

Grade 8 Religion

The eighth grade religion curriculum continues to educate students in Catholic doctrine, morality, prayer, and liturgy. Students are introduced to important people in the history of the Church and study background on its rich traditions, rituals, and organization.

Unit 1: The Marks of the Church from the Beginning

The first Christians filled with the Holy Spirit, spread the gospel message throughout their world. The same Spirit calls us to be witnesses of the message of Christ in our world today.

The Church is Apostolic: Founded on the Apostles

Students will:

- recall that belonging to a group involves certain goals and responsibilities
- learn a gospel story about Peter and the early Church
- describe how the Church is apostolic and Trinitarian
- define the role of the Magisterium
- understand that, since Jesus' appointment of Peter as leader of the Church, the pope has had the authority and responsibility to lead and guide the universal Church
- offer ways to carry out the apostolic mission of the Church in today's world
- pray the Creed

The Church is Holy: Jesus Christ in the Sacraments

Students will:

- recognize that Jesus Christ is present in the sacramental life of the whole Church
- describe reasons that the Eucharist is the central act of worship in the Church
- understand that the Church is the Body of Christ and that its members are on a journey toward holiness
- express appreciation for the gift of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist
- demonstrate knowledge of significant parts of the Mass
- pray a prayer adapted from the Mass

The Church is Catholic: Open and Respectful of All

Students will:

- recognize that disagreements can occur between people with good intentions and explore ways to resolve such conflicts
- define the word catholic and describe an early disagreement in the Church over the catholic nature of the Church
- offer ways we can reflect the catholic nature of our Church and promote the common good
- respond to the challenge of spreading the Gospel message in the modern world
- pray an intercessory prayer for the good of the Church, society, and the world

The Church is One: Praying for Unity

Students will:

- reflect upon the differences between people and consider ways to overcome them
- learn the ways that unity and variety are reflected in the Church
- acknowledge God's call for Christian unity
- understand that there are many ways to express our faith and show God's love to others and that even the most ordinary ways are important

Unit 2: The Growth of Christendom

Christianity became the dominant religion of the Mediterranean world after enduring persecution and internal strife and the organizing principle of society. Great cathedrals and basilicas showed forth the spirit of faith and optimism.

Councils, Cultures, and Conflicts

Students will:

- understand that the Church has experienced and continues to experience internal conflicts
- describe some of the serious conflicts that divided the early Church and how the Church struggled to overcome them
- identify basic Catholic beliefs: God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and Jesus Christ is both human and divine
- name some ways to stand firm in one's Christian beliefs
- pray the Nicene Creed

Liturgy and Unity, Worship and Beauty

Students will:

- identify changing family traditions and changing liturgical traditions
- learn about the development of the Church's liturgy and the different liturgical customs that existed between early Christians of the East and West
- discover an example of the way the Church's liturgy can adapt to customs and cultures without changing its essential meaning or mystery
- explore how symbols and designs have been used to express the mystery of faith, especially through the construction of cathedrals during the medieval period
- pray a Eucharistic prayer from the third century, noting its likeness to the Eucharistic prayers of today

The Church and the Empire

Students will:

- give examples of Christian influences on the customs and celebrations of modern society
- discover how the Church established Christianity in the Roman Empire and how Church and state became united
- become aware of the challenges of following the natural law and being obedient to God in modern society, where Church and state are not united

- identify ways to bring Christian principles into modern society
- meditate on a story about Mother Teresa that calls us to remain faithful to Christ

Prayer for Understanding

Students will:

- realize that different types of images can be aids for prayer
- learn about the differences between the churches of the East and West that eventually led to the eleventh-century schism in the Church
- appreciate the Eastern Church's richness of tradition and recognize the diversity of prayer forms within the Church
- pray the words of St. Anselm who sought reunification of Eastern and Western Churches

Unit 3: An Age of Faith and Beauty

The medieval Church expressed its deep faith through glorious cathedrals and elaborate worship. We are called to use contemporary media to proclaim our Catholic faith.

