

Religion Guidelines

Archdiocese of Philadelphia

These Religion Guidelines are those published in 2000; reformatted into trimesters in 2006; revised in 2012 and 2013. Each Grade contains the following:

- The **core content** with references to scripture

To help teachers in their presentations, the outline is referenced to scripture which suggests certain passages that complement a specific topic in the outline. Teachers are encouraged to use the scripture passages for personal prayer as well as for reflection and for sharing with students. This could help the children become increasingly more familiar and comfortable with scripture and its importance in the lives of both the Church and of those who are followers of Jesus Christ. The numbers on the right side of the page in parentheses correspond to the **paragraph numbers** in the Catechism of the Catholic Church which treat of a specific subject or concept. This to help the teachers in their own background reading. It is not intended that students be taught directly from the Catechism.

- The **Liturgical Year** (Ordinary Time; Advent; Christmas Season; Lent; Holy Week; Triduum; Easter Season; Saints and Holy People) is developed according to its appropriate placement in each trimester. The importance of *Sunday* is stressed.
- Summaries of the feasts of **Mary** and lives of the **Saints**
- **Praying with Children**

Each Grade is required to learn certain of our Traditional Catholic Prayers. The versions we should teach can be found in either the United States Catholic Catechism for Adults (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops), Appendix B: Traditional Catholic Prayers *or* the Compendium: Catechism of the Catholic Church, Appendix A: Common Prayers (English and Latin).

Hopefully, using these guidelines as the basis of teaching the subject of Religion will contribute to developing a strong religious foundation in the Catholic Faith for each student, and invite the student into the mission of the Church which is the mission of Jesus Christ. It is our hope that each student will come to a deeper understanding of the Catholic Faith and be able to articulate this faith. The **faith believed** is the **faith celebrated** in one's full, conscious and active participation in the sacramental life of the Church. The **faith believed** is the **faith lived** in a moral life that demonstrates the social consequences of living according to the demands of the Gospel. It is a life that serves the needs of others with care and compassion. The **faith believed** is the **faith prayed** in attitudes of adoration, praise, thanksgiving, and awe for the glory of God.

First Trimester

I. GOD THE FATHER

- A. FIRST PERSON OF THE TRINITY (238-40)
- B. CREATOR OF HEAVEN AND EARTH Gn. 1:1-25

II. CREATION (337)

- A. CREATION OF THE WORLD Gn. 1:1-25 (275, 295)
- B. CREATION OF PEOPLE Gn. 1:25-31, 2:1-25
- C. HUMAN BEINGS HAVE A UNIQUE PLACE IN CREATION
 - 1. God created human beings in his own image. Gn. 1:27, (355, 1700, 1702)
 - 2. God created them male and female.
 - 3. God created people to know, love, and serve him. (51, 356, 357, 1719-21, 1726)
- D. SACREDNESS OF HUMAN LIFE (2258)
 - 1. Respect for ourselves
 - 2. Respect for others
 - 3. Respect for all life

B. ORDINARY TIME: liturgical color is green: hope, growth, life

C. ADVENT (524)

1. Liturgical color is purple: preparation, sorrow for sin, repentance
2. Period of four weeks of preparation for the birth of Jesus, Christmas
3. Symbol: Advent Wreath
 - a. The circle of greens reminds us that God has no beginning and has no end.
 - b. There are four candles - three purple and one pink
 - c. One candle is lit each week.

D. CHRISTMAS

1. Liturgical color is white: joy, glory, innocence
2. Story of Jesus' Birth Mt. 1:18 - 2:23

V. SAINTS AND HOLY PEOPLE

Special days to honor saints are ranked and celebrated in different degrees.

Solemnity: liturgies celebrating events, beliefs, and personages of principle importance and universal significance in salvation history

Feast: liturgies of major importance

Memorial: liturgies celebrating minor events in the life of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of saints significant to a local country, church or religious community.

October 4: St. Francis of Assisi

St. Francis founded the Franciscan Order. He was born in Assisi, Italy in 1181 to a wealthy family and given every comfort. His youth was full of parties and he had hopes of becoming a knight. He distinguished himself in battle against the neighboring town of Perugia and was taken captive for a year. Intending to join the knights in the army of Walter of Brienne, Francis set out in magnificent armor only to return a few days later after a dream told him to return to Assisi. Slowly, he tried to live a quieter life. He began to seek out the poor and sick and made a pilgrimage to

Rome. He gave up his inheritance and devoted himself to a life of poverty. Within a year he had eleven followers. In 1209, he wrote a simple rule for his followers, or “friars,” and gained official acceptance from Pope Innocent III in 1210. St. Francis and his friars embraced poverty, loved nature and animals, devoted themselves to the Eucharist and to helping the poor. He also received the stigmata. He died in 1226 and was made a saint just two years later.

