriel said to Mary... The angel said something like, "Hail Mary, full of grace!" which meant, "Greetings, favoured one!"". It might be more helpful to explain that the words 'full of grace' meant just that, confirming Mary's freedom from original sin, the Immaculate Conception. It would also be helpful to include, 'The Lord is with you', and show how the Angel's greeting pointed to Mary's election by God to be the mother of the Redeemer of all mankind, Jesus Christ, the centre-point of salvation history.<sup>448</sup>

The Visitation is addressed in Lessons A2-T1L13: Preparing and A3-T3L1: Mary's Joy. Elizabeth's greeting is given as, 'Mary, Mary, it's so good to see you', and no connection is made with the Hail Mary prayer.

It would be helpful if both Pupils and Teacher's Book encouraged memorising the Hail Mary and also provided age-appropriate explanations of both parts of the Hail Mary prayer, starting with the introduction of the prayer in Year 2 and progressively developing the meaning through to the end of the Programme, Year 8.

The Rosary is addressed in the following lessons: A3-T3L1 - Mary's Joy; A4-T3L1 - Mary Our Mother; A6-T1L5 – Mary; A7-T1L7 - Mary and the Mysteries of Light. The four lessons cover the Joyful, Sorrowful and Glorious Mysteries, and the Mysteries of Light.

The pattern established in Lesson A7-T1L7 for the Mysteries of Light is very good. In the Pupil's Book the Mysteries are listed, and then for each Mystery there is an illustration with

---

<sup>448</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 490-493, 503-511.



explanation or development, usually a relevant Scripture passage. The Teacher's Book then provides for praying of one mystery for each day of the week. It would be helpful if this same pattern had been followed for the other lessons.

Teacher's Book 6 has very good instructions on how to pray the Rosary with the Rosary beads. It would have been helpful if this instruction had been included in one of the Pupil's Books for the benefit of pupils and their parents. It might also have been helpful to include the Fatima Prayer as an option after each decade, considering that this prayer is widely used in Ireland. Additional comments on individual lessons on the Rosary are given below:

Lesson A3-T3L1 - Mary's Joy, addresses the Joyful Mysteries. Each of the Mysteries has an illustration, but the illustrations for the Annunciation and Visitation could helpfully be amended, as noted above in Section 3.3.6 Mary and the Saints. There is provision for praying one decade of the Rosary in class, which may be sufficient for this age group.

Lesson A4-T3L1 - Mary Our Mother, addresses the Sorrowful Mysteries. There is provision for praying three of the Mysteries in class, which is reasonable. The poem and story provide quite limited explanation of the mysteries, and could be much strengthened, in particular: the First Mystery mentions Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, but omits that he suffered any agony; the Fifth Mystery refers to Jesus as, 'Rabbi, Friend, Healer', but omits describing Jesus as Saviour or Redeemer and omits any mention that Jesus' death on the cross was a sacrifice that saved the human race from sin.

Lesson A6-T1L5 – Mary, addresses the Glorious Mysteries. The Pupil's Book says: 'By the Assumption we mean that Mary, when the course of her earthly life was finished, was taken up body and soul into the glory of Heaven', which is good. In the Teacher's Book the Assumption is described as an 'ancient belief'; it would have been helpful to note that the

Assumption is more than this, and has been declared a dogma of the Church. The Pupil's Book is given over to a story-poem about the Wedding Feast at Cana; it would have been more helpful to list the Glorious Mysteries, accompanied with illustrations and explanations, following the same pattern as Book 7.

Lesson A7-T1L7 - Mary and the Mysteries of Light, establishes a very good pattern, as has been noted above. There are good Scripture readings for the first two Mysteries in the Teachers Book; it would have been helpful to include them in the Pupil's Book as well. An appropriate Scripture reading might be selected for the Fifth Mystery: Jesus gives us the Eucharist, because the reading provided (John13:1,4-5,14) only describes Jesus washing the disciples' feet. The Lesson presents the 'Hail Holy Queen', to be learned, which is good.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF PRAYER IN LESSON MATERIALS

### Pattern and Structure of Prayer.

The Programme provides for daily prayer-times in Years 1 through 6. The prayer-times in Years 7 and 8 are less frequent than daily. It would seem appropriate that the daily religious education time should start and finish with prayer.

The Programme's prayer-times are highly structured and set out in the Teacher's Books with detailed Programme-scripted prayers for teachers and pupils. Every prayer-time is different, and normally consists of prayers to be read out by the teacher with responses from the pupils. The pupils will not normally know the responses, so they must be read out by the teacher and repeated by the pupils. There is very little provision for spontaneous prayers and responses by the pupils, and where this is provided it is within defined parameters as set out in the prayer-

time. Prayer-times start and finish with the Sign of the Cross, but other use of the great prayers of the Church is quite limited.

As the prayer-times are different every day, and are predominantly Programme-written special prayers, one must be concerned that the pupils will not build up any habits or pattern of regular prayer. The normal practice of regular prayer in the Church, and among Christians generally, is to have a basic pattern which will provide for the essentials of prayer: praise and adoration, thanksgiving, petition and intercession, contrition. There is normally much reliance on the great prayers of the Church and on prayers from Scripture, in particular the Psalms and the great canticles, but also provision for personal and spontaneous prayer to avoid undue rigidity from repetition of formal prayers.

One might suggest that the daily prayer-times for pupils would have a regular pattern, with the basic structure of the great prayers of the Church as a foundation on which to build the prayers, including spontaneous prayers and prayers for special occasions. In this way pupils could participate more fully and freely, and would not be waiting and wondering each day what prayer the teacher is going to give them and what responses they will be expected to make. The pattern of daily prayer could also provide a foundation for the pupils' own personal prayer outside of the classroom, and hopefully contribute to the practice of family prayer in the homes.

### Prayer Symbols.

The Programme provides for symbols to be displayed during the prayer-times, which is good in principle. Every prayer time uses a lighted candle.

Christian symbols are sometimes used: on occasion the Bible, the special Wreath for Advent, the crib at Christmas, a cross or crucifix for the Good Friday ritual, icons.

A wide range of other symbols are often used, particularly during Years 1 through 4. These symbols include: joss sticks, flowers, seeds and pots, 'summer things', toys, stones and sand, branches and leaves, plants, egg-timer, class crest and enrolment book, balloons, rain-gauge, 'memory objects', books and pictures, map of the world, flour and milk, plasticine and clay 'Beings', etc.

The use of symbols as aids to prayer is very much part of the Christian tradition, and therefore it is good that a symbol or symbols would be used during the prayer-times with pupils in the classroom. The most common symbol used by Christians is a cross, normally in the form of a crucifix in the Catholic tradition. It would seem desirable that a cross or crucifix is displayed during every prayer time for the pupils. Other Christian symbols could then be added, and there is great scope for variety and creativity (including those Christian symbols already noted above as used by the Programme), which could help the pupils with prayer and also add to their catechesis. The use of lighted candles is very much in the Christian prayer tradition, and is to be recommended; however, it is not part of the Christian tradition to pray focused on a lighted candle alone in the absence of any Christian symbols.

#### Prayers of Thanksgiving, Petition and Intercession.

It is good that the Programme's prayer times include many prayers of thanksgiving, petition and intercession. There is however, a tendency for these prayers to be preponderantly 'horizontal', and very light on spiritual matters. The balance might helpfully be changed to

focus more on spiritual matters, which should take first place in Christian prayer. It might also be helpful to teach about God's response to prayers of petition and intercession, because pupils could get discouraged if there appears to be no answers to prayer. It would be helpful to give examples of answers to prayer (physical and spiritual healings, etc.), and also to explain that God always hears our prayers and responds in the way he knows is best for us, which might not always be the way we would like.

### Meditation.

The Programme seeks to introduce pupils to meditative prayer, which is reasonable in principle. However, one might question whether Junior Infants is too early to start meditation? One might also question if there is undue attention (particularly in the early years of the Programme) on the technique of achieving mental detachment, too much focus on self and secular things while releasing the imagination to be guided by the teacher following the Programme's script? Later years of the Programme seem to give more attention to meditative prayer as taught by the Church, which is to focus on Christian matters so that one might conform one's life better to the way of the Lord, and also give attention to dimensions of contemplative prayer involving silent communication with God.

### Para-liturgical Prayer Rituals.

The Programme's prayer-times include many prayer rituals which could be considered 'para-liturgical' (the Programme's own term). There are more than one hundred para-liturgical rituals, about half of which could be considered 'para-sacramental'.

‘Para-sacramental rituals’ include: Eucharistic-like prayer services with meals, Bible procession rituals, blessings with holy water, anointings with oil, sacramental enrolment rituals, reconciliation services, baptismal renewal rituals, commitment and called to witness rituals. Other para-liturgical rituals include: formally structured prayer services, blessing rituals, Holy Week rituals, dance rituals, Ash Wednesday rituals, leaving school ritual.

The CCC does not include such para-liturgical rituals in its teaching on the liturgy and sacraments. The Programme considers that these para-liturgical rituals will help pupils understand the sacraments and the Church's liturgy. Might this be so, or might the opposite happen? Might the pupils see little or no difference between the Programme's numerous para-liturgical rituals and the Church's own formal liturgy? In particular, might the many para-sacramental rituals be confused with the real sacraments of the Church, which could detract from an understanding of the unique and grace-filled nature of the seven sacraments as instituted by Christ? The potential for confusion could be increased by the way in which some of the Programme's prayer-times (not only the para-liturgical rituals) incorporate prayers from the Mass.

## 4. PEDAGOGICAL ASPECTS

### 4.1 Developments in Pedagogy

#### Pedagogy of God

The *General Directory for Catechesis* is founded and structured on the principle of catechesis as an integral component of the Church's mission of evangelisation. At the heart of the GDC is the Pedagogy of the Faith; the GDC understands pedagogy as the fundamental strategy and approach for catechesis, which is education in the faith. While the GDC favours a diversity of methods in catechesis, it proposes only one pedagogy, the pedagogy of the Faith, which it also calls the pedagogy of God, the pedagogy of Christ, and the pedagogy of the Church.

The salvation of the person, which is the ultimate purpose of Revelation, is shown as a fruit of an original and efficacious "pedagogy of God" throughout history<sup>449</sup>. Jesus Christ continued the "pedagogy of God" in his words, signs and works, which are recorded in the Gospels. This is the pedagogy of Christ, the pedagogy of Jesus<sup>450</sup>. From her beginnings the Church has lived her mission as a continuation of the pedagogy of the Father and of the Son<sup>451</sup>

Catechesis, as communication of divine Revelation, is radically inspired by the pedagogy of God, as displayed in Christ and in the Church, taking the form of a process or a journey of following the Christ of the Gospel in the Spirit towards the Father<sup>452</sup>.

Catechesis does not confuse the salvific action of God, which is pure grace, with the pedagogical action of man. Neither, however, does it oppose and separate them. It continually

---

<sup>449</sup> *General Directory for Catechesis*, 1997. 139.

<sup>450</sup> *Ibid.* 140.

<sup>451</sup> *Ibid.* 141.

<sup>452</sup> *Ibid.* 143.

seeks dialogue with people in accordance with the directions offered by the Magisterium of the Church. Methodological choices are inspired by seeking a synthesis between full adherence of man to God (*fides qua*) and the content of the Christian message (*fides quae*); to develop all the dimensions of faith, and to move the person to abandon himself completely and freely to God, in intelligence, will, heart and memory<sup>453</sup>. Catechesis seeks to evangelise by educating and to educate by evangelising<sup>454</sup>.

### **Diversity of Methods in Catechesis**

The Church, while insisting on the one pedagogy of the Faith, does not have a particular method nor any single method. She favours diversity of methods in catechesis. She welcomes those methods which are not contrary to the Gospel and places them at its service, seeing a variety of methods as a sign of life and richness. The Church avails of the pedagogical and communication sciences, and applies them to catechesis for education in the faith<sup>455</sup>.

The following is a helpful definition of what constitutes a 'method': a method is a normative pattern of recurrent and related operations yielding cumulative and progressive results. There is a method, then, where there are distinct operations, where each operation is related to the others, where the set of relations forms a pattern, where the pattern is described as the right way of doing the job, where operations in accord with the pattern may be repeated indefinitely, and where the fruits of such repetition are, not repetitious, but cumulative and progressive<sup>456</sup>.

---

<sup>453</sup> *General Directory for Catechesis*. 144.

<sup>454</sup> *Ibid.* 147.

<sup>455</sup> *Ibid.* 148.

<sup>456</sup> Bernard J F Lonergan, SJ, *Method in Theology*, p.4. London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1972



## **The Content-Method Relationship**

Catechesis receives from Christ the law of fidelity to God and of fidelity to man, which involves the communication of the whole word of God in the concrete existence of people<sup>457</sup>.

There is a necessary correlation and interaction between the method and content. Method is at the service of Revelation and conversion. A good catechetical method is a guarantee of fidelity to content<sup>458</sup>. The effectiveness of catechesis is reduced by use of methods that are not in harmony with the content of the Faith<sup>459</sup> or by undue emphasis on method to the relative neglect of content<sup>460</sup>.

## **Inductive / Deductive Methods and Human Experience**

In the history of catechesis, deductive and inductive methods have played an important part. Deduction involves moving from stated premises to the formally valid conclusions, or reasoning from the general to the particular. In relation to catechesis, this would involve communicating the truths of the Faith, received primarily through divine Revelation, and applying them to life. This approach harmonises well with the 'pedagogy of God'.

---

<sup>457</sup> *General Directory for Catechesis, 1997.* 145-146.

<sup>458</sup> *Ibid.* 149.

<sup>459</sup> The fundamental rejection of a catechism that we have witnessed in the last ten years is perhaps the plainest example of an attitude that lets the question of communication be determined by methodological praxis rather than by seeking a means of communication that is appropriate to the matter. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 319. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987.

<sup>460</sup> There has been a collapse even of simple religious information. This naturally forces us to ask: What is our catechesis doing? What is our school system doing at a time when religious instruction is widespread? I think it was an error not to pass on more content. Our religion instructors rightly repudiated the idea that religious instruction is only information, and they rightly said that it is something else, that it is more, that the point is to learn life itself, that more has to be conveyed. But that led to the attempt to make people like this style of life, while information and content were neglected. .... Students should find out what Christianity is; they should receive good information in a sympathetic way so that they are stimulated to ask: Is this perhaps something for me? Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth*, 125-126. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997.

The process of induction involves inference of the general from observation of particular instances. In relation to catechesis this would find its fullest expression in the ways of coming to know the existence of God through observation of the physical world and the human person. Through converging and convincing arguments we can attain certainty about the existence of a personal God<sup>461</sup>. However, in pedagogy the inductive method is generally not applied in its pure form in which the pupils are expected to arrive at important truths and first principles from observation of the particular, but rather to use observation of the particular to obtain greater understanding of truths or general principles which have been derived or received by others and are communicated to the pupils. In relation to the natural sciences pupils carry out laboratory experiments not to discover original scientific laws, but rather to come to a greater understanding and knowledge of scientific laws that have been derived by others and are part of the heritage of scientific knowledge<sup>462</sup>.

In catechesis, inductive methods consist of presenting facts (Biblical events, liturgical acts, events in the Church's life as well as events from daily life) so as to discern the meaning these might have in divine Revelation. In relation to deductive and inductive methods it is not a case of 'either or', but rather 'both and'; the inductive method does not exclude the deductive method, but rather requires it as well<sup>463</sup>.

---

<sup>461</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 31-37.

<sup>462</sup> Bernard Lonergan notes that human knowledge is largely a belief in the findings of others, and this includes the natural sciences: 'Human knowledge, then, is not some individual possession but rather a common fund, from which each may draw by believing, to which each may contribute in the measure that he performs his cognitional operations properly and reports their results accurately. A man does not learn without the use of his own senses, his own mind, his own heart, yet not exclusively by these. He learns from others, not solely by repeating the operations they have performed but, for the most part, by taking their word for the results. Through communication and belief there are generated common sense, common knowledge, common science, common values, a common climate of opinion'. Bernard J F Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 43-44. London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1972.

<sup>463</sup> *General Directory for Catechesis*, 150.

Another expression of deductive/inductive methods refers to the 'kerygmatic' (descending), which begins with the proclamation of the message, expressed in the principal documents of the faith and applies it to life, and the 'existential' (ascending), which moves from human problems and conditions and enlightens them with the word of God<sup>464</sup>.

Human experience has a vital role in catechesis, which is related to the question of deductive and inductive methods. Human experience arouses interest, raises questions and hopes which can lead people to a desire to transform their existence. Experience promotes the intelligibility of the Christian message, and helps explore and assimilate the truths which are the object of the content of Revelation. Interpreting and illuminating experience with the data of faith is a constant task of catechetical pedagogy, helping people to respond to the saving grace of God<sup>465</sup>.

Notable contributions have been made by many authors and researchers, both secular and Christian, leading to greater understanding of deductive and inductive methods and the role of human experience in pedagogy<sup>466</sup>.

**Bernard Lonergan** offered some fundamental rethinking on the problem of human development<sup>467</sup>. Lonergan discerned two directions of human development, inverse but complementary, which he termed development from below upwards, and development from

---

<sup>464</sup> *General Directory for Catechesis*. 151.