Faith Expressed and Lived

Students will:

- gain awareness of the principles of monastic life and share examples of places that can help a person feel closer to God
- learn about St. Benedict's desire to nourish his relationship with God
- learn about Benedictine Rule and the role of monasteries in the Middle Ages
- discover ways to nourish one's own relationship with God
- describe how study of the word of God and the Church's teachings can nourish one's faith
- practice lectio divina, divine reading, which combines spiritual reading, meditation, spontaneous prayer, and contemplation

Mass in the Cathedral

Students will:

- discover the spiritual philosophies shown in the designs of various churches
- learn the ways that Gothic cathedrals and medieval Masses expressed the spiritual philosophy of Christians from that time
- explain why celebrating Mass on Sunday is essential to our Catholic faith
- explore the principles behind the design of Gothic cathedrals
- meditate in the spirit of medieval mysticism

The Quest for Salvation

Students will:

- explore the injustice of religious warfare in the world
- explore religious warfare in the history of the Church
- understand that salvation comes through Jesus Christ and must be more important to us than worldly matters
- suggest ways to become closer to God in the midst of our worldly concerns

- learn about the Psalter of the Middle Ages and praise God by praying a psalm

Devotions

Students will:

- become aware of the merits of Catholic devotions
- learn about The Imitation of Christ and the rise of devotional practices, personal piety, and mendicant orders during a troubled time in the Church
- define the role of private devotion in Catholic life
- discover the history of the Rosary

Unit 4: Reason, Rebellion, and Reform

The Renaissance brought calls for reform in the Church. Martin Luther began the Protestant Reformation when he nailed ninety-five statements of protest to a Church door. The Church responded with the Counter-Reformation.

Reforming the Church

Students will:

- consider the best way to address faults or abuses within a group
- learn about the Protestant Reformation and the division it caused in the Church
- understand that Jesus Christ established the Church to bring salvation to everyone and that we must strive for Christian unity
- explore constructive paths to reform based on the example of Saints Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross
- develop knowledge about the Reformation
- pray with the poetry of John of the Cross and write an original prayer

Forgiveness and Reconciliation

Students will:

- reflect on experiences of sin and forgiveness
- learn about the history of the sacrament of Reconciliation and about the Counter-Reformation
- realize that Christ forgives our sins and that the priest to whom we confess our sins is a visible sign of Christ
- pray a prayer of mercy from the Rite of Penance

Morality and Salvation

Students will:

- consider positive ways to respond to situations of conflict and division
- learn how Church leaders defended the Church against contrary teachings of Protestant Reformers, including predestination
- become aware of the persecution of Catholics in England during the Reformation period
- understand the roles of grace and conscience in salvation
- discover St. Teresa of Avila's advice on prayer

Seeking a Common Prayer

Students will:

- become aware of commonalities among Christian denominations
- learn about the beginnings of Catholicism in America and about religious influences on American life
- explain why we must work for Christian unity
- explore ways to receive and spread the Christian message
- pray for Christian unity

Unit 5: Returning to the Roots of Christianity

Grounded in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, our faith is expressed in new ways in every age to meet the challenges of modern life. We are called to be part of this renewal.

Modern Ecumenical Councils

Students will:

- explore the value and meanings of traditions
- discover how the Church brought its traditions into the modern age
- understand that the Church must meet the challenge of spreading the Gospel message to every culture and age
- give examples of how members of the Church can help the Church in its mission to evangelize
- pray a peace prayer of Pope John XXIII

Renewal of the Liturgy

Students will:

- express appreciation for the Mass
- learn about the sacramental and liturgical changes that resulted from the Second Vatican Council
- explain why celebrating the liturgy of the Church and being part of a faith community are important
- give examples of ways people can participate in the liturgical life of the Church
- pray a contemporary version of the Gloria

The Moral Struggle of a New Age

Students will:

- help offer ways to create an economically just world
- explore various Catholic social justice teachings
- describe effective responses to social injustices, such as practicing the corporal works of mercy
- suggest ways to respond to specific examples of injustice and inequality

Materials

- RCL Benziger: Blest Are We: The Story of Our Church, textbook
- RCL Benziger: Blest Are We: The Story of Our Church, classroom activities and resources
- RCL Benziger: Blest Are We: The Story of Our Church, test book
- RCL Benziger: Blest Are We: The Story of Our Church, teacher's manual
- www.blestarewe.com
- St. Mary's Press: HELP for Ministry with Young Teens by Carole Goodwin and Marilyn Kielbasa
- New American Bible and the Catechism of the Catholic Church
- Art materials
- Pflaum Gospel Weeklies Faith Formation Program: "Visions"

Instruction

Methods are employed to maintain interest in and enthusiasm for learning Catholic doctrine. Instruction is given in various ways including reading, discussion, testing, lecture, individual and group research and presentation projects, craft activities, prayer, outreach activities, worship, computer quizzes utilizing the Blest Are We website.

Prepared by: Elizabeth E. Gill
Feb. 9, 2011