November 3: St. Martin de Porres

Martin de Porres, son of a wealthy Spaniard and a freed black woman from Panama, grew up in poverty in Lima, Peru in the late 16th century. Apprenticed to a barber-surgeon at a young age, he joined the Dominicans at 15 as a lay helper. He used his simple medical knowledge to care for the poor and sick. His role in the convent grew, and he eventually became a fully professed brother. He ran the infirmary, cared for animals, collected alms for the poor, and devoted his nights to lengthy prayers before the Blessed Sacrament. Endowed with many spiritual gifts, including bilocation, St. Martin was always seeking ways to show charity to others, regardless of their race. He died in 1639 and is the patron saint of African-Americans.

November 13: St. Frances Xavier Cabrini

Frances was born in Italy in 1850. She was a school teacher in an orphanage in Italy. Frances founded the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart and, with seven other women, cared for poor children in schools and hospitals. Pope Leo XIII asked her to go to New York City to work with Italian immigrants. Although dreadfully afraid of water, she traveled to New York and in the next thirty years continued to travel, founding more than fifty schools, hospitals, and orphanages in England, France, Spain, and North and South America. She was canonized in 1946 and was the first citizen of the United States so recognized.

VI. PRAYER

A. PRAYER

Mt. 6:5-15, (2564,
2697-04, 2742-45)

1. Definition

- a. Listening to God
- b. Talking to God
- c. Sometimes just being still with God

2. Traditional Prayers

- a. Sign of the Cross (2157)
- b. Our Father Mt. 6:7-15, (2792-93, 2801)
- c. Hail Mary Lk. 1:26-38
- d. Doxology (Glory be...)
- e. Simple Grace before and after meals (2698)
- f. Simple Morning Offering (2698)
- g. Angel of God
- h. Introduce the Rosary

VII. SACRAMENTALS (1667-79)

- A. HOLY WATER (1238)
- B. HOLY OILS (Oil of Catechumens and Chrism) (695, 1237)
- C. CROSS / CRUCIFIX
- D. SIGN OF THE CROSS
- E. BLESSED CANDLES (697)
- F. BLESSED MEDALS
- G. ROSARY

VIII. SOCIAL JUSTICE

“The commitment to human life and dignity, to human rights and solidarity, is a calling all Catholic educators must share with their students. It is not a vocation for a few religion teachers, but a challenge for every Catholic educator and catechist.”

Sharing Catholic Social Teaching Challenges and Directions, USCC, 1998, p. 4

Major Themes:

The Life and Dignity of the Human Person
Call to Family, Community and Participation
Rights and Responsibilities of the Human Person
Care for God’s Creation

A. AWARENESS OF THE NEEDS OF OTHERS

1. Foster a willingness to share.
2. Participate in Thanksgiving and Christmas activities for the needy.

B. AWARENESS OF THE NEED TO CARE FOR ALL OF CREATION

“Catholic tradition insists that we show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God’s creation.”

Sharing Catholic Social Teaching Challenges and Directions, USCC, 1998, p. 6

For further ideas see From the Ground Up: Teaching Catholic Social Principles in Elementary Schools, NCEA, 1999.

Second Trimester

I. LIVING IN GOD'S WORLD

A. FAMILY

Col. 3:18-21,
Acts 3:25, (764,
1934-35, 2204-05)

1. All families are special.
2. We first learn about love and about God in the family.
3. We first learn to pray in the family.
4. Families are important in our world and in our Church.

B. CHURCH

1. Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist make us members of the Church. (1265)
2. The Church is the people of God.
3. The parish is where God's people gather as a family to worship. (1180-81, 1198-99)

C. SCHOOL

1. We learn more about God and the world in school.
2. We learn to cooperate with others in school.

D. COMMUNITY

Lk. 3:11, Acts 2:42-47,
Jas. 2:15-16, 1 Jn 1:7,
(1803, 2447)

1. We learn to share with others in community.
 - a. Feed the hungry.

- b. Clothe the naked.
 - c. Care for the sick.
 - d. Pray for the dead.
2. In and with community we can try to make the world more peaceful.
- a. Forgive others. (1850, 1871)
 - b. Practice acts of kindness.

II. GOD THE SON: JESUS CHRIST

A. SECOND PERSON OF THE TRINITY (262, 663)

B. JESUS' LIFE

1. Birth and Childhood

a. Annunciation Lk. 1:26-38

- 1) Jesus - name given by angel; means "God saves"
- 2) Jesus is the Son of God; St. Joseph is his foster father

b. Nativity Mt. 1:18 - 2:15,
Lk. 2:1-20, (525)

- 1) Birth in Bethlehem
- 2) Angels appeared to Shepherds
- 3) Visit of the Magi
- 4) Flight into Egypt

c. Life in Nazareth Lk. 2:41-52, (527-34)

- 1) Holy Family
- 2) Finding in the Temple
- 3) Hidden Life

- 2. Jesus' Public Life
 - a. Baptism by St. John the Baptist Mt. 3:13-17, Mk. 1:9-11, Lk. 3:21-22 (541-46)
 - b. Call of the apostles and the disciples Mt. 4:18-22, Mk. 1:16-20, Jn. 1:35-51
 - c. Jesus as Messiah
 - d. Jesus as miracle worker and healer Mt. 4:23-25, Mk. 2:1-12; Mk. 8:22-26, Lk. 8:49-56
 - e. Jesus as Savior Rom. 5:6-11
 - f. Jesus is Lord 1Cor. 12:3, (209)