<sup>465</sup> *Ibid.* 152-153.

<sup>466</sup> Raymond Topley crystallises contributions made by four authors on the role of experience in religious education in 'The Act of Judgment in Religious Education: Light from Newman, Lonergan, Giussani, and Groome', *Exploring Religious Education*, Patricia Kieran & Anne Hession – Editors. Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2008.

<sup>467</sup> Frederick E Crowe, *Old Things and New: A Strategy for Education*, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985. p. xi, 1-2, 12-15, 22-29, 132-133.

above downward. The key lies in the structured route along which, in either direction, development may travel, and this is provided by four interrelated levels of human consciousness: experience, understanding, reflection (and judgement), deliberation (and decision); and four levels concerned respectively with data, intelligibility, truth, and values.

The way of achievement (way of progress) proceeds from below upwards in the original development, and the way of heritage (way of tradition) moves from above downward in the handing on of development.

Lonergan explains the two ways as follows: 'Development begins from experience, is enriched by full understanding, is accepted by sound judgement, is directed not to satisfactions but to values. The handing on of development begins in the affectivity of the infant, the child, the son, the pupil, the follower. On affectivity rests the apprehension of values; on the apprehension of values rests belief; on belief follows the growth in understanding of one who has found a genuine teacher and has been initiated into the study of the masters of the past. Then to confirm one's growth in understanding, comes experience made mature and perceptive by one's developed understanding'.

These two ways are to be seen not as mutually exclusive, but rather as complementary. The single structure, and the possibility of traversing it in either direction, provides a real basis for the complementarity of the two ways.

The way of achievement could be seen as having a structure of four levels, the empirical (that on which data are received, grouped, recalled), the intelligent (on which we ask why, form ideas), the reasonable (on which we reflect, test our ideas, form judgements, reach the truth), and the responsible (the level of values, on which we take action in accordance with an

informed conscience). The levels could also be termed experience, understanding, reflection, and values.

The way of heritage could also be described in the following four steps: values handed down and apprehended; reflection on values, and beliefs received; understanding of received beliefs; experience made mature and perceptive.

The downward movement is not only first in time, but appears more important and fundamental. There appears to be a need for gift to precede achievement. The way of development from above downward is the way of heritage, of tradition handed on, which will inspire later achievement. It is truly the fundamental, chronologically prior way of learning.

The two ways are complementary. The relative importance of the two ways normally varies during the lifetime of the human being. In childhood it is almost entirely the way of heritage, from above downward, with the way of achievement increasing in importance to reach a balance, not without a degree of conflict, in adolescence. In mature adulthood the two ways are in constructive balance, with the way of achievement being somewhat more important than the way of heritage.

Excessive reliance on the way of heritage, from above downward, can lead to credulity. Excessive reliance on the way of achievement can lead to scepticism. Newman considered this question and made a plea for what he called 'reasonable scepticism', but qualified this by saying<sup>468</sup>, 'Of the two (credulity and scepticism), I would rather have to maintain that we ought to begin with believing everything that is offered to our acceptance, than that it is our duty to doubt of everything. The former, indeed, seems the true way of learning. We shall

---

<sup>468</sup> John Henry Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*. London: Longmans Green & Co., 1930. p.377.

soon discover and discard what is contradictory to itself; ..... we shall somehow make our way forward, the error falling off from the mind, and truth developing and occupying it.'

In relation to Christian education it is clear that heritage comes first, and then the way of achievement. We start with love and trust, and the grace of the Spirit. However, it is not a question of 'either or', but rather of 'both and'.

**Paulo Freire** made a significant contribution to pedagogy through his book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, first published in 1970, which has been translated into over eighteen languages<sup>469</sup>. Freire, a Brazilian, was writing for a situation of oppression, and everything is set in this context. There are the oppressors, and then there are the oppressed.

Freire identifies a kind of pedagogy which he calls 'banking' (a term which has negative connotations relative to capitalism), which involves teaching something to students (this might be considered 'deductive' learning, but Freire does not use the term). Freire identifies 'banking' pedagogy with oppression, and sees it as the way in which the oppressors keep the oppressed down. One might readily conceive of a type of education or pedagogy which could be used in a very oppressive and directive way to keep people down, but Freire does not allow for the use of a deductive pedagogy in a positive way, such as communication of truth, goodness or values or the passing on of a heritage of culture or knowledge.

As opposed to the pedagogy of 'banking', Freire proposes the pedagogy of 'problem-solving', in which teacher and pupil work together to discover and create knowledge. He sees this as recognition of the dignity and value of pupils, and how they can participate in a creative way

---

<sup>469</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Penguin Books, London, 1996; p. 25-67,

with the teacher in the educational process. One might question Freire's tendency to an 'either or' approach. Good education is more a matter of 'both and'; information and values can be communicated to pupils, and also pupils must be encouraged and stimulated to participate actively in learning, to appropriate truths that are communicated.

However, Freire does not give any credit to a deductive dimension to pedagogy: 'Liberating education consists in acts of cognition, not transferrals of information'; 'Both should be simultaneously teachers and students'; 'No one teaches another'.

Freire proposes 'conscientisation', which involves teaching oppressed peoples that they are oppressed, and how they can get out of their oppressed state through his pedagogy. He also encourages 'radicalisation', which he opposes to 'sectarianism' of the right or left. Freire is not explicit in favouring Marxism, but he does seem to tend that way, with favourable references to Marx, Engels, Che Guevara and the Cuban revolution. Freire does not see any good coming from the oppressors, who cannot liberate the oppressed; paternalism is just another form of oppression. Only the oppressed can free themselves and also free their oppressors.

*Pedagogy of Freedom – Ethics, Democracy, and Civic Courage*, published shortly after Freire's death in 1997, is based on the notes that he prepared for a seminar to be held in Harvard<sup>470</sup>. It marks a significant shift in some ways from his 1970 *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, and yet in other ways he repeats his earlier ideas from 1970.

---

<sup>470</sup> Paulo Freire. *Pedagogy of Freedom – Ethics, Democracy, and Civic Courage*. Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham Maryland, 1998.

Freire's condemnations are no longer aimed at 'the oppressors', but against 'neoliberalism', in the fight against which he promotes 'conscientisation'. 'Neoliberalism' appears to refer to a resurgence of laissez-faire capitalism in the wake of the fall of communism, especially as expressed in forms of ruthlessly pragmatic globalisation.

Freire gives attention to a universal human ethic, and talks about hope and optimism, decency and purity, truth. In relation to pedagogy, Freire no longer refers to 'problem-solving' education, but rather promotes the idea of 'progressive' education, which favours the autonomy of the student. He has many good things to say, which would be widely accepted as characteristic of good education. Education should promote curiosity, critical thinking, and the experience of students, respect for the autonomy of the student and common sense. Teaching requires curiosity, a good balance between freedom and authority, knowing how to listen, an openness to dialogue and caring for the student.

However, Freire still retains his bias against teaching as communicating anything, such as truth, values, knowledge, or culture, and he still refers pejoratively to deductive learning as the 'banking' system.

Freire says, reasonably, that there is no teaching without learning, and that teaching is not just transferring of knowledge. However, he tends to set up an unnecessary dichotomy, an 'either/or' situation, between passing on of knowledge and the involvement of students, with an overstatement of the value of that part of the education which involves the activity of the student. 'To teach is not to transfer knowledge but to create the possibilities for the production or construction of knowledge'. 'To know how to teach is to create possibilities for the construction and production of knowledge rather than to be engaged simply in a game of transferring knowledge. When I enter a classroom I should be someone who is open to new



ideas, open to questions, and open to the curiosities of the students as well as their inhibitions. In other words, I ought to be aware of being a critical and enquiring subject in regard to the task entrusted to me, the task of teaching and not that of transferring knowledge'.<sup>471</sup>

**Henry Giroux** is supportive of the pedagogical approach of Paulo Freire, which he seeks to apply to US society<sup>472</sup>. Giroux is committed to 'neo-Marxism' or 'Western Marxism', which rejects Marxist economics, but embraces the social theories of Marx and Engels. Giroux considers that Paulo Freire was deeply indebted to both Marx and Jean-Paul Sartre.

Giroux sees schools as institutions of cultural and social reproduction that embody 'cultural capital'. By 'reproduction' he means that schools currently exist to support and provide formation for the existing dominant class and the capitalist economy. Giroux sees the school as a terrain of contestation where cultural capital may be wrested by teachers and pupils through change in curriculum and pedagogy from those who hold it under lock and key.

Giroux presents a strategy to radicalise schools, largely through curriculum change, and to radicalise teachers through changes in teacher education, leading to a radical (neo-Marxist) society.

---

<sup>471</sup> Paulo Freire. *Pedagogy of Freedom – Ethics, Democracy, and Civic Courage*. see Chapter 3. Teaching Is Not Just Transferring Knowledge, 59.

<sup>472</sup> Henry A Giroux; *Ideology, Culture, and the Process of Schooling*. London: Falmer Press, 1981.

**Denis Gleeson and John Eggleston** take a similar position to Henry Giroux in relation to the situation in the United Kingdom<sup>473</sup>. The authors argue for educational changes, mainly in curriculum development, which will in turn help bring about societal change.

Sociologists and educationists realise that one of the central concerns of education is the distribution of political and economic power in social systems. Traditionalist orientations seek to preserve the present situation, using positivist and normative models of social analysis. Radical orientations advocate redistribution of power, emphasising the impermanent nature of social structures and the various arrangements, including education, that support them.

Two models of curriculum development are presented, functionalist and structuralist. The functionalist model is essentially an updating, in which teams of schoolteachers, college lecturers and advisory committees draft new programmes which are tried out in selected schools. Based on the feedback new curricula and programmes are prepared. The functionalist perspective prepares the young for society as it exists. Equality of opportunity is a major concern.

The authors consider that the functionalist perspective protects those who have advantageous access to economic and political capital, and who are also those who possess, own and control the structure, transmission and access to cultural capital. Capitalists educate their children so that they remain in the dominant classes. Educational institutions do not exist to create equality but rather to maintain and legitimate existing hierarchies; pupils are victims of

---

<sup>473</sup> John Eggleston and Denis Gleeson, *Curriculum innovation and the context of the school*. p.15-27. in Denis Gleeson – Editor. *Identity and Structure: Issues in the Sociology of Education*. Nafferton England: Studies in Education Ltd. 1977.

the system. Children of capitalist parents benefit from the system, thereby perpetuating class privilege.

The authors favour the structuralist model, wherein knowledge is not only updated but distributed more widely through new methods of organisation and presentation of whatever is defined as content. The structural perspective is commended for its critical resistance to preservation of the *status quo*, questioning the legitimacy and validity of such concepts as knowledge transmission. The authors argue that curriculum changes which are informed by a structural critique must be constructed within the realities of classroom practice and the experiences of teachers and pupils.

### **The Activity and Creativity of the Catechized**

The active participation of all the catechised in their formative process is completely in harmony, not only with genuine human communication, but specifically with the work of Revelation and salvation. Christians are called to respond to the gift of God through prayer, participation in the sacraments, the liturgy, ecclesial and social commitments, works of charity and promotion of human values, and the protection of creation. In catechesis, therefore, subjects take on a commitment in the activities of faith, hope and charity, to strengthen their personal conversion, and to a Christian praxis in their lives<sup>474</sup>. A number of writers and researchers in the field of education paid great attention to the dimension of the activity of pupils, and their active participation in the pedagogical process.

**Jean Piaget** is well-known for his contribution to the stages of cognitive development in children. He also made notable contributions to the field of education in general, and was

---

<sup>474</sup> *General Directory for Catechesis, 1997.* 157.

much concerned with the understanding of the development of new ideas and methods in education<sup>475</sup>.

Piaget asks how is one to define the new methods of education, and from when should we date their first appearance? To educate is to adapt the child to the adult social environment. On the one hand, there is the growing individual, and on the other social, intellectual, and moral values into which the educator is charged with initiating the individual. The older methods tended to look upon the child either as a little man to be instructed, given morals, and identified as rapidly as possible with its adult models, or as the prop of various original sins, that is, as recalcitrant raw material even more in need of reclamation than of instruction. The new methods are those that take account of the child's own individual nature and make their appeal to the laws of the individual's psychological constitution and those of his development. The child no longer tends to approach the state of adulthood by receiving reason and the rules of right action ready-made, but by achieving them with his own effort and personal experience.

Piaget draws attention to three major modern developments which have significant bearing on the development of teaching methods. These are: the huge increase in number of students due to greater access to educational opportunities; the related difficulty of recruiting a sufficient number of trained and qualified teachers; and the increased economic, technical, and scientific needs of modern society.

In spite of these three major developments Piaget sees a continuing struggle for balance between methods of transmission by the teacher and methods which focus more on the

---

<sup>475</sup> Howard E Gruber – Editor, *The Essential Piaget*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977, p.695-725.

activity of those being taught, whether this involves physical activity or more intuitive methods. A limitation of Piaget's work was that his research focused exclusively on males, and did not include females.

**James Fowler** studied the question of the development of faith<sup>476</sup>, in which he gave great attention to the participation of the believer in the development of his faith, more than the transmission of faith to the believer. His focus on a pattern of stage development of faith drew much on the work of Piaget in stages of cognitive development.

Piaget identified four major stages of mental development. Piaget viewed this sequence of four stages as both invariant and universal, and every normal child should realise this sequence, which is part of the human blueprint. The four stages are:

1. *Sensorimotor intelligence*, which covers roughly the first two years of life.
2. *Intuitive or symbolic* thought, which spans the pre-school years. The child uses language, mental images, and other kinds of symbols to refer to the world which he had previously known only directly through acting upon it, but the knowledge through symbols is still static.
3. *Concrete operational* thought, by which the child can see things not only from his present perspective but from the point of view of another person.
4. During the period of *formal operations*, which begins in early adolescence, the child becomes able to perform mental actions upon symbols as well as upon physical entities.

---

<sup>476</sup> James Fowler, *Moral Stages and the Development of Faith*, in Brenda Munsey – Editor, *Moral Development, Moral Education and Kohlberg*, p.130-160. Birmingham Alabama: Religious Education Press, 1980.

Fowler's work appears to draw more on Kohlberg's work on stages of moral development than on Piaget's stages of mental development. Fowler and Lawrence Kohlberg worked together as colleagues in Harvard. Fowler acknowledges that his work is significantly influenced by that of Kohlberg and grows from it, though he considers that his thinking goes further than that of Kohlberg in relation to moral development.

Fowler develops a concept of faith which is not necessarily religious. Faith has to do with a person's understanding of the meaning of life, or the force-field of life, the image of the ultimate environment, which one develops through one's life, always involving relationships with others. Fowler summarises his understanding of faith as: a disposition of the total self toward the ultimate environment, investing trust and loyalty in centres of value and power, giving order and coherence to the force-field of life, giving orientation, courage, meaning and hope to our lives and everyday commitments, and uniting us into communities of shared interpretation, loyalty, and trust.

Fowler's theory of stages of Faith development was based on a series of interviews undertaken with a representative sample of people. By a 'stage' Fowler means one of the sequence of formally described *styles* of composing an ultimate environment and of committing oneself to centres of value and power. He proposes that his stage sequence is invariant, that is, the stages come in the order presented and that persons do not skip over a stage. The stages are not defined by a particular content of belief or valuing, but focus on the *how* of faith rather than on the *what* or the content of faith.

The Stages of Faith are:

Undifferentiated Faith – infancy, aged 1-2.

Stage 1. Intuitive-Projective Faith – aged 3 to 7.

Stage 2. Mythic-Literal Faith – school-child.

Stage 3. Synthetic-Conventional Faith – mainly adolescence, but for many adults it becomes a permanent equilibration.

Stage 4. Individuative-Reflective Faith – most appropriately late adolescence or young adulthood; not all adults reach it, and some only get there in mid-thirties or forties.

Stage 5. Paradoxical-Consolidative Faith – unusual before midlife.

Stage 6. Universalizing Faith – exceedingly rare.

**Howard Gardner** researched the field of cognition, and took a particular interest in cognition and art<sup>477</sup>. The cognitive revolution came in two parts. First, the recognition that one could and must take seriously human mental processes, including thinking, problem-solving, and creating. Study of the mind once again became a proper scientific undertaking. Second, several researchers demonstrated that human thought processes were characterised by considerable regularity and structure. Not all of this cogitation took place in full view, but there was structure to thought processes, a structure that the careful analyst could help to lay bare.

The structuralist approach (as exemplified by psychologist Jean Piaget and the linguist Naom Chomsky) proposes that the mind operates according to specific rules, often unconscious

---

<sup>477</sup> Gardner, Howard: *Art, Mind, and Brain – A Cognitive Approach to Creativity*. New York: Basic Books Inc. 1982.

ones, and that these may be investigated and made explicit by the systematic examination of human language, action, and problem-solving.

The structuralist approach to the mind has limitations, and is especially problematic in relation to innovation and creation, as in the fashioning of original works of art. Gardner believes that the limitation implicit in the standard structuralist stance can be circumscribed by recognition of symbol systems, which by their very nature are creative, open systems. Through the use of symbols the human mind, operating according to structuralist principles, can create, revise, transform, and re-create wholly fresh products, systems, and even worlds of meaning.

The Piaget-Chomsky debate in 1975 emphasised two different approaches. Piaget saw the child's efforts as engaging the full range of inventive powers as he moves from one stage to the next, while Chomsky viewed the child as equipped with the requisite knowledge from the beginning, only needing time to let that knowledge unfold. Chomsky held that knowledge is largely inborn, part of the individual's birthright, a form of innate ideas existing in the realm of nature. Piaget's view saw knowledge as conceived as a product of living in an environment, a series of messages of nurture transmitted by other individuals and one's surrounding culture. It could be expressed as genetic versus cultural contributions, or nurture versus nature.

These arguments have a relationship to the deductive versus inductive ways of learning, and related ideas which are addressed in the GDC, and developed more fully by Lonergan. They are also reflected in the concepts of unfolding or teaching, as addressed further below.

Gardner studied artistic development in children. In most areas of development, he observed that youngsters get better, more skilled, more sophisticated with age, but this uni-linear



portrait does not do the arts justice. Children display great artistic talent in their very early years, and the years 5-7 are like a golden age, after which there tends to be a falling off, followed by an improvement in the years preceding adolescence, in some young people, but most do not develop the promise shown in their early years. This developmental picture has led some scholars to speak of U-shaped curve in the artistic development. Gardner also observed large individual differences between children and their ability to express themselves through art.

Gardner addressed the theme of unfolding or teaching, in relation to the optimal training of artistic skills. In the unfolding perspective, the child is viewed as a seed, which contains all the necessary germs for eventual artistic virtuosity, and the need is primarily to shield the young from negative influences and pernicious forces in the society, so that the child's inborn talents can flower. Other than providing a comfortable setting and minimal equipment, the teacher does little that is active; his task is preventive rather than prescriptive.

The opposite point of view, which emphasises a training, directive or skills approach, holds that the young child, even one displaying considerable promise, requires firm guidance and active intervention on the part of more knowledgeable adults. Proficiency in the arts requires the attainment of many highly intricate skills, ones that can be acquired only under the direction of a gifted teacher or practising artist.

While recognising the merits in each of these two approaches, Gardner does not propose some kind of golden mean. Rather he suggests that in line with the U-shaped development curve of artistic ability, that in the earlier stage, the 'golden age' of 5-7 years, the child should be left relatively free to develop his own talents, while in the later stages of

preadolescence to adolescence, there will be need for more training in skills, guiding and mentoring from skilled teachers of art.

### **The Importance of the Group**

Groups play an important function in the development processes of people. The same is true of catechesis, both for children where it fosters a rounded sociability, or for young people where groups are practically a vital necessity for personality formation. The same is true of adults where they promote a sense of dialogue and sharing as well as a sense of Christian co-responsibility. The catechist who participates in such groups and who evaluates and notes their dynamics recognises and plays the primary specific role of participating in the name of the Church as an active witness to the Gospel, capable of sharing with others the fruits of his mature faith as well as stimulating intelligently the common search for faith.<sup>478</sup>

**Thomas Groome** has developed an approach based on the work of Paulo Freire, Shared Christian Praxis<sup>479</sup>, which consists essentially in a Focussing Activity and five Movements.

In the Focussing Activity the educator, who acts as group leader, facilitates the group to select a topic or theme which is of interest to the participants. In Movement One participants express and engage on the theme. Movement Two involves reflection on the theme, relating it to life. In Movement Three the leader gives teaching to participants from the Christian ‘Story and Vision’ that relates to the theme. In Movement Four the participants appropriate

---

<sup>478</sup> *General Directory for Catechesis*, 159.

<sup>479</sup> Thomas H Groome, *Educating Faithful Christians in a Dissenting World*, p.249-258 in *Exploring Religious Education*, Patricia Kieran & Anne Hession – Editors. Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2008.

the wisdom of Christian faith to their lives in relation to the theme. In Movement Five participants decide their personal response to the spiritual wisdom they have learned from the Christian faith.

The Shared Christian Praxis approach responds in principle to several catechetical methodologies encouraged in the GDC<sup>480</sup>: the use of group work, integration of faith and life, the use of inductive and deductive methods, relating to human experience, and active participation of the catechised. One might also see limitations in the Shared Christian Praxis (SCP) approach. Working in groups has advantages but also inherent limitations and potential pitfalls, so is therefore very dependent on the group leaders, who would need to be skilled in group leading and teaching, with a thorough knowledge of Catholic faith, which may not always be available. SCP gives priority to the inductive method. The component of deductive learning comes in Movement Three, but is related only to the topic selected; this could lead to participants learning of the Faith in a fragmentary way, rather than the comprehensive and organic knowledge that would be aim in a deductive method. Giving greater attention to the deductive method would harmonise well with the Church's mandated 'pedagogy of God' based on divine Revelation, and also with respected scholar Bernard Lonergan, who accords greater importance and chronological priority to the deductive ('the way of heritage') over the inductive ('the way of achievement'), as noted above. Application of Shared Christian Praxis might helpfully be preceded or paralleled by a programme to teach the Catholic faith, based on Scripture and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which would also encourage participants to study the Word of God and Church teaching for themselves.

---

<sup>480</sup> *General Directory for Catechesis, 1997.* 116, 118, 145, 150-153, 157, 159.

## **The Role of the Catechist / Teacher**

No methodology, no matter how well tested, can dispense with the person of the catechist in every phase of the catechetical process. The charism given to him by the Spirit, a solid spirituality and transparent witness of life, constitutes the soul of every method. Only his own human and Christian qualities guarantee a good use of texts and other work instruments. The catechist is essentially a mediator. He facilitates communication between the people and the mystery of God, between subjects among themselves, as well as with the community. The personal relationship of the catechist with the subject is of crucial importance<sup>481</sup>.

Formation seeks to enable catechists to transmit the Gospel to those who desire to entrust themselves to Jesus Christ. The purpose of formation, therefore, is to make the catechist capable of communicating: the summit and centre of catechetical formation lies in an aptitude and ability to communicate the Gospel message<sup>482</sup>. The catechist requires a theological formation that is close to human experience and capable of correlating the various aspects of the Christian message with the concrete life of man both to inspire it and to judge it in the light of the Gospel<sup>483</sup>.

The catechist also acquires a knowledge of man and the reality in which he lives through the human sciences which have greatly developed in our own time. In pastoral care sufficient use should be made, not only of theological principles, and but also of secular findings, especially in the fields of psychology and sociology: in this way the faithful will be brought to a more mature living of the faith<sup>484</sup>. The formation of catechists must also cultivate technique,

---

<sup>481</sup> *General Directory for Catechesis, 1997.* 156.

<sup>482</sup> *Ibid.* 235.

<sup>483</sup> *Ibid.* 241.

<sup>484</sup> *General Directory for Catechesis, 1997.* 242.

because the catechist is an educator who facilitates maturation of the faith in those being catechised with the help of the Holy Spirit<sup>485</sup>.

There are very many books and reference works that are used in the training of teachers in secular settings that are helpful in training of catechists and religious educators.<sup>486</sup>

**Jean Piaget** addressed the training of teachers<sup>487</sup>. In looking at the training of primary school staff Piaget raises the question as to whether teachers should be trained in a completely separate teacher training Institute, or in a university environment. He would generally favour the university environment because of the broader education, but recognises that the separate Institute is often more easy to organise. In relation to secondary school teachers he notes that the training at university level is normal, which he approves. He notes the importance of psychological instruction up to the same level as that bearing directly on the subject that is to be taught. However, this psycho-pedagogical training is much more difficult to obtain for secondary teachers, as compared with the situation for primary teachers.

**Ned Flanders** developed an interesting and innovative approach to analysing, assessing and improving the performance of teachers, which he terms 'interaction analysis'<sup>488</sup>.

Flanders focused on interactions between teachers and pupils involving verbal communication only. He identified ten key categories of verbal interaction. There are seven categories for the teacher, two for the pupils, and one of silence. The categories are grouped

---

<sup>485</sup> Ibid. 244.

<sup>486</sup> One such example is: Gilbert Highet, *The Art of Teaching*. London: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1951.

<sup>487</sup> Howard E Gruber – Editor, *The Essential Piaget*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977.

<sup>488</sup> Ned A Flanders, *Analysing Teaching Behavior*. Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 1970.

into response and initiation. The author accepts that these are by no means the only categories of interaction between teacher and pupil, but that these are the particular helpful categories that have been identified for the purposes of interaction analysis, which might lead to relevant improvements in teacher performance.

In application of the technique an observer watches what is going on in the classroom, identifies and records the different categories of interaction, and then these results are subsequently decoded, analysed and applied in various ways, with increasing sophistication. Flanders makes use of the technique known as ‘statistical sampling’, which has been applied and proven in many other situations.

Flanders correlated interaction analysis with teacher and pupil performance, accepting the principle that it is good for teachers to encourage pupil ideas and initiative. Patterns of interaction between teacher and pupils were explored in order to understand better what is going on, and to seek ways in which teaching practice may be improved. Initial studies revealed rigidity in teacher interaction, with little encouragement of pupil involvement and response.

Flanders provided guidelines on ways in which the results of interaction analysis could help in professional self-development of teachers, develop strategies to promote pupil initiation, and in general help others to change their teaching behaviour.

## **4.2 Programme Pedagogy**

It has been noted above in Section 2 that the principal reference for the *pedagogical aspects* of Catholic catechesis is the *General Directory for Catechesis, 1997*, (GDC) issued by the

Vatican's Congregation for the Clergy, which updated the earlier *General Catechetical Directory, 1971*, (GCD). The GCD uses the term 'pedagogy' to mean the overall educational approach and strategy; specific educational methods, methodologies and techniques are then employed to put the overall 'pedagogy' into effect.

The Programme is not explicit about its 'pedagogy'. However, there is the equivalent of a pedagogy outlined in the Information for teachers in Books 1 through 4, under the heading, 'Process Followed in the Lessons', on the following pages: Alive-O 1, page: XIV-XV; Alive-O 2, page: XIV-XV; Alive-O 3, page: XXX-XXXI; Alive-O 4, page: XXXV-XXXVI.

The Process presented has three steps: Focus, Explore/Reflect, Response.

The first step is to focus on particular experiences which are part of the pupils' lives; the examples given of these experiences are all expressed in human terms, and do not encompass any spiritual experience.

The second step involves reflecting on that experience, which may involve activities such as listening to a story, drawing pictures, acting out drama, or engaging in a craft activity. It is hoped that this will help the pupils understand their feelings, and help them to become reflective people, becoming aware of the presence and action of God in their lives and in the world around them. The Christian story is explored as it sheds light on their experience.

The third step is encouraging the pupils to express what they have learnt, how it affects them, and what it means for their own life. They are also encouraged to act in accordance with what they have learnt.

There is merit in this process, to the extent that it focuses on experience and seeks to relate this to God, and what it means for the pupils' lives. However, it does appear to have limitations. Focusing primarily on human experience as a way to learning about God can only lead as far as a knowledge of the existence of a personal God, and that is not without difficulty even for adults<sup>489</sup>. Knowledge of Christianity can only come through divine Revelation<sup>490</sup>. The GDC acknowledges the place of experience in catechesis as a way of understanding the Faith better and applying it in one's life, but it does not propose human experience as a primary source and foundation for catechesis<sup>491</sup>.

Book 3 adds to the 'Process Followed in the Lessons': 'Sometimes important information needs to be given to the children, and because of the nature of this information it cannot be readily elicited from them. In this situation the programme presents such content under the heading "Did You Know?"' (This presumably refers to the question and answer information provided in Pupil's and Teachers Book's under the heading 'Now You Know'). Most of the Questions and Answers provide simple information about the Christian faith, which is good; however, it would be helpful to advise teachers that this kind of information could never be elicited from the pupils, but is available only through divine Revelation.

The Church teaches that the essential pedagogy for Catholic catechesis is the 'pedagogy of God', based on divine Revelation, which is the 'source and model of the pedagogy of the faith'<sup>492</sup>. Books 5 through 8 do not have any Information for teachers under the heading 'Process Followed in the Lessons', nor any other explicit reference to the pedagogy being

---

<sup>489</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 47.

<sup>490</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 50.

<sup>491</sup> *General Directory for Catechesis*, 152-153.

<sup>492</sup> *Ibid.* 139-147.



followed. However, the approach in Books 5 through 8 tends to focus more on Scripture, the teaching of the Church, and other Christian information which comes from divine Revelation. It would be helpful for all eight Years of the Programme to set out clearly and implement an educational approach and process which is the 'Pedagogy of God', following the excellent guidance in the GDC.

### **4.3 Programme Materials and Methodologies**

The Church does not have a particular method for catechesis, but rather encourages a diversity of methods and methodologies, in the light of the pedagogy of God. The GDC provides helpful guidelines on methodology.<sup>493</sup>

The Programme employs a comprehensive range of materials and methodologies. The principal materials employed are: for each Year there is a Pupil's Book, a Teacher's Book, a pupil's Workbook, a video, and an audiotape or CD with songs. Contained within these materials are: songs, hymns, stories, poems, illustrations, liturgies and para-liturgies, prayers, games, activities, discussions and drama. Many of these aspects of the Programme have already been addressed in Section 3 above in the analysis of the content of the Programme; other elements of the materials and methodologies are addressed below.

The Pupil's Books are attractively presented, with good layout and full-colour illustrations on most pages. (The illustrations are analysed further below). The Pupil's Books are low on content relative to the Teacher's Books, which are quite extensive and contain most of the

---

<sup>493</sup> *General Directory for Catechesis*, 118, 148-162.

Programme material. Pupil's Books 1 through 4 each have 50 pages. Normally a page, corresponding to a week's lesson, contains an illustration and a brief text; in Pupil's Book 4 the text is mainly questions without answers. Pupil's Books 5 through 8 are longer (64 to 97 pages) and contain more text, but the majority of the lesson material is still contained in the relevant Teacher's Books. It would be more helpful to follow the practice of many other Catholic catechetical programmes, which include all the essential material to be taught to the pupils in the Pupil's Books, while the Teacher's Books contain advice and guidance for teachers on how to present the lessons; such a practice would have many benefits for pupils, teachers, parents, priests in the parish, and other interested parties.

Workbooks 1 through 4 have a Worksheet for each lesson. The Worksheet has a relevant illustration to be coloured in, and sometimes a simple exercise. Years 5 through 8 also have Workbooks with a Worksheet for each lesson; these Worksheets normally have a more developed exercise, consisting of writing in something, un-jumbling words, during a crossword puzzle, etc., also with an opportunity to colour in the illustration provided. For the benefit of parents at home, all the Worksheets have a brief note explaining what the lesson is about, and a prayer for parents and pupils to say together. There are over two hundred illustrations in the Workbooks.

The concept of the Worksheet for pupils is a good one, as is the recommended practice of bringing the worksheet home to be shown to parents. The Worksheet would be more meaningful to parents if the Pupil's Books contained all the essential material of each lesson, and were available to the parents. The prayers provided are nearly all Programme-written prayers which will be unfamiliar to parents, and may also be new to the pupils unless teachers

had read them out during the lesson in the classroom. It would seem preferable to encourage parents and pupils to pray together the great prayers of the Church, and thereby contribute to the practice of family prayer.

The Teacher's Books are quite extensive, varying from 277 pages (Book 1) to 520 pages (Book 4), with a total of 3,200 pages and approximately 1.5million words. The Teacher's Books contain information for teachers alone, along with lesson material for the pupils. The Teacher's Books are very comprehensive, with lesson plans for each day of the week. There is probably significantly more material than the teachers could actually apply in the time available for religious education, and therefore teachers would need to be selective on the material they use. Given that most of the lesson material is in the Teacher's Books and not in the Pupil's Books, this puts a great burden on the teachers, requiring them to select the most important material and then present it well, otherwise pupils will miss out on most of what the Programme contains, because they have only a limited amount of material in their Pupil's Books. It would be helpful if all the essential information for pupils was contained in the Pupil's Books, and if the Teacher's Books then contained guidance to help teachers in the presentation of the lesson material, and perhaps some optional extra material which teachers could use at their discretion.

One might also suggest that the Teacher's Books should contain an index to Programme material for the year; this would be particularly helpful to teachers, but will also be helpful to other interested parties who wish to understand the Programme better. It would also be helpful to have an overall Index for the complete Programme.

The Teacher's Books could helpfully include Learning Assessment (see further comment below).

A Video accompanies each year of the Programme with material to illustrate and give added context to many of the lessons. The concept of such a video is very good. The technical quality of the Videos is high, and should prove attractive to the pupils. The value of the contents of the videos from the point of view of Catholic catechesis is somewhat variable; some are very good, as has been noted in the analysis in Section 3 above, but others not so helpful.

Illustrations figure prominently in the Pupil's Books, which is very good in principle, because there is much truth in the saying, 'a picture is worth a thousand words'. There are close to four hundred illustrations in total, which are generally attractive, colourful, and skilfully presented; most are specially prepared for Alive-O. Some of the illustrations are photographs but the great majority are artwork, mostly in a cartoon style which should be attractive to pupils. There is scope for greater focus on Christian themes, especially in the earlier books: less than twenty percent of the illustrations are on Christian themes in Books 1 and 2, while Christian and secular themes are addressed about equally in Books 3 and 4; the situation is improved in Books 5 through 8, where about three quarters of the illustrations are on Christian themes.

Many of the illustrations are helpful, some very good, but others could be significantly improved, most often in bringing out better the dimension of reverence and respect. While the cartoon style of most of the illustrations could be attractive, the Christian imagination of the pupils would be served by greater use of illustrations from the great treasury of Christian art, such as included in Pupil's Book 6 (paintings of the Entry to Jerusalem, Last Supper, Crucifixion, and Resurrection), and Pupil's Book 8 (Rublev icon of the Trinity). It would also

be catechetically instructive to provide commentary in the Pupil's Books on these great works of art, such as is given in Teacher's Book 8 for the Rublev icon.

A large selection of Songs/Hymns is included in the Programme's lesson materials, more than forty songs on average per year. This is very good in principle, because music and song can be educationally very effective, especially when the music is attractive and tuneful, which is generally the case with the songs selected for the Programme. Songs can be important for memorization, because words of songs are generally more readily remembered than words of text.

Some individual songs have already been analysed above in Section 3: Programme Content.

The following are more general comments:

Most of the songs in Books 1 and 2 are devoted to themes that are secular or just slightly religious; the proportion that address specifically Christian themes, about fifteen percent, might helpfully be increased. The situation is more satisfactory with Books 3 and 4, where two-thirds of the songs address specifically Christian themes, and even more so in Books 5 through 8, where over ninety percent of the songs deal with specifically Christian themes.

The great majority of the songs, approximately eighty percent, are unique to the Programme.

Of the remaining twenty percent from traditional or other published sources, about half are likely to be found in use in our parish churches; this means that about ninety percent of the songs that the pupils are learning will probably be unfamiliar to home and parish.

This author considers that the musical quality of the songs in the Programme is generally high, and that many of the songs are satisfactory from the point of view of Catholic

catechesis, particularly among the songs that have been chosen from traditional and other published sources. Most of the Christian songs are reasonable in themselves, but the songs could make a better contribution to pupil learning by inclusion of important elements of the Catholic faith that do not find expression in the songs selected. There also appears scope for greatly increasing the proportion of songs from other published sources; there is a wide range of songs available, both traditional and modern, attractive and in popular use, which could contribute effectively to Catholic catechesis and help link school with home and parish.

Memorisation plays a vital role in learning any topic; religious education should be no exception. Indeed, the Church affirms the use of memory, which has been an essential aspect of the pedagogy of the faith since the beginning of Christianity. ‘The blossoms of faith and piety do not grow in the desert places of a memoryless catechesis. What is essential is that texts and prayers that are memorised must at the same time be taken in and gradually understood in depth, in order to become a source of Christian life’.<sup>494</sup>

It has been noted above that pupils are likely to remember illustrations and the words of songs without any special effort on the part of teachers. The Programme has some advice for teachers on memorisation, but merely reading out text from the Teacher’s Book is unlikely to be very effective. Pupil memorisation is not an easy task, and for greatest effectiveness the text to be memorised should be in the Pupil’s Book, along with clear instructions on what should be memorised for the guidance of pupils and their parents.

There is nothing explicit about memorisation in Pupil’s Books 1 and 2. Short questions and answers are introduced into Pupil’s Books 3, 4 and 5 (from 10 to 26 questions in each Book);

---

<sup>494</sup> *Catechesi Tradendae*, 55; *General Directory for Catechesis*, 154.

these questions are generally reasonable and ideal for memorisation, but there is no instruction that they should be memorised.

Pupil's Book 6 continues the practice of questions and answers, now helpfully headed by the specific instruction, 'To be Learned'. Pupil's Books 7 and 8 continue with the heading, 'To be Learned', under which are: questions and answers, brief Scripture quotations, other quotations, short doctrine statements, and other items (Hail Holy Queen, Apostles' Creed, Prayer to the Holy Spirit, Gifts of the Spirit, Fruit of the Spirit, Seven Sacraments, Precepts of the Church, Decalogue, Acts of Faith, Love, Hope). All this is good, and should be helpful towards pupil memorisation.

Learning Assessment complements Memorisation in good educational practice, not excluding religious education. Learning assessment has many benefits, including: it can provide motivation for memorisation; it can provide feedback to teachers and others on the effectiveness of the educational programme; the instruments employed in learning assessment can show what results are being aimed at. There is no provision in the Programme for teachers to carry out learning assessment. Neither is there provision for inviting or facilitating parish clergy or Diocesan Advisers to carry out learning assessment with pupils. It would be extremely beneficial to all parties to introduce an appropriate and professional system of learning assessment. For models of learning assessment, one might look to other RE programmes<sup>495</sup> or catechetical journals<sup>496</sup>; the work done in assessment of secular

---

<sup>495</sup> A good example of learning assessment can be found in the *Image of God series* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994), Teacher's Resource Books, comprising a range of assessment instruments appropriate for primary school age pupils, including: multiple choice questions, matching, fill in the blanks, true or false, short answers, bible search, completion, essays, yes or no, drawings, fill in the blanks.

subjects at primary school level (Department of Education and Science; National Council for Curriculum and Assessment; Educational Research Centre at St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin) should also be of assistance.<sup>497</sup>

#### **4.4 School, Home and Parish Collaboration**

The Church teaches that catechesis is essentially a task of the entire Christian community<sup>498</sup>; family, diocese and parish, Catholic schools, Christian associations and movements, basic ecclesial communities. Parents carry the principal responsibility and authority in relation to education of their own children, including religious education; the family has been described as “the domestic Church”<sup>499</sup>. Traditionally Catholic parents have largely depended on Catholic schools to provide formal catechesis in the faith, while the home provided a lived experience of faith and family prayer, along with encouragement and exhortation in the practice of faith, attendance at the sacraments<sup>500</sup>. However, the challenge of modern conditions would indicate that parents should be more involved, while the role of grandparents is of growing importance.

The parish is the most important place in which the Christian community is formed and expressed; parish clergy have a vital interest and grave responsibility for the Catholic

---

<sup>496</sup> A good example is Joe Paprocki's series 'What's Your Catholic IQ?', which is aimed at helping both pupils and teachers. See the *Catechist* (Dayton, Ohio: Peter Li Inc.), January 2010, 44, 62.

<sup>497</sup> A particularly relevant publication is *Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum – Guidelines for Schools*. Dublin: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2007.

<sup>498</sup> *General Directory for Catechesis*, 219-220.

<sup>499</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, 11. *Familiaris Consortio*, 39. *General Directory for Catechesis*, 227. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1666.

<sup>500</sup> The experience of Pope Benedict is probably not atypical. In his family there was prayer at all meals, daily Mass where possible, the Rosary, and on Sundays the family went to church together. His parents relied on the catechesis he received in school, but there wasn't explicit religious education; it was given by family prayer and church attendance. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger. *Salt of the Earth – An Interview with Peter Seewald*. P.48-49. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997.



catechesis of primary school children, especially those attending Catholic primary schools. The Catholic school is a most important place for human and Christian formation, orienting the whole of human culture to the message of salvation.<sup>501</sup>

A study carried out in 1999 on Years 5 through 8 of the *Children of God* religious education series (which preceded the *Alive-O Programme*) found such large gaps between home, school and parish that it was published under the title '*Islands Apart*',<sup>502</sup>.

The role of the teacher is of vital importance.<sup>503</sup> The Information for teachers in the Teacher's Books, headed 'The Role of the Teacher', states that the school may have to make up for deficiencies in the home, but includes no advice to teachers on collaboration with parents or parish clergy. The Programme provides for invitation of parents and parish clergy to attend some prayer services, preparation rituals for the sacraments, and the celebration of the Sacraments. While this is good in principle, one might be concerned about the essentially passive role assigned to parents and priests, with the Programme providing detailed instructions and scripts as to what priests and parents should say and do.

One must also be concerned that the structure of the Programme is not conducive to collaboration between schools, home and parish. The Programme is essentially contained in the extensive Teacher's Books, which will rarely if ever be available to parents and priests. There is limited information in the Pupil's Books and Workbooks, which is the most that parents are likely to see about the Programme. Therefore parents, and probably priests too,

---

<sup>501</sup> *General Directory for Catechesis*, 73-76, 78-79, 253-260.

<sup>502</sup> Martin Kennedy, *Islands Apart*, Consultation Report, Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2000.

<sup>503</sup> 'There is no question in my mind that we need reliable and complete catechetical texts according to the age and condition of the respective catechumens, but more important than the text, much more important, is the teacher, the catechist. .... A well-prepared, devout catechist, who practices what he or she is preaching, is essential to the success of any catechetical instruction. It is not a question of "either a good catechism, or a good teacher," it is a question of both'. Silvio Cardinal Oddi, *The Right of the Catechized to the Truth*, p.18. Boston: Daughters of St Paul, 1984.

will have a very limited knowledge and understanding of what the pupils are learning, and therefore will not be in a position to be supportive and helpful. Almost total control of the Programme therefore rests with the school, which is hardly fair to parents and priests, and is also putting an undue burden on teachers.

As has been noted above, the great majority of the songs, hymns, stories, poems, illustrations, liturgies, prayers, games, activities, and lesson materials are specially written for and unique to the Programme, and are likely to be unfamiliar to parents/grandparents/guardians and to parish clergy. Rather than building collaboration, this may increase the separation of the 'island' of school from the 'islands' of home and parish.

A re-balancing of the Programme so that all essential information to be taught to the pupils is included in the Pupil's Books, the preference for materials that are familiar to home and parish (when suitable materials are available) rather than uniquely created by the Programme, and the introduction of a comprehensive and transparent system of Learning Assessment, should provide the foundation for meaningful collaboration by parents and parish clergy, and an easing of the burden on teachers.

## 5. SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

### SUMMARY

From earliest times the Church has attached great importance to catechesis, and this continues today. The Second Vatican Council gave great impetus to renewal of catechesis, as in other aspects of the life of the Church. There have many been many positive developments in Catholic catechesis since Vatican II, and there are today a wide range of references available for Catholic catechesis, which are informative, inspiring and authoritative. However, there have also been limitations in Catholic catechesis since Vatican II, to which the Church has drawn attention.

This study analyses the religious education programme in Ireland's Catholic primary schools, the *Alive-O Religion Programme* (hereinafter referred to as 'the Programme'), seeking to identify ways in which the Programme makes a positive contribution to Catholic catechesis, and how it might be strengthened. The Programme is published by Veritas Publications, and was progressively introduced over the years 1996 to 2004. The scope of this Analysis is limited to the Programme's published materials: Pupil's Books, Teacher's Books, Workbooks, audio and video tapes. The Teacher's Books contain mostly lesson material for pupils, but also some Information for teachers alone. The Analysis addresses both content and pedagogical aspects of the Programme.

The principal standards of reference for Catholic catechesis used in this Analysis are the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1992, and the *General Directory for Catechesis*, 1997.

The analysis criteria adopted are, for Content: Authenticity and Completeness, and for Pedagogical Aspects: Faithfulness to the Church's pedagogy and Educational effectiveness.

Revelation: The Programme addresses Revelation, giving particular attention to Scripture, both Old and New Testaments, teaching that the Bible is the Word of God. There is scope for strengthening the presentation of: salvation history; Sacred Tradition; the role of the Church's Magisterium; the truth of Scripture; the unity of both Old and New Testaments in the context of salvation history. In relation to the Old Testament the Programme addresses many relevant topics, e.g. creation; the call and covenant with Abraham; the call of Moses; the Exodus and Decalogue; Ruth; Elijah; Jeremiah; the anointing of David. The presentation could be strengthened by following a chronological sequence in the context of salvation history, and inclusion of some additional important topics, e.g. Noah and the Flood; the Tower of Babel; the sacrifice of Isaac; some indication of the wars and conflicts fought by and against the Chosen People; crossing of the Red Sea, manna and entry to the Promised Land; Samson; David and Goliath; the covenants with Adam and Eve, Noah and David; Solomon; the Babylonian Exile; Daniel.

The Trinity and God the Father: The Programme stresses that God is good and loving and is creator of all things. The teaching on the nature of God could be strengthened, e.g. by including that there is only one God, and that God is transcendent, omnipotent and eternal. There is teaching that God is Father, but there is scope for clarifying the difference between God and God the Father, especially as God is often imaged as mother and father.

Pupils are introduced from early in the Programme to the great Trinitarian prayers, the Sign of the Cross, and the Glory Be to the Father. They are taught about St Patrick using the

shamrock to teach about the Trinity, and there are lessons specifically devoted to the Trinity in the final Book. The teaching could be strengthened by including lessons on the Trinity much earlier in the Programme, and teaching that the Trinity does not mean that there are three different gods, but one God in three persons, each of whom is fully God, and that we can especially understand that God the Father is Creator, Jesus, God the Son, is our Redeemer, and God the Holy Spirit is our Sanctifier.

Creation: The Programme teaches pupils that God is creator of human beings and the material world; human beings are created in the image of God. The wonder, beauty and diversity of all God's creation are well expressed. There is teaching on the creation and Fall, based on Genesis 1-3. The teaching could be strengthened by including God's unseen creation: the human immortal soul, angels, both faithful and fallen. There is scope to bring out the Church's teaching on original sin, in the context of salvation history. The account of creation based on Genesis 1-3 comes late in the Programme, and could benefit from introduction much earlier. It could be helpful to bring out that human beings are the summit of God's creation, and all the material world is created for them.

Jesus Christ: The Programme appropriately gives considerable attention to Jesus in both lesson material for pupils and Information for teachers alone. The main events of Jesus' life are presented: Nativity, finding in the Temple, baptism in the Jordan by John the Baptist, call of the Apostles, entry to Jerusalem, the Last Supper, Passion and death on the cross, Resurrection and Ascension. It would be helpful to include the death of the Holy Innocents and the flight into Egypt, and also Jesus' Second Coming as Judge at the end of time. Jesus is presented as healer, teacher, shepherd, and worker of miracles. Jesus is presented as sent by God, but his identity as God the Son, Second Person of the Trinity, tends to be weak and

could be greatly strengthened. Jesus' mission is presented predominantly as to tell of God's love, and to teach by word and example how we should love God and others; the teaching could be greatly strengthened by inclusion of salvation history and Jesus' central role as Saviour of the human race from sin through his death on the cross. Several of Jesus' parables are included; some are well presented, but others could be greatly strengthened by including key elements that are omitted, and avoiding mixing up of different parables which is likely to cause confusion. The presentation of Jesus' teaching on children could be strengthened by showing that it was child-like humility that leads to greatness in the Kingdom of God, rather than the physical fact of childhood.

The Holy Spirit: The Programme teaches that: the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity; we receive the Holy Spirit at Baptism and Confirmation; the Holy Spirit helps us to live like Jesus and be his witnesses in the world; dove, breath and fire are all symbols of the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit came on the Apostles at Pentecost and inspired them with boldness, courage, and great love for one another in the first Christian community in Jerusalem. The teaching could be strengthened by bringing out clearly that the Holy Spirit is a distinct Divine Person, equal to the Father and Son; the Programme's presentations on the Holy Spirit tend to an understanding of a presence of God in human beings and the natural world.

The Church: The Programme brings out well the dimension of the Church as a unified body of people who love, support and care for each other (similar to the early Church as described in Acts 2:44-45, 3:42); however, the spiritual nature of the Church as established by Christ (as described in Acts 2:42-43, 3:43) could be strengthened. The image of the Church as the

Body of Christ is presented; the teaching could be strengthened by clarifying that this Body has a Head, who is Christ.

In relation to the structure of the Church there is some good teaching with the aid of the videos on the church building. There is some information on the parish and diocese, but this could be much strengthened by explaining the nature of the Catholic Church and her structure. Also it could be helpful to include the role played by the lay movements and organisations in the life of the Church.

In relation to the history of the Church there is a good account of the early Christian community in Jerusalem, in particular how the members shared all their belongings and talents. The presentation could be strengthened by showing that this was a response to the 'Kerygma' preached by Peter, that the 'breaking of bread' is the Eucharist, the importance of the teaching of the Apostles, and the continuity of the Catholic Church with the first Christian community. The coming of Christianity to Ireland through St Patrick is well presented, including development of monasteries; this could be strengthened by including the extraordinary missionary activity of the monks in bringing the Christian faith back to Britain and Europe. There is a simple presentation of the history of the Church through the ages, which is good in principle, but could be more balanced in relation to the Catholic Church, to which it is unduly negative.

Mary and the Saints: The Programme covers the great events of the life of Mary, which paralleled the life of Jesus: Annunciation, Visitation, Nativity, Jesus growing up in Nazareth, the finding of Jesus in the Temple, the wedding feast at Cana, Mary's presence at the cross and at Pentecost. There are some ways in which the teachings might be strengthened: Mary's virginity could be brought out; some illustrations might be amended that suggest that Mary

was pregnant at the time of the Annunciation, and had other children besides Jesus; the Hail Mary prayer could be explained and connected to the Scriptural greetings of the Angel Gabriel and Elizabeth; Mary's key role in salvation history and significance of her 'yes' could be better brought out; Jesus giving John to Mary, and Mary to John at the cross, and its significance; approved apparitions of Mary and places of pilgrimage.

There are good presentations on the saints in general, on several individual Irish and other saints. The lessons might be strengthened by clarifying the difference between the Feasts of All Saints and All Souls, and by including missionaries and martyrs among the saints selected.

The Last Things (Eschatology): The Feast of All Souls receives much attention; it would be helpful to explain how the Feast differs from the Feast of All Saints, and that we cannot presume that everyone who dies automatically goes to heaven. The Programme covers purification in Purgatory after death, the joy of heaven, and that we can only cut ourselves off from heaven by rejecting God. The teaching could be strengthened by a clear presentation on the communion of saints and how our prayers, especially the sacrifice of the Mass, can lessen the suffering of souls undergoing purification in Purgatory. It would be helpful to state that it is through the death and resurrection of Jesus, and not only his resurrection, that we can hope for heaven; that immediately after death the immortal soul will be judged by Christ, leading to heaven or hell, and that Jesus will come again at the end of time, his Second Coming, to judge the living and dead in a 'general judgement' (employing an appropriate pedagogy), when the bodies of the dead will rise and be reunited with their souls, and the material universe itself will be transformed. It would be helpful to include that Catholics celebrate



funerals to pray for the person who has died, especially at the Eucharist when celebrated, and to comfort relatives and friends.

Liturgy and Seasons of the Church: The Seasons of the Church Year are re-visited many times in the Programme, going into greater depth and detail in parallel with the growing of ability of the pupils to understand. The Programme covers Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter and Pentecost, saying that the Church Year follows the life, death and resurrection of Jesus; it would be helpful to show that the Liturgical Year celebrates the full sweep of salvation history from Creation right through to the Second Coming of Jesus at the end of time. It would also be helpful to give greater attention to Sunday, the Lord's Day, and its importance for the Church's liturgy.

Sacraments: It would be helpful to present clearly the Church's teaching on grace in general, and sacramental graces in particular. It is good to note the importance of faith in responding to the sacraments, but it would be helpful to indicate that, while the fruitfulness of the sacraments depends on the disposition of the recipients, nevertheless the grace of each sacrament acts by the very fact of being performed. It is good to address symbols and their importance in the sacraments; it would be helpful to point out that each sacrament has a particular outward sign or symbol, which is essential for the performance of the sacrament and cannot be changed. It would be helpful to give a simple definition or explanation of what a sacrament is, which might include the following elements: The seven sacraments were instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church to give grace, which is divine life won for us by the death and resurrection of Christ, and the sending of the Holy Spirit. Each sacrament has a minister and an outward sign which signifies and makes efficaciously present, by the

action of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, the grace proper to each sacrament. The ordained ministerial priesthood plays an important part in the sacraments.

Baptism: The Programme emphasises Baptism as the ritual where the Christian community gathers to welcome a new member. It would be helpful to present teaching on Baptism in the context of salvation history and introduced earlier, during the years of preparation for First Penance and First Communion.

The teaching could be strengthened by presenting that the essential rite of Baptism consists in immersing in water or pouring water on the person's head, while calling on God the Holy Trinity, saying 'I baptise you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit'. The principal symbolisms of the water of Baptism, should be presented, while indicating that the other parts of the Rite of Baptism, including the use of oil of anointing, candle and white garment, help develop meaning and significance, but are not essential to the Sacrament.

It would be helpful to present clearly and explain the various parts of the Church's Rite of Baptism, and to state that Baptism confers graces, which come from the saving death of Christ on the cross, and it is by those graces that Baptism brings forgiveness of original sin and all personal sins, birth into the new life as children of God the Father, and incorporation into the Church, the Body of Christ. Baptism also gives special graces of the Holy Spirit which empower the baptized to love and serve God, to grow in faith, hope and charity, and to live a good Christian life.

The teaching could also helpfully include that: Baptism places a spiritual mark or 'character' on the soul, which is why we can only be baptised once. At Baptism each person is given a

Christian name, which is usually the name of a saint, who can be a model and example. Baptism is usually given by the priest, but in emergency, any person can baptize.

Confirmation: The Programme presents: the history of the Sacrament of Confirmation; renewal of Baptismal Promises; Confirmation names and sponsors; the rite of administration of the Sacrament by the Bishop, including the anointing with oil, laying on of hands, and the words spoken; gifts and fruit of the Spirit. The accompanying video has good presentations of the Blessing of the Oil of Chrism, and the celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation itself.

The teaching might be strengthened by inclusion of the following: Confirmation completes the grace of Baptism. The Sacrament of Confirmation gives us graces of the Holy Spirit, which bind us with Christ and with the Church, and strengthen us to bear witness to Christ and to spread and defend the faith. Confirmation, like Baptism, puts a permanent spiritual mark on the soul, so that we can receive Confirmation only once. A candidate for Confirmation must have attained the age of reason, professed Christian faith, be in the state of grace, have the intention of receiving the sacrament, and be prepared to be a disciple and witness to Christ.

Eucharist and the Mass: The Programme gives considerable attention to the Eucharist, which is appropriate considering the great importance of this Sacrament. There is much useful information, but also scope for strengthening, in line with the following suggestions:

The Liturgy of the Mass is presented with a few different structures, which vary from the structure presented in the CCC. It would be helpful to introduce pupils to a structure of the Mass in harmony with Church teaching, involving -

- ❖ The *Liturgy of the Word*, with the gathering of the people and penitential rite, followed by the Scripture readings, homily and general intercessions;
- ❖ The *Liturgy of the Eucharist*, with the presentation of the bread and wine, consecration by the priest (which is the heart of the Eucharistic celebration), communion and concluding rite.

There is teaching on the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist; it would be helpful to use the term ‘transubstantiation’, which best describes the change of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood, soul and divinity, of Christ. Christ is present whole and entire under the species of both the bread and the wine, and their parts; breaking the bread does not divide Christ.

There is emphasis on human attitudes and values that will help pupils participate in the Eucharist. It would be helpful to bring out the essentially spiritual nature of the Sacrament offered by Christ, and our participation in it.

The emphasis tends to be on the Mass as a shared meal; it would be important to teach that the Mass is the sacrament of the sacrifice of the cross. The same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody manner on the cross for our salvation is offered in an unbloody manner on the altar at Mass. The Eucharist is the source and summit of the Church’s life, because it contains Jesus, God the Son, himself.

There is reference to priests presiding at Mass; it would be helpful to clarify that it is only priests, who have validly received the Sacrament of Holy Orders, that can preside at the Eucharist and consecrate the bread and wine so that they become the Body and Blood of Christ.

In relation to receiving Communion, it would be helpful to state that the Eucharist gives grace which increases our union with Jesus, forgives our venial sins, preserves us from grave sins, and strengthens the unity and love of the members of the Church. Anyone who desires to receive Christ in Eucharistic communion must be in the state of grace. Anyone aware of having sinned mortally must not receive communion without having received absolution in the sacrament of Penance.

It would also strengthen the teaching to include that the faithful are obliged to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days. The Church encourages more frequent, even daily, attendance at Mass and reception of Holy Communion. The Church encourages visits to the Blessed Sacrament for prayer and adoration.

Penance: The Programme presents the Rite of Celebration of the Sacrament of Penance, Rites 1 and 2, with preference for Rite 2, and several Reconciliation Services based on Rite 2. It would be more helpful to reflect the Church's preference, and give comprehensive teaching on Rite 1.

The teaching includes that the priest administers the Sacrament; it would be helpful to clarify that the priest in the sacrament of Penance stands in the place of Christ, and that through the

grace of the sacrament of Holy Orders, he gives us Jesus' forgiveness when he says the words of absolution, through the merits of Jesus' redemptive sacrifice on the cross.

Other items that should help strengthen the lessons could include:

Before Penance we should examine our consciences to come to know our sins, reflecting on the Word of God, especially the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes.

In the Sacrament of Penance the main requirements of the penitent are,

- ❖ To have sincere repentance
- ❖ To confess sins to the priest
- ❖ To make reparation by carrying out the penance given by the priest, and making all reasonable efforts to repair any harm done to others by sins committed, e.g. return of stolen goods, restore reputation of someone slandered.

In Penance we are bound to confess all mortal sins that have not previously been confessed, which remains the only ordinary means of reconciliation with God and the Church. The confession of venial sins, without being necessary in itself, is nevertheless strongly recommended by the Church.

In addition to forgiveness of sins, the graces of the Sacrament of Penance reconcile us with God and the Church, bring peace, give spiritual strength to live a good Christian life and to avoid sin.

The Church requires that we go to the sacrament of Penance at least once per year, but regular more frequent confession, even of venial sins only, is strongly recommended.

Anointing of the Sick: The Programme describes the administration of the Sacrament, through which the Church expresses Jesus' care for those who are sick. The teaching could helpfully be strengthened in the following ways. While it is good to mention the participation of the community, it could be made clear that it is the priest (or bishop) who confers the Sacrament through the grace of Holy Orders, and not the Christian community as a whole. It would be important to state that the Sacrament has a special grace, which unites the sick person to the Passion of Christ, brings strength, peace, and courage to endure suffering in a Christian manner, brings forgiveness of sins if the person has been unable to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and may bring healing from the illness.

Holy Orders: The Programme addresses Holy Orders in Year 8, presenting some good information about the Sacrament. The Sacrament of Holy Orders might helpfully be introduced much earlier in the Programme, especially when teaching about Eucharist and Penance.

The teaching on Holy Orders might also be strengthened by including the following:

The call to priesthood comes from God, and must be submitted to the judgement of the Church who will decide on suitability to be ordained. The Church is bound by the choice of Christ to ordain only men to the priesthood. The priest acts in the person of Christ our Saviour, the Head of the Church. Bishops and priests are normally not married, so they can give themselves entirely to God and the people they serve; celibacy is also an imitation of Christ, and of the Blessed Virgin.

The Sacrament of Holy Orders was instituted by Christ at the Last Supper, when he established the Twelve Apostles as the bishops to lead and take care of the Church. Priests receive through ordination the gift of a 'sacred power' to celebrate Mass, proclaim the Gospel and consecrate the Eucharist, to forgive sins in Confession, and to administer the Sacrament of the Sick. Priests normally administer Baptism, and officiate at the Sacrament of Marriage. Ordination, like Baptism and Confirmation, can be received only once.

There are three degrees of the ordained ministry: bishop, priest and deacon. The bishop is a successor of the apostles and head of his diocese. He also shares in responsibility for the whole Church, under the authority and in union with the Pope, the successor of St Peter. The bishop has the fullness of priestly ordination, including the sacramental power to ordain priests, deacons and other bishops, and to administer Confirmation. Deacons are ordained for tasks of service; permanent deacons are men who may be married.

Marriage: The Programme has a reasonable account on Marriage in Year 8, which might be strengthened by including the following:

By performing his first miracle at the wedding feast of Cana, Jesus gave a sign confirming Marriage as a Sacrament of the Church. The graces of Christ particular to the Sacrament of Marriage help husband and wife to love and care for each other, to bring each other closer to God on the way to eternal life, and to love and educate their children in the Catholic Faith. Jesus' love for his Church is a model of love for all married couples. Catholic weddings are normally celebrated during a Nuptial Mass, the couple are the ministers of the sacrament for each other, while the priest blesses the couple and acts as a witness for the Church. The Holy



Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph in Nazareth is a model for the Christian family home, which is rightly called "the domestic church."

Life in Christ – Morality: In relation to morality in general, the Programme emphasises as foundation the natural goodness of children and development of human maturity; while accepting the innate goodness of human beings as created by God, the teaching would be strengthened by including original sin and its effects, which introduce an inclination to evil in everyone, including children, and we need the grace and mercy of God, which was won for us by the redemptive sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. The Programme's Act of Sorrow is not unreasonable, but could helpfully be replaced by an Act of Contrition, in harmony with the tradition of the Church.

Other elements that could helpfully be covered in relation to morality in general include: temptation, free will, the Christian understanding on feelings and emotions, conscience, virtue, vice, the nature of sin, mortal and venial sin, the natural moral law, grace including sanctifying and actual graces, the authority of the Church's moral teaching.

In relation to moral laws and commandments, the Programme helpfully presents the Beatitudes (Mt.5:1-12), but greater attention is given to the Programme's alternative beatitudes-like list, 'Be Blessed'. It would be more helpful to focus solely on the Gospel version of the Beatitudes. The Ten Commandments are given, but in different versions, with main attention given to the Programme's version; it would be more helpful to give only the version in the CCC. There is somewhat limited teaching given on some of the Commandments; it would be helpful to give teaching on the meaning of all the commandments, in harmony with the CCC. A number of other guidelines and codes of

behaviour are presented, including those prepared by the pupils themselves; it would be helpful to clarify the superiority of the law of God.

Prayer: The Programme provides for prayer in the great majority of lessons, which is very good in principle. The great prayers of the Church (especially the Sign of the Cross, Glory Be to the Father, Our Father, Hail Mary) are all used in the prayer times; it would be helpful to develop the meaning of these great prayers, especially the Our Father in harmony with the practice of the CCC.

The Programme provides for symbols to be displayed during the prayer-times, which is good in principle. Every prayer time uses a lighted candle; Christian symbols are sometimes used, but more often various secular symbols. It would be more helpful to always use a Christian symbol, particularly a cross or crucifix, to which other Christian symbols could be added for special occasions, which could help pupils with prayer and also add to their catechesis.

The Programme's prayer times include many prayers of thanksgiving, petition and intercession. These prayers tend to be preponderantly 'horizontal'; the balance might helpfully be changed to focus more on spiritual matters. It would also be helpful to teach about God's response to prayers of petition and intercession, explaining that God always hears our prayers and responds in the way he knows is best for us, which might not always be the way we would like.

The Programme seeks to introduce pupils to meditation, which is reasonable in principle. It might be helpful if there were less attention (particularly in the early years of the Programme) on the technique of achieving mental detachment with focus on self and secular things, and

more attention to meditative and contemplative prayer as taught by the Church, focusing on Christian matters so that one might conform one's life better to the way of the Lord, and experience silent communication with God.

The Programme's prayer-times include more than a hundred para-liturgical rituals, about half of which could be considered 'para-sacramental'. The CCC does not include such para-liturgical rituals in its teaching on the liturgy, sacraments or prayer. There might be a risk that pupils will be confused and see no essential difference between these para-liturgies and the unique nature of the sacraments and liturgy of the Church; it might be more prudent to omit these para-liturgies.

The Programme's teaching on prayer might also be strengthened by including the following:

Christian prayer is primarily Trinitarian; we normally pray in the Holy Spirit through Christ to the Father. We may also pray directly to the Father, Jesus or the Holy Spirit. The Christian family – the “domestic church” – is the first place for learning to pray, especially at family prayer times and going to the church as a family. We can experience difficulties and temptations in the practice of prayer, such as lack of faith, distractions and dryness; the remedy lies in faith, giving our hearts fully to God and persevering in prayer. Memorisation is important for catechesis in prayer, especially for children and young people, accompanied with explanation of the meaning of the prayers.

Pedagogical Aspects: The *General Directory for Catechesis* uses the term ‘pedagogy’ to mean the overall educational approach and strategy; specific educational methods, methodologies and techniques are then employed to put the overall ‘pedagogy’ into effect.

The GDC teaches that the essential pedagogy for Catholic catechesis is the 'pedagogy of God', which is based on divine Revelation. Books 1 through 4 of the Programme set out a process based on human experience and the natural world; the approach in Books 5 through 8 tends to focus more on Scripture, the teaching of the Church, and other Christian information which comes from divine Revelation. It would be helpful for all eight Years of the Programme to set out clearly and implement an educational approach and process which is the 'Pedagogy of God', in accordance with the guidelines of the GDC.

The Church does not have a particular method for catechesis, but rather encourages a diversity of methods and methodologies, in the light of the pedagogy of God. The Programme employs a comprehensive range of materials and methodologies. The principal materials employed are: for each Year there is a Pupil's Book, a Teacher's Book, a pupil's Workbook, a video, and an audiotape or CD with songs. Contained within these materials are: teachings, songs, hymns, stories, poems, illustrations, liturgies and para-liturgies, prayers, games, activities, discussions and drama.

The Pupil's Books are attractively presented, but low on content, while the extensive Teacher's Books contain most of the Programme material. It would be more helpful to include all the essential material to be taught to the pupils in the Pupil's Books, while the Teacher's Books would contain advice and guidance for teachers on how to present the lessons; such an arrangement would benefit pupils, teachers, parents, priests in the parish, and others.

The great majority of the songs, hymns, stories, poems, illustrations, liturgies, prayers, games, activities, and lesson materials are specially written for and unique to the Programme, and are likely to be unfamiliar to parents/grandparents/guardians and to parish clergy. The

Programme is essentially contained in the extensive Teacher's Books, which will rarely if ever be available to parents and priests, with little information in the Pupil's Books and Workbooks. The structure of the Programme therefore gives almost total control to the school, putting undue burden on teachers and marginalising parents, parish clergy and others. Complete faithfulness to the teaching of the Church and a re-balancing of the Programme so that all essential information to be taught to the pupils is included in the Pupils Books, with preference for materials that are familiar to home and parish (when suitable materials are available) rather than uniquely created by the Programme, should provide the foundation for meaningful collaboration by parents and parish clergy, and an easing of the burden on teachers.

Learning assessment has many benefits, including: motivation for memorisation; feedback to teachers and others on the effectiveness of the educational programme; the instruments employed in learning assessment can show what results are being aimed at. There is no provision in the Programme for teachers to carry out learning assessment; neither is there provision for inviting or facilitating parish clergy or Diocesan Advisers to carry out learning assessment with pupils. It would be beneficial to all parties to introduce an appropriate and professional system of learning assessment.

It would be helpful to have a subject and theme Index for each Year of the Programme in the relevant Teacher's Book, and an Index for the Programme as a whole.

It would be reassuring if the Programme could give a statement that it received the required pre-publication approval from the Congregation for the Clergy on behalf of the Holy See,<sup>504</sup> especially in light of concerns raised about oversight of the Programme.<sup>505</sup>

## CONCLUSION

This Analysis has achieved its aim carrying out an in-depth study of the religious education programme in Ireland's Catholic primary schools – the *Alive-O Programme* – setting out the ways in which the Programme promotes the Church's vision for Catholic catechesis, and also identifying shortcomings and ways in which the programme might be strengthened. This should facilitate an enhanced understanding of the Programme for all involved in its current application – parents, pupils, teachers, parish clergy and others – which should prove of assistance to them in making best use of the Programme in the interests of the education in the Faith of Catholic primary school pupils.

The Chairman of the Catechetics Commission of the Irish Episcopal Conference announced in 2002 that a new syllabus and programme would be developed to succeed the *Alive-O Programme*<sup>506</sup>: this Analysis should prove helpful to the Episcopal Catechetics Commission, to those tasked with developing the new programme, and to all who may wish to make a contribution to this new initiative, which is so vitally important for the future of the Catholic Faith in Ireland.

---

<sup>504</sup> *The Code of Canon Law*. London: Collins Liturgical Publications, 1983. 775§2; *General Directory for Catechesis*, 285.

<sup>505</sup> Shirley Kelly, 'A New Start for Religion'. *Books Ireland*, 1997, 321. Dublin: Jeremy Addis.

<sup>506</sup> Hermann Kelly, *Changes to RE on the Way*, *The Irish Catholic*, November 28 2002, 13.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### PRIMARY SOURCES

*The Bible*, in reputable translations, e.g. Jerusalem Bible, Revised Standard Version.

*Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Dublin: Veritas Publications, 1994.

*Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*. London: Catholic Truth Society, 2006.

Congregation for the Clergy. *General Directory for Catechesis*. Dublin: Veritas Publications, 1997.

Congregation for the Clergy. *General Catechetical Directory*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1971.

Declaration on Education, *Gravissimum Educationis*, 1965. Flannery, Austin. Ed. *Vatican Council II, The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*. Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1975.

Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, 1965. Flannery, Austin, Ed. *Vatican Council II, The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*. Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1975.

Irish Episcopal Commission on Catechetics. *Alive-O Series*. Dublin: Veritas Publications, 1996-2004.

John Paul II. *Catechesi Tradendae - On Catechesis in Our Time*. Apostolic Exhortation, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1979.

Paul VI. *Evangelii Nuntiandi - On Evangelisation in the Modern World*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1975.

Paul, VI. *Credo of the People of God*. Motu Proprio, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1968.

Pontifical Biblical Commission. *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*. Document, London: SCM Press Ltd, 1995.

Pontifical Council for the Family. *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*. Oxford: Family Publications, 1996.

*The Code of Canon Law*. London: Collins Liturgical Publications, 1983.

## SECONDARY SOURCES

### **A. Church Documents**

Benedict XVI, Pope. *Caritas in Veritate* - On Integral Human Development in Charity and Truth. www.vatican.va. 29 June 2009.

Pope, Benedict XVI. *Spe Salvi - On Christian Hope*. Encyclical Letter, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2007.

Benedict XVI, Pope. "Address of Benedict XVI to Irish Bishops on their Ad Limina Visit." *Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference*, www.irishbishops.ie. 28 October 2006.

—. "On the Priest's Mission as Teacher." *Zenit.org*. 14 April 2010.

Congregation for Catholic Education. *Consecrated Persons and Their Mission in Schools* . Reflections and Guidelines, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

Congregation for Catholic Education. *Educational Guidance in Human Love -- Outlines for Sex Education*. Document, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1983.

Congregation for Catholic Education. *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith*. Document, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1982.

Congregation for Catholic Education. *The Catholic School*. Document, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1977.

Congregation for Catholic Education. *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*. Document, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997.

—. *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School - Guidelines for Reflection and Renewal*. Vatican City : Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1988.

—. "Religious Education in Schools Fits into the Evangelising Mission of the Church ." *Zenit.org*, 8 September 2009.

Congregation for Divine Worship & the Discipline of the Sacrament. *Redemptionis Sacramentum - On certain matters to be observed or to be avoided regarding the Most Holy Eucharist*. Instruction, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2004.

Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *Circular Letter Concerning the Integrity of the Sacrament of Penance*, 2. 20<sup>th</sup> March 2000. www.vatican.va

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Dominus Jesus - On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church*. Declaration, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2000.

Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples. *Guide for Catechists -- Vocational, Formative and Promotional Orientation of Catechists*. Document, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1993.

Flannery, Austin. Genl Editor, *Vatican Council II, The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*. Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1975.



Irish Episcopal Commission on Catechetics. *Children of God series*. Dublin: Veritas Publications, 1984-1987.

John Paul II. *Ecclesia in Europa - On Jesus Christ Alive in His Church, the Source of Hope for Europe*. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2003.

John Paul II. *Ex Corde Ecclesiae - On Catholic Universities*. Apostolic Constitution, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1990.

John Paul II. *Redemptoris Missio*. Encyclical, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1990.

Pius X. *Pascendi Dominici Gregis - On the Doctrine of the Modernists*. Encyclical, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1907.

Pius XI. *Divini Illius Magistri - On Christian Education*. Encyclical, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1929.

Pontifical Biblical Commission. *The Jewish People and Their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible*. Document, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2001.

Pontifical Councils for Culture & Interreligious Dialogue. *Jesus Christ, the Bearer of the Water of Life - A Christian Reflection on the "New Age"*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2003.

Zenit.org. *Pope Urges Taiwan Bishops to Focus on Catechesis*. Vatican City, 12 December, 2008.

## **B. Authors**

Allica, Greer. *Meditation Workbook - A Practical Guide to Doing It Your Way*. Tunbridge Wells: Burnes & Oates, 1991.

Bevilacqua, Anthony J. "A Pastoral View of Catechetics." In *Catechetical Instruction and the Catholic Faithful*, by George A - Editor Kelly, 37-88. Boston: St Paul Editions, 1982.

Breen, Damian. "Religious diversity, inter-ethnic relations and the Catholic school: introducing the responsive approach to single faith schooling." *British Journal of Religious Education*, 2009: 103-115.

Brennan, Oliver - Editor. *Critical Issues in Religious Education*. Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2005.

Byrne, Gareth. *Religious Education Renewed - An Overview of Developments in Post-Primary Religious Education*. Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2005.

Catholics United for the Faith. *Faith and Life Series*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press , 1987.

Clark, Stephen B. *Redeemer - Understanding the Meaning of the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ*. Ann Arbor: Servant Publications, 1992.

Colombo, Joseph. "Eschatology Past and Present: A Review Essay." *The Living Light*, 1989: 266-273.

- Confraternity of Christian Doctrine. *Baltimore Catechism No.1*. New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1964.
- . *Baltimore Catechism No.2*. New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1964.
- Conneely, Daniel. *The Letters of Saint Patrick*. Maynooth: An Sagart, 1993.
- Crowe, Frederick E. *Old Things and New: A Strategy for Education*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985.
- Csinos, David M. "'Come follow me': Apprenticeship in Jesus' Approach to Education." *Religious Education - The Journal of the Religious Education Association*, 2010: 45-62.
- Cunnane, Finola. "Issues of Identity in Religious Education." In *Critical Issues in Religious Education*, by Oliver Brennan - Editor, 35-60. Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2005.
- . *New Directions in Religious Education*. Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2004.
- Deroitte, Henri. "Grilles pour évaluer la qualité théologique et pédagogique des productions catéchétiques." *Revue Lumen Vitae*, 2002: 259-270.
- Diocese of Wagga Wagga. *We Belong to the Lord - Religious Education Syllabus for Primary Children*. Wagga Wagga, 1994.
- Duffy, Joseph. *Patrick, in his own words*. Dublin: Veritas Publications, 1972.
- Dungan, David Laird. *A History of the Synoptic Problem - The Canon, the Text, the Composition, and the Interpretation of the Gospels*. New York: Doubleday, 1999.
- Eggleston, Denis Gleeson & John. "Curriculum Innovation and the Context of the School." In *Identity and Structure: Issues in the Sociology of Education*, by Denis - Editor Gleeson, 15-27. Nafferton England: Studies in Education Ltd, 1977.
- Flanders, Ned A. *Analysing Teaching Behavior*. Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 1970.
- Fowler, James. "Moral Stages and the Development of Faith." In *Moral Development, Moral Education and Kohlberg*, by Brenda Munsey - Editor, 130-160. Birmingham Alabama: Religious Education Press, 1980.
- Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of Freedom*. Lanham Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998.
- . *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. London: Penguin Books, 1996.
- Gallico, Paul. *The Steadfast Man - A Life of St Patrick*. London: The Catholic Book Club, 1958.
- Gardner, Howard. *Art, Mind, and Brain - A Cognitive Approach to Creativity*. New York: Basic Books Inc., 1982.
- Gaughan, J. Anthony. *At the Coalface - Recollections of a City and Country Priest 1950-2000*. Dublin: Columba Press, 2000.
- Giroux, Henry A. *Ideology, Culture, and the Process of Schooling*. London: Falmer Press, 1981.
- Gleeson, Denis - Editor. *Identity and Structure: Issues in the Sociology of Education*. Nafferton England: Studies in Education Ltd, 1977.

- Gordon, Ed. "The Divine Pedagogy." *RTJ: The Magazine for Catechist Formation*, April/May 2007: 14-15.
- Gruber, Howard, Editor. *The Essential Piaget*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977.
- Hahn, Scott. *A Father Who Keeps His Promises*. Ann Arbor: Servant Publications, 1998.
- Hauke, Manfred. *God or Goddess? - Feminist Theology: What is it? Where does it lead?* San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995.
- Higher Catechetical Institute, Nijmegen. *A New Catechism - Catholic Faith for Adults*. New York: Herder and Herder, 1967.
- Highet, Gilbert. *The Art of Teaching*. London: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1951.
- Hogan, Frances. *Can You Trust the Bible?* London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd., 1991.
- Hughes, Alfred, and Archbishop of New Orleans, interview by Zenit.org. *When Catholic Catechetical Works Don't Teach the Faith* (24 December 2003).
- Hughes, Archbishop Alfred. *High School Catechisms*. Progress Report, New Orleans: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2003.
- Hughes, Philip. *A Popular History of the Catholic Church*. London: Burns & Oates, 1958.
- . *The Reformation*. London: Burns & Oates, 1960.
- Image of God Inc. *Image of God Series*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994.
- Iona Institute & Evangelical Alliance. "NI Religious Knowledge Poll." *www.ionainstitute.ie*. 10 December 2007.
- . "Religious Knowledge Poll." *www.ionainstitute.ie*. 9 April 2007.
- Johnson, Éanna. "Angels in Primary Schools: A Comparative Review of Teaching Materials." *The Sower*, 2005: 33-34.
- Keane, Eamonn. *A Generation Betrayed*. New York: Hatherleigh Press, 2002.
- Kelly, George A - Editor. *Catechetical Instruction and the Catholic Faithful*. Boston: St Paul Editions, 1982.
- Kelly, Hermann. "Changes to RE on the Way." *The Irish Catholic*, 28 November 2002: 1, 3.
- Kelly, Shirley. "A New Start for Religion." *Books Ireland*, 1997: 321.
- Kennedy, Martin. *Islands Apart*. Consultation Report, Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2000.
- Kieran, Patricia, and Anne Hession. *Children, Catholicism & Religious Education*. Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2005.
- Kohlberg, Lawrence. *The Philosophy of Moral Development - Moral Stages and the Idea of Justice*. San Francisco: Harpur & Row, 1981.
- Lane, Dermot A. *The Experience of God - An Invitation to Do Theology*. Dublin: Veritas Publications, 1981, 2003.
- Lane, Dermot A, Brendan Leahy, and - Editors. *Vatican II, Facing the 21st Century - Historical and Theological Perspectives*. Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2006.

- Leon-Dufour, Xavier - Editor. *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*. London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1962, 1988.
- Loneragan, Bernard J F. *Method in Theology*. London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1972.
- Moran, Gabriel. *Theology of Revelation*. London: Burns & Oates Limited, 1966.
- National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. *Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum*. Guidelines for Schools, Dublin: NCCA, 2007.
- . *Religious Education Syllabus - Junior Certificate*. Dublin: The Stationery Office, 2000.
- . *Religious Education Syllabus - Leaving Certificate*. Dublin: The Stationery Office, 2003.
- Newman, John Henry. 'The Tradition of Civilisation: The Isles of the North', in *Historical Sketches, vol.III, chapter X, 116-119*. Westminster, Md., 1970.
- Norris, Thomas. "A Renewed Theology of Divine Revelation: Response to Jan Lambrecht." In *Vatican II - Facing the 21st Century*, by Dermot A Lane & Brendan Leahy - Editors, 130-135. Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2006.
- Norris, Thomas J. *Getting Real about Education*. Dublin: Columba Press, 2006.
- Oddi, Silvio Cardinal. *The Right of the Catechized to the Truth*. Boston: Daughters of St Paul, 1984.
- Office for the Catechism. "Protocol for Assessing the Conformity of Catechetical Materials with the Catechism of the Catholic Church." *US Conference of Catholic Bishops, www.usccb.org*. (accessed February 8, 2002).
- Paprocki, Joe. "What's Your Catholic IQ?" *Catechist*, January 2010: 44, 62.
- Partridge, Christopher - Editor. *Encyclopedia of New Religions - New Religious Movements, Sects and Alternative Spiritualities*. Oxford: Lion Publishing plc, 2004.
- Pell, George. *Issues of Faith and Morals*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997.
- Piaget, Jean. "Science of Education and the Psychology of the Child." In *The Essential Piaget*, by Howard - Editor Gruber, 695-725. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977.
- . *The Moral Judgment of the Child*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1932.
- Ratzinger, Joseph Cardinal. *Called to Communion - Understanding the Church Today*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996.
- Ratzinger, Joseph Cardinal. "Handing on the Faith and the Sources of the Faith." In *Handing on the Faith in an Age of Disbelief*, 13-40. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006.
- . *Introduction to Christianity*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990, 2004.
- . *Principles of Catholic Theology - Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987.
- Ratzinger, Joseph Cardinal, and Christoph Schonborn. *Introduction to the Catechism of the Catholic Church*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994.
- Ratzinger, Joseph Cardinal, and Peter Seewald. *God and the World*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2002.

- . *Salt of the Earth - The Church at the End of the Millennium*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997.
- Ratzinger, Joseph Cardinal, and Vittorio Messori. *The Ratzinger Report*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1985.
- Ratzinger, Joseph. “The Dutch Catechism: A Theological Appreciation.” *The Furrow*, July 1970: 739-754.
- Secretariat of Evangelisation and Catechesis. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. [www.usccb.org/catechism/](http://www.usccb.org/catechism/). 11 July 2008.
- The Irish Theological Commission. *A New Age of the Spirit? - A Catholic Response to the New Age Phenomenon*. Dublin: Veritas Publications, 1994.
- Topley, Raymond. “The Act of Judgment in Religious Education: Light from Newman, Lonergan, Giussani and Groome.” In *Exploring Religious Education*, by Patricia & Anne Hession - Editors Kieran, 234-248. Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2008.
- Turner, Philip. “An Unworkable Theology.” *First Things*, June/July 2005: 10-12.
- Vitz, Paul C. “Moral Education: A Comparison of Secular and Religious Models.” In *Catechetical Instruction and the Catholic Faithful*, by George A Kelly - Editor, 89-137. Boston: St Paul Editions, 1982.
- Wrenn, Michael D, and Kenneth D Whitehead. “Teaching a Different Faith.” *Catholic World Report*, October 1997: 37-43.
- Wrenn, Michael J. *Catechisms and Controversies - Religious Education in the Postconciliar Years*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991.
- Wrenn, Michael J, and Kenneth D Whitehead. *Flawed Expectations - The Reception of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996.

## **APPENDIX A – LESSON STRUCTURE, by YEAR and TERM**

### **ALIVE-O 1 Lesson Structure**

#### **Term One**

- A1-T1L1 - Starting School
- A1-T1L2 - Getting to Know You
- A1-T1L3 - Settling In
- A1-T1L4 - Here We Are
- A1-T1L5 - My World in Autumn
- A1-T1L6 - Me in Autumn
- A1-T1L7 - Celebrating Change
- A1-T1L8 - Hallowe'en
- A1-T1L9 - Belonging
- A1-T1L10 - How Do I Belong?
- A1-T1L11 - This is Where I Belong
- A1-T1L12 - We Belong to God
- A1-T1L13 - Simeon and Anna Wait
- A1-T1L14 - Mary and Joseph Wait
- A1-T1L15 - Jesus is Born

#### **Term Two**

- A1-T2L1 - My World in Winter
- A1-T2L2 - Me in Winter
- A1-T2L3 - We Celebrate Saint Brigid
- A1-T2L4 - Thank You, God, For Me
- A1-T2L5 - Celebrating Me
- A1-T2L6 - Families Celebrate
- A1-T2L7 - A Place to Celebrate
- A1-T2L8 - My World in Spring
- A1-T2L9 - Me in Spring
- A1-T2L10 - Easter

#### **Term Three**

- A1-T3L1 - Food is Good
- A1-T3L2 - The Food we Eat
- A1-T3L3 - We Eat Together
- A1-T3L4 - My World in Summer
- A1-T3L5 - Me in Summer
- A1-T3L6 - Holidays
- A1-T3L7 - Alive-O

## **ALIVE-O 2 Lesson Structure**

### **Term One**

- A2-T1L1 - School Starts
- A2-T1L2 - Together Again
- A2-T1L3 - I Can Feel
- A2-T1L4 - Getting Along Together
- A2-T1L5 - Autumn
- A2-T1L6 - Autumn Colours
- A2-T1L7 - {Let's Celebrate
- A2-T1L7 - {Let's Remember
- A2-T1L8 - Hallowe'en
- A2-T1L9 - Caring
- A2-T1L10 - They Care For Me
- A2-T1L11 - I Care For Them
- A2-T1L12 - God Cares For Us
- A2-T1L13 - Preparing
- A2-T1L14 - Preparing for the Birth of Jesus
- A2-T1L15 - Celebrating the Birth of Jesus

### **Term Two**

- A2-T2L1 - Winter - A Time To Rest
- A2-T2L2 - Winter
- A2-T2L3 - Peace Around Me
- A2-T2L4 - Peace Within Me
- A2-T2L5 - Special Things
- A2-T2L6 - Special Places
- A2-T2L7 - Saint Patrick
- A2-T2L8 - New Beginnings
- A2-T2L9 - Spring
- A2-T2L10 - Easter

### **Term Three**

- A2-T3L1 - Water is Good
- A2-T3L2 - Water is Fun
- A2-T3L3 - Water is God's Gift
- A2-T3L4 - I Want a Word
- A2-T3L5 - Summer Light
- A2-T3L6 - Hurray For Summer
- A2-T3L7 - Alive-O

## **ALIVE-O 3 Lesson Structure**

### **Term One**

- A3-T1L1 - We Begin Together
- A3-T1L2 - Anytime
- A3-T1L3 - Inside Time
- A3-T1L4 - Time Moves On
- A3-T1L5 - We Belong Together
- A3-T1L6 - We Remember Together
- A3-T1L7 - In Jesus' Time
- A3-T1L8 - Jesus - Journey Man
- A3-T1L9 - Jesus - Story-teller
- A3-T1L10 - Jesus - Sharer of Bread
- A3-T1L11 - Jesus - Diviner
- A3-T1L12 - Jesus - Teacher
- A3-T1L13 - One Moment
- A3-T1L14 - Watching, Waiting, Wondering
- A3-T1L15 - The Moment They'd All Been Waiting For

### **Term Two**

- A3-T2L1 - A Different Time
- A3-T2L2 - My Goodness
- A3-T2L3 - We Are The Greatest
- A3-T2L4 - Lent - Turning Time
- A3-T2L5 - The Good Shepherd
- A3-T2L6 - Losing My Way
- A3-T2L7 - Time To Change
- A3-T2L8 - I Was Lost, I Am Found
- A3-T2L9 - Time For Joy

### **Term Three**

- A3-T3L1 - Mary's Joy
- A3-T3L2 - A Time To Share Stories
- A3-T3L3 - A Time To Share Meals
- A3-T3L4 - A Time To Share Memories
- A3-T3L5 - A Time To Share Life
- A3-T3L6 - Holy Spirit Help Us
- A3-T3L7 - Treasures From Long Ago
- A3-T3L8 - Time To Go -- Alive-O!



## **Alive-O 4 Lesson Structure**

### **Term One**

- A4-T1L1 - Family Spirit
- A4-T1L2 - Spirit Of Friendship
- A4-T1L3 - School Spirit
- A4-T1L4 - Earthed In The Spirit
- A4-T1L5 - The Spirit Of God In David
- A4-T1L6 - The Feast Of All Saints
- A4-T1L7 - Jesus - The One Who Calls
- A4-T1L8 - Jesus - Teaching and Nourishing
- A4-T1L9 - Jesus - Saying and Doing
- A4-T1L10 - Jesus - Telling Parables
- A4-T1L11 - Jesus - Healing
- A4-T1L12 - The People Who Walked In Darkness
- A4-T1L13 - From Darkness To Light
- A4-T1L14 - Jesus - A Light For All

### **Term Two**

- A4-T2L1 - Returning - A New Beginning
- A4-T2L2 - Being Me! Being Us!
- A4-T2L3 - Jairus' Daughter
- A4-T2L4 - Lent - Re-connecting
- A4-T2L5 - The Good Shepherd
- A4-T2L6 - Not Being Bothered, Not Being True
- A4-T2L7 - Being A Bully, Being Unfair, Being Selfish
- A4-T2L8 - Reconciliation Rite
- A4-T2L9 - The Passion And Death Of Jesus
- A4-T2L10 - The Resurrection

### **Term Three**

- A4-T3L1 - Mary Our Mother
- A4-T3L2 - We Gather Together To Celebrate
- A4-T3L3 - We Listen To The Word Of God
- A4-T3L4 - We Celebrate Jesus' Love For Us
- A4-T3L5 - We Give Thanks
- A4-T3L6 - We Celebrate God's Forgiveness
- A4-T3L7 - We Share Jesus, The Bread Of Life
- A4-T3L8 - Go In Peace
- A4-T3L9 - The Spirit Of God In Us
- A4-T3L10 - The Spirit Of God In Saint Gobnait
- A4-T3L11 - Time To Go - Alive-O!

## **Alive-O 5 Lesson Structure**

### **Term One**

- A5-T1L1 - Beginning Again, Amen
- A5-T1L 2 - Where Have We Come from?
- A5-T1L3 - Where Are We Now?
- A5-T1L4 - Beginning Again in Baptism.
- A5-T1L5 - What's the Story? (1): The Centurion's Servant.
- A5-T1L6 - Christianity Comes to Our Country (1)
- A5-T1L7 - Christianity Comes to Our Country (2)
- A5-T1L8 - What's the story? (2): the Sea of Galilee.
- A5-T1L9 - Mary Wonders -- Who Is the One Who Is Coming?
- A5-T1L10 - John The Baptist Wonders -- Who Is the One Who Is Coming?
- A5-T1L11 - Joseph Wonders -- Who Is the One Who Is Coming?

### **Term Two**

- A5-T2L1 - Abraham and Sarah -- Loved by God
- A5-T2L2 - Moses and the People -- Loved by God.
- A5-T2L3 - At Home with God's Love
- A5-T2L4 - Celebrating God's love.
- A5-T2L5 - Lent -- Endings and New Beginnings
- A5-T2L6 - God's Love Counts Us in
- A5-T2L7 - God's Love Helps Us to Love the World.
- A5-T2L8 - Reconciliation.
- A5-T2L9 - What's the story? (3): The Cure of the Man Who Was Paralysed
- A5-T2L10 - Holy Week

### **Term Three**

- A5-T3L1 - We are an Easter People.
- A5-T3L2 - Celebrating the Risen Jesus at Mass (1)
- A5-T3L3 - Celebrating the Risen Jesus at Mass (2).
- A5-T3L4 - Follow me.
- A5-T3L5 - Love and Serve the Lord.
- A5-T3L6 - Gifted with the Spirit
- A5-T3L7 - The Early Christian Community
- A5-T3L8 - Brendan The Navigator.

## **Alive-O 6 Lesson Structure**

### **Term One**

- A6-T1L1 - Within God's creation.
- A6-T1L2 - And God said.....
- A6-T1L3 - Jesus and Creation.
- A6-T1L4 - St Francis Cares for Creation.
- A6-T1L5 - Mary.
- A6-T1L6 - God Nourishes Us.
- A6-T1L7 - God Sent Jesus to Nourish Us.
- A6-T1L8 - God Sent the Holy Spirit to Nourish Us.
- A6-T1L9 - Happy Ever After.
- A6-T1L10 - Loving God.
- A6-T1L11 - Loving My Neighbour.
- A6-T1L12 - Come to the Manger.

### **Term Two**

- A6-T2L1 - A Healing Community.
- A6-T2L2 - Our Parish.
- A6-T2L3 - The Body of Christ – The Church.
- A6-T2L4 - The Body of Christ – At Play.
- A6-T2L5 - The Body of Christ – At Work.
- A6-T2L6 - Lent.
- A6-T2L7 - The Prodigal Son.
- A6-T2L8 - God's Never-Ending Love.
- A6-T2L9 - Jesus' Never-Ending Love (Holy Week).

### **Term Three**

- A6-T3L1 - The Risen Jesus.
- A6-T3L2 - The Sacrifice of the Mass.
- A6-T3L3 - Under God's Wing.
- A6-T3L4 - Under God's Guidance.
- A6-T3L5 - In God's Family.
- A6-T3L6 - The Holy Spirit.
- A6-T3L7 - St Canaire

## **Alive-O 7 Lesson Structure**

### **Term One**

- A7-T1L1 - Opening a New School Year
- A7-T1L2 - The Call to be Prophetic
- A7-T1L3 - Hearing the Call
- A7-T1L4 - Jeremiah Hears the Call
- A7-T1L5 - Jesus and Prophecy
- A7-T1L6 - The Spirit of Prophecy
- A7-T1L7 - Mary and the Mysteries of Light
- A7-T1L8 - The Saints
- A7-T1L9 - The Garden Story
- A7-T1L10 - Commandments (1)
- A7-T1L11 - Commandments (2)
- A7-T1L12-14 - Waiting in Joyful Hope

### **Term Two**

- A7-T2L1 - The Seamless Garment
- A7-T2L2 - Christian Faith
- A7-T2L3 - Christian Community
- A7-T2L4 - Christian Morality
- A7-T2L5 - Christian Love
- A7-T2L6 - Lent
- A7-T2L7 - Enkindling the Spirit
- A7-T2L8 - Spirit Wind
- A7-T2L9 - Breath of the Spirit
- A7-T2L10 - Ceremony of Confirmation (1)
- A7-T2L11 - Ceremony of Confirmation (2)
- A7-T2L12 - Holy Week

### **Term Three**

- A7-T3L1 - Easter
- A7-T3L2 - The Risen Jesus is Present at Mass
- A7-T3L3 - Where Do We Go From Here (1)?
- A7-T3L4 - Where Do We Go From Here (2)?
- A7-T3L5 - Where Do We Go From Here (3)?
- A7-T3L6 - Where Do We Go From Here (4)?

## **Alive-O 8 Lesson Structure**

### **Term One**

- A8-T1L1 - In Relation ...
- A8-T1L2 - In Relation to God's Creation
- A8-T1L3 - In Relation to the Word
- A8-T1L4 - In Relation to Numbers
- A8-T1L5 - In Relation to Being Human
- A8-T1L6 - In Relation to Reconciliation
- A8-T1L7 - Coming Together and Rituals
- A8-T1L8 - Symbol
- A8-T1L9 - Conversations and Stories
- A8-T1L10 - Sacramentality
- A8-T1L11 - Sacraments of the Church (1)
- A8-T1L12 - Sacraments of the Church (2)
- A8-T1L13-16 - Nativity Play

### **Term Two**

- A8-T2L1 - Fan the Flame
- A8-T2L2 - Spirit-Filled Life
- A8-T2L3 - Led by the Spirit
- A8-T2L4 - Celebration of Confirmation (1)
- A8-T2L5 - Celebration of Confirmation (2)
- A8-T2L6 - Mary
- A8-T2L7 - Lent
- A8-T2L8 - Holy Week

### **Term Three**

- A8-T3L1 - Easter
- A8-T3L2 - Kingdom Children
- A8-T3L3 - Kingdom Bodies
- A8-T3L4 - Kingdom Friends
- A8-T3L5 - Kingdom Justice
- A8-T3L6 - One Kingdom
- A8-T3L7 - Kingdom Ecology
- A8-T3L8 - In the Kingdom - Forever

## APPENDIX B – PROGRAMME LESSON STRUCTURE, by YEAR and THEME

Note: Lessons in *italics* appear under more than one theme.

### Alive-O 1 Lesson Structure

#### Starting & finishing school year:

A1-T1L1 - Starting School    A1-T1L2 - Getting to Know You  
*A1-T1L3 - Settling In*    A1-T1L4 - Here We Are    A1-T3L7 - Alive-O

#### Creation:

##### *Focus on the natural world*

A1-T1L5 - My World in Autumn    A1-T2L1 - My World in Winter  
*A1-T2L8 - My World in Spring*  
A1-T3L1 - Food is Good    A1-T3L2 - The Food we Eat  
A1-T3L4 - My World in Summer

##### *Focus on human beings*

A1-T1L6 - Me in Autumn    A1-T1L10 - How Do I Belong?  
A1-T2L2 - Me in Winter  
A1-T2L4 - Thank You, God, For Me    A1-T2L5 - Celebrating Me  
A1-T2L9 - Me in Spring    A1-T3L5 - Me in Summer  
A1-T3L6 - Holidays

##### *Focus on God as Creator*

A1-T1L12 - We Belong to God

Jesus Christ:    *A1-T1L15 - Jesus is Born*    *A1-T2L10 - Easter*

Church:    A1-T1L9 - Belonging    A1-T2L7 - A Place to Celebrate

Mary:    *A1-T1L13 - Simeon and Anna Wait*    *A1-T1L14 - Mary and Joseph Wait*  
*A1-T1L15 - Jesus is Born*

Saints:    A1-T1L8 - Hallowe'en (St Vincent de Paul)    A1-T2L3 - We Celebrate Saint Brigid  
*A1-T2L8 - My World in Spring* (St Patrick)

Liturgical Year:    *A1-T1L13 - Simeon and Anna Wait*    *A1-T1L14 - Mary and Joseph Wait*  
*A1-T1L15 - Jesus is Born*    *A1-T2L10 - Easter*

#### Sacraments:

*A1-T1L3 - Settling In*  
A1-T2L6 - Families Celebrate (marriage) *A1-T3L3 - We Eat Together* (Eucharist);

#### Life in Christ / Morality: *A1-T1L3 - Settling In*

A1-T1L11 - This is Where I Belong (4<sup>th</sup> commandment)

#### Old Testament:

*A1-T1L3 - Settling In* (Miriam & Moses)    *A1-T3L3 - We Eat Together* (Passover)

## Alive-O 2 Lesson Structure

### Starting & finishing the school year:

A2-T1L1 - School Starts      A2-T3L7 - Alive-O

### Creation:

#### *Focus on natural world*

A2-T1L5 - Autumn      A2-T1L6 - Autumn Colours  
A2-T2L1 - Winter - A Time to Rest      A2-T2L8 - New Beginnings  
A2-T3L1 - Water is Good      A2-T3L2 - Water is Fun  
A2-T3L3 - Water is God's Gift      A2-T3L5 - *Summer Light*

#### *Focus on human beings*

A2-T2L2 - Winter      A2-T2L9 - Spring  
A2-T3L6 - Hurray For Summer

Jesus Christ: A2-T1L15 - *Celebrating the Birth of Jesus*      A2-T2L10 - *Easter*

Church: A2-T1L2 - Together Again      A2-T1L4 - Getting Along Together  
A2-T1L7a - {Let's Celebrate      A2-T2L6 - Special Places

Mary: A2-T1L13 - *Preparing*      A2-T1L15 - *Celebrating the Birth of Jesus*  
A2-T3L4 - *I Want a Word*

Saints: A2-T1L7b - {*Let's Remember*      A2-T1L8 - *Hallowe'en*  
A2-T2L3 - *Peace Around Me* (St Brigid)      A2-T2L7 - *Saint Patrick*

Last Things: A2-T1L7b - {*Let's Remember*

Liturgical Year: A2-T1L13 - *Preparing*      A2-T1L14 - *Preparing for the Birth of Jesus*  
A2-T1L15 - *Celebrating the Birth of Jesus*      A2-T2L10 - *Easter*

Sacraments / Liturgy: A2-T2L5 - *Special Things*

Life in Christ / Morality: A2-T1L3 - *I Can Feel*  
A2-T1L9 - *Caring*      A2-T1L10 - *They Care For Me*      A2-T1L11 - *I Care For Them*  
A2-T2L3 - *Peace Around Me*      A2-T2L4 - *Peace Within Me*

Old Testament: A2-T1L12 - *God Cares For Us (David)*  
A2-T3L5 - *Summer Light* (Exodus)

Scripture: A2-T3L4 - *I Want a Word*

## Alive-O 3 Lesson Structure

### Starting & finishing school year:

A3-T1L1 - *We Begin Together*    A3-T3L8 - *Time To Go -- Alive-O!*

### Creation: A3-T1L2 - *Any time*    A3-T1L3 - *Inside Time*    A3-T1L4 - *Time Moves On*

Jesus: A3-T1L7 - *In Jesus' Time*    A3-T1L8 - *Jesus - Journey Man*  
A3-T1L9 - *Jesus - Story-teller*    A3-T1L10 - *Jesus - Sharer of Bread*  
A3-T1L11 - *Jesus - Diviner*    A3-T1L13 - *One Moment*  
A3-T1L15 - *The Moment They'd All Been Waiting For*  
A3-T2L3 - *We Are The Greatest*    A3-T2L5 - *The Good Shepherd*  
A3-T2L9 - *Time For Joy*

### Holy Spirit: A3-T3L6 - *Holy Spirit Help Us*

Church: A3-T1L1 - *We Begin Together*    A3-T1L5 - *We Belong Together*  
A3-T3L7 - *Treasures From Long Ago*    A3-T3L8 - *Time To Go -- Alive-O!*

Mary: A3-T1L7 - *In Jesus' Time*    A3-T1L8 - *Jesus - Journey Man*    A3-T1L13 - *One Moment*  
A3-T1L15 - *The Moment They'd All Been Waiting For*    A3-T3L1 - *Mary's Joy*

### Saints: A3-T1L6 - *We Remember Together* (St Columba)

### Last Things: A3-T1L6 - *We Remember Together*

Liturgical Year: A3-T1L13 - *One Moment*    A3-T1L14 - *Watching, Waiting, Wondering*  
A3-T1L15 - *The Moment They'd All Been Waiting For*    A3-T2L4 - *Lent- Turning Time*  
A3-T2L9 - *Time For Joy*    A3-T3L6 - *Holy Spirit Help Us*

### Sacraments/Liturgy: A3-T1L5 - *We Belong Together* (Baptism)

A3-T1L10 - *Jesus-Sharer of Bread* & A3-T2L9 - *Time For Joy* (Eucharist)  
A3-T3L2 - *A Time To Share Stories*    A3-T3L3 - *A Time To Share Meals*  
A3-T3L4 - *A Time To Share Memories*    A3-T3L5 - *A Time To Share Life*  
A3-T2L8 - *I Was Lost, I Am Found* (Penance)

### Life in Christ / Morality: A3-T1L1 - *We Begin Together*    A3-T2L2 - *My Goodness*

A3-T2L3 - *We Are The Greatest*  
A3-T2L5 - *The Good Shepherd*    A3-T2L6 - *Losing My Way*  
A3-T2L7 - *Time To Change*

### Prayer: A3-T3L1 - *Mary's Joy* (Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary)

A3-T1L12 - *Jesus – Teacher* (Our Father)    A3-T2L2 - *My Goodness*

### Old Testament: A3-T1L7 - *In Jesus' Time* (Exodus)    A3-T2L1 - *A Different Time* (Exodus)

A3-T3L4 - *A Time To Share Memories* (Passover)



## Alive-O 4 lesson structure

Jesus: A4-T1L7 - Jesus - The One Who Calls A4-T1L8 - Jesus - Teaching and Nourishing  
A4-T1L9 - Jesus - Saying and Doing A4-T1L10 - Jesus - Telling Parables  
A4-T1L11 - Jesus - Healing A4-T1L12 - *The People Who Walked In Darkness*  
A4-T1L13 - *From Darkness To Light* A4-T1L14 - *Jesus - A Light For All*  
A4-T2L1 - *Returning - A New Beginning* A4-T2L3 - *Jairus' Daughter*  
A4-T2L5 - *The Good Shepherd* A4-T2L8 - *Reconciliation Rite*  
A4-T2L9 - *The Passion and Death of Jesus* A4-T2L10 - *The Resurrection*

Holy Spirit: A4-T1L4 - *Earthed In The Spirit*

Church: A4-T1L3 - *School Spirit* A4-T3L2 - *We Gather Together To Celebrate*  
A4-T3L11 - *Time To Go - Alive-O!*

Mary: A4-T3L1 - *Mary Our Mother*

Saints: A4-T1L6 - *The Feast Of All Saints (St Therese)*  
A4-T3L10 - *The Spirit Of God In Saint Gobnait*

Last Things: A4-T1L6 - *The Feast Of All Saints*

### Liturgical Year:

A4-T1L12 - *The People Who Walked In Darkness* A4-T1L13 - *From Darkness To Light*  
A4-T1L14 - *Jesus - A Light for All* A4-T2L1 - *Returning - A New Beginning*  
A4-T2L4 - *Lent - Re-connecting*  
A4-T2L9 - *The Passion and Death of Jesus* A4-T2L10 - *The Resurrection*  
A4-T3L9 - *The Spirit Of God In Us*

### Sacraments / Liturgy:

A4-T2L8 - *Reconciliation Rite* A4-T3L2 - *We Gather Together To Celebrate*  
A4-T3L3 - *We Listen To The Word Of God* A4-T3L4 - *We Celebrate Jesus' Love For Us*  
A4-T3L5 - *We Give Thanks* A4-T3L6 - *We Celebrate God's Forgiveness*  
A4-T3L7 - *We Share Jesus, The Bread Of Life* A4-T3L8 - *Go In Peace*  
A4-T3L9 - *The Spirit Of God In Us (Baptism)*

### Life in Christ / Morality: A4-T1L1 - *Family Spirit*

A4-T2L5 - *The Good Shepherd* A4-T2L6 - *Not Being Bothered, Not Being True*  
A4-T2L7 - *Being A Bully, Being Unfair, Being Selfish*

Prayer: A4-T3L1 - *Mary Our Mother (Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary)*

Old Testament: A4-T1L5 - *The Spirit Of God In David*

Scripture: A4-T3L3 - *We Listen To The Word Of God*

## Alive-O 5 Lesson Structure

### Beginnings & Endings theme:

A5-T1L1 - *Beginning Again, Amen* A5-T1L 2 - *Where Have We Come from?*

Trinity A5-T1L1 - *Beginning Again, Amen*

Jesus A5-T1L3 - *Where Are We Now?* A5-T1L5 - *Story1: Centurion's Servant.*  
A5-T1L8 - *Story2: Sea of Galilee.* A5-T2L9 - *Story3: Cure of Paralyzed Man*  
A5-T1L10 - *John the Baptist Wonders -- Who Is the One Who Is Coming?*  
A5-T2L10 - *Holy Week* A5-T3L1 - *We are an Easter people*  
A5-T3L4 - *Follow me.* A5-T3L5 - *Love and serve the Lord.*

Holy Spirit: A5-T3L6 - *Gifted with the Spirit*

Church A5-T1L6 & 7 - *Christianity Comes to Our Country (1) & (2)*  
A5-T3L7 - *The Early Christian Community*

Mary A5-T1L9 - *Mary Wonders -- Who Is the One Who Is Coming?*  
A5-T1L11 - *Joseph Wonders -- Who Is the One Who Is Coming?*  
A5-T2L3 - *At Home with God's Love*

Saints A5-T1L6 & 7 - *Christianity Comes to Our Country(1)&(2)* (St Patrick)  
A5-T3L8 – *Brendan The Navigator*

The Liturgical Year A5-T1L9 - *Mary Wonders -- Who Is the One Who Is Coming?*  
A5-T1L10 - *John the Baptist Wonders -- Who Is the One Who Is Coming?*  
A5-T1L11 - *Joseph Wonders -- Who Is the One Who Is Coming?*  
A5-T2L5 - *Lent -- Endings and New Beginnings* A5-T2L10 - *Holy Week*  
A5-T3L1 - *We are an Easter people.* A5-T3L5 - *Love and serve the Lord (Ascension).*  
A5-T3L6 - *Gifted with the spirit*

Sacraments/Liturgy A5-T1L4 - *Beginning Again in Baptism.* A5-T2L8 - *Reconciliation.*  
A5-T3L2 & 3 - *Celebrating the risen Jesus at mass (1) & (2).*  
A5-T3L6 - *Gifted with the Spirit (Baptism)*

### Life in Christ / Morality

A5-T2L2 - *Moses and the people -- Loved by God (Decalogue & 1<sup>st</sup> Commandment)*  
A5-T2L3 - *At Home with God's Love (4<sup>th</sup> Cmdt.)* A5-T2L6 - *God's Love Counts Us in*  
A5-T2L7 - *God's love helps us to love world.*

Prayer: A5-T1L3 - *Where Are We Now?* A5-T3L1 - *We are an Easter people (Creed)*  
A5-T2L3 - *At Home with God's Love (Angelus)*

Old Testament A5-T2L1 - *Abraham and Sarah -- Loved by God*  
A5-T2L2 - *Moses and the people -- loved by God.* A5-T2L4 - *Celebrating God's love.*

## **Alive-O 6 Lesson Structure**

Trinity: A6-T3L6 - *The Holy Spirit.*

Creation *Focus mainly on human beings and natural world*

A6-T1L1 - Within God's creation. A6-T1L4 - *St Francis Cares for Creation.*

A6-T1L6 - God nourishes us. A6-T1L7 - *God sent Jesus to nourish us.*

A6-T1L8 - *God Sent the Holy Spirit to Nourish Us.*

*Focus on God as Creator:* A6-T1L2 - *And God said.....*

Jesus: A6-T1L3 - *Jesus and Creation.* A6-T1L5 – *Mary*

A6-T1L7 - *God sent Jesus to nourish us.* A6-T1L12 - *Come to the Manger.*

A6-T2L6 - *Lent.* A6-T2L7 - *The Prodigal Son*

A6-T2L9 - *Jesus' Never-Ending Love (Holy Week).* A6-T3L1 - *The Risen Jesus.*

Holy Spirit: A6-T3L6 - *The Holy Spirit.* A6-T1L8 - *God Sent the Holy Spirit to Nourish Us.*

Church A6-T2L2 - *Our Parish.* A6-T2L3 - *The Body of Christ – The Church.*

A6-T2L4 - *The Body of Christ – At Play.* A6-T2L5 - *The Body of Christ – At Work.*

Mary A6-T1L5 – *Mary.*

Saints A6-T1L4 - *St Francis Cares for Creation.* A6-T3L7 - *St Canaire (& St Senan)*

The Last Things A6-T1L9 - *Happy Ever After.*

The Liturgical Year A6-T1L12 - *Come to the Manger.*

A6-T2L6 - *Lent.* A6-T2L9 - *Jesus' Never-Ending Love (Holy Week).*

A6-T3L1 - *The Risen Jesus.*

Sacraments/Liturgy A6-T2L1 - *A Healing Community. (Sacrament of Sick)*

A6-T2L3 - *The Body of Christ – The Church. (Baptism)*

A6-T2L8 - *God's Never-Ending Love. (Reconciliation)*

A6-T3L2 - *The Sacrifice of the Mass.*

Life in Christ / Morality A6-T1L8 - *God Sent the Holy Spirit to Nourish Us.*

A6-T1L10 - *Loving God.* A6-T1L11 - *Loving My Neighbour.*

Prayer: A6-T1L5 – *Mary (Rosary: Joyful, Sorrowful and Glorious Mysteries)*

A6-T1L10 - *Loving God.*

Old Testament / Scripture A6-T1L2 - *And God said.....*

A6-T3L3 - *Under God's Wing. (Scripture in general; Ruth)*

A6-T3L4 - *Under God's Guidance. (Abraham, Isaac, Rebekah)*

A6-T3L5 - *In God's Family. (Joseph)*

## **Alive-O 7 Lesson Structure**

**Starting school year:** A7-T1L1 - Opening a New School Year

**Creation:** A7-T1L2 - *The Call to be Prophetic*; A7-T1L9 - *The Garden Story*

**Jesus:** A7-T1L5 - Jesus and Prophecy; A7-T1L6 - *The Spirit of Prophecy*  
A7-T1L7 - *Mary and the Mysteries of Light*; A7-T2L1 - The Seamless Garment  
A7-T2L6 – Lent;  
A7-T2L12 - *Holy Week*; A7-T3L1 - *Easter*

**Holy Spirit:** A7-T2L7 - *Enkindling the Spirit*; A7-T2L8 - *Spirit Wind*;  
A7-T2L9 - *Breath of the Spirit*

**Church:** A7-T2L3 - *Christian Community*

**Mary:** A7-T1L7 - *Mary and the Mysteries of Light*

**Saints:** A7-T1L8 - The Saints

**Liturgical Year:** A7-T1L12-14 - Waiting in Joyful Hope; A7-T2L6 – Lent;  
A7-T2L12 - *Holy Week*; A7-T3L1 - *Easter*

**Sacraments / Mass:** A7-T1L11 - *Commandments (2)* (Penance)

A7-T2L3 - *Christian Community* (Confirmation)  
A7-T2L4 - *Christian Morality* (Penance)  
A7-T2L7 - *Enkindling the Spirit*;  
A7-T2L8 - *Spirit Wind*; A7-T2L9 - *Breath of the Spirit*  
A7-T2L10 - Ceremony of Confirmation (1);  
A7-T2L11 - Ceremony of Confirmation (2)  
A7-T3L2 - The Risen Jesus is Present at Mass  
A7-T3L3-6 - Where Do We Go From Here (1-4)? (Confirmation)  
A7-T3L5 - Where Do We Go From Here (3)? (Penance)

**Life in Christ / Morality:** A7-T1L9 - *The Garden Story*

A7-T1L10 - Commandments (1); A7-T1L11 - *Commandments (2)*  
A7-T2L4 - *Christian Morality*; A7-T2L5 - *Christian Love*

**Prayer:** A7-T1L7 - *Mary and the Mysteries of Light*

A7-T1L11 - *Commandments (2)* (Our Father)

**Old Testament:** A7-T1L2 - *The Call to be Prophetic*

A7-T1L3 - Hearing the Call; A7-T1L4 - Jeremiah hears the Call  
A7-T1L6 - *The Spirit of Prophecy*  
A7-T1L9 - *The Garden Story*

## **Alive-O 8 Lesson Structure**

Trinity: A8-T1L4 - *In Relation to Numbers*    A8-T1L5 - *In Relation to Being Human*

Creation: A8-T1L2 - *In Relation to God's Creation*    A8-T3L7 - *Kingdom Ecology*

Jesus: A8-T1L3 - *In Relation to the Word*    A8-T1L7 - *Coming Together and Rituals*  
A8-T1L9 - *Conversations and Stories*;    A8-T1L13-16 - *Nativity Play*  
A8-T2L1 - *Fan the Flame*;    A8-T2L8 - *Holy Week*;    A8-T3L1 - *Easter*

Holy Spirit: A8-T1L4 - *In Relation to Numbers*    A8-T2L1 - *Fan the Flame*  
A8-T2L2 - *Spirit-Filled Life*    A8-T2L3 - *Led by the Spirit*

Church: A8-T3L6 - *One Kingdom*

Mary & Saints: A8-T2L2 - *Spirit-Filled Life* (St Therese)    A8-T2L6 – *Mary*

Last Things: A8-T3L8 - *In the Kingdom - Forever*

Liturgical Year: A8-T1L13-16 - *Nativity Play*;    A8-T2L1 - *Fan the Flame*  
A8-T2L7 – *Lent*;    A8-T2L8 - *Holy Week*;    A8-T3L1 - *Easter*

Sacraments: A8-T1L6 - *In Relation to Reconciliation*    A8-T1L7 - *Coming Together and Rituals*  
A8-T1L8 - *Symbol*    A8-T1L9 - *Conversations and Stories*    A8-T1L10 - *Sacramentality*  
(Baptism)  
A8-T1L11 - *Sacraments of the Church (1) (Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Sick)*  
A8-T1L12 - *Sacraments of the Church (2) (Marriage, Holy Orders)*  
A8-T2L1 - *Fan the Flame* (Baptism, Confirmation)    A8-T2L3 - *Led by the Spirit* (Baptism)  
A8-T2L4 - *Celebration of Confirmation (1)*    A8-T2L5 - *Celebration of Confirmation (2)*  
(Baptism)

Life in Christ / Morality: A8-T2L2 - *Spirit-Filled Life*  
A8-T3L2 - *Kingdom Children*;    A8-T3L3 - *Kingdom Bodies*  
A8-T3L4 - *Kingdom Friends*;    A8-T3L5 - *Kingdom Justice*  
A8-T3L7 - *Kingdom Ecology*

Old Testament / Scripture: A8-T1L2 - *In Relation to God's Creation*  
A8-T1L3 - *In Relation to the Word*;  
A8-T1L4 - *In Relation to Numbers* (Abraham & Sarah)  
A8-T1L8 – *Symbol* (Jacob's Dream)