III. MARY

A. DAYS IN HONOR OF MARY

December 8 Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception

Under the title of the Immaculate Conception, Mary is revered as the patroness of the United States and of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. In 1854, Pope Pius IX declared: "From the first moment of her conception, the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, by a unique grace and privilege of God and in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the human race, was preserved from all stain of Original Sin." (CCC #490-91)

December 12 Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe

Our Lady appeared to Juan Diego, a poor Mexican Indian, on December 9, 1531. Mary told Juan to build a Church. Juan went to the Bishop to tell him the Lady's request. The bishop did not believe him. Three days later, when Juan again went to the bishop and opened his cloak to give to the Bishop roses which the Lady had arranged in Juan's cloak, there was a picture of Mary on his cloak. The Bishop believed and built a church in honor of Mary. We honor Our Lady of Guadalupe because we recognize her concern for all people especially the suffering and the poor. December 9 is the feast of Saint Juan Diego.

January 1 Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

This feast of Mary is considered to be one of the oldest and most important feasts of Our Lady. In 431, the Council of Ephesus met to correct false teachings about Christ's divinity. The Council affirmed that Jesus is true God and true man. Since Mary is the Mother of Jesus, who is the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, she can truly be called the Mother of God. Devotion to Mary as the Mother of God continued to spread from this time to the present.

February 11 Memorial of Our Lady of Lourdes

Mary appeared to a fourteen year old girl named Bernadette Soubirous on February 11, 1858 in Lourdes, France. Our Lady appeared dressed in white with a blue sash, yellow roses at her feet and a rosary in her hand. Mary appeared eighteen times to Bernadette. The Lady told her many things among them that, although Bernadette would not find happiness in this life, she would find it in Heaven. She told her to pray for sinners and to do penance. The Blessed Mother told Bernadette to have a chapel built at the site where she appeared and that processions were to be held. When Bernadette asked the Lady what her name was, she said, "I am the Immaculate Conception." Through Bernadette, the Blessed Mother called sinners to a change in heart, to reach out and care for the sick, the poor, and those who had lost hope. Each year millions of people make their way through the mountainous country of southeastern France to the shrine at Lourdes. They come to ask Jesus through the intercession of his Mother for a cure of their body or soul.

IV. LITURGICAL YEAR

A. SEASONS

1. Lent (1095)

- a. Time of preparation for Easter
- b. From Ash Wednesday to Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday
- c. Liturgical color is purple: repentance, sorrow for sin

2. Holy Week

- a. Palm Sunday
- b. Holy Thursday
- c. Good Friday
- d. Holy Saturday

3. Easter Mt. 28:1-15, Mk. 16:1-8,
Lk. 24:1-12, Jn. 20: 1-10
- a. Easter Sunday: liturgical color is white
for joy, glory, innocence
- b. Ascension Thursday: liturgical color
is white Mt. 28: 16-20,
Mk. 16: 19-20,
Lk. 24: 50-53, Acts 1:6-12
- c. Pentecost: liturgical color is red
for the Holy Spirit Acts 2:1-4

V. SAINTS AND HOLY PEOPLE

December 6: St. Nicholas, Bishop

Many legends surround the life of St. Nicholas, who was a 4th century bishop in Greece. One of the most famous legends is of a poor man with three daughters. The man could not afford to help them get married, so St. Nicholas secretly threw bags of gold coins through the man's window. The third time, in order to avoid being seen by the poor man, St. Nicholas threw the bag of gold coins down the chimney. The practice of gift-giving at Christmas is inspired by the generosity St. Nicholas showed to the poor man and his daughters.

January 4: St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

Elizabeth Ann Bayley was born in 1774 in New York. She was raised in the Episcopal Church, and after her mother died she was influenced greatly by the charitable works of her step-mother. When she was 19, she married a wealthy businessman named William Seton. They had five children. Inspired by St. Vincent de Paul, she founded a ladies group committed to charity towards the poor. When her husband became sick in 1803, they traveled to Italy to see doctors. After his death, she became a Catholic in 1805 because of the influence of the Italian family with whom she stayed. Elizabeth Ann Seton opened a school in Baltimore, the first Catholic school in America, and started a community of sisters called the Sisters of Charity. She died in 1821 and was canonized in 1975. She was the first native-born North American to be raised to sainthood.

January 5: St. John Neumann

Born in Bohemia on March 20, 1811, John dedicated his life to missionary work in the United States especially in Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Maryland. He was ordained a priest in New York in 1836 and first worked with German immigrants near Niagara

Falls. As a priest and later as a bishop, he worked tirelessly to educate the members of the Church. He became Bishop of Philadelphia in 1853. He increased the number of parochial schools in Philadelphia, founding the first Catholic diocesan school system in the US. He also instituted the Forty Hours Devotion, and constructed a cathedral. Bishop Neumann died on January 5, 1860, at the age of 48 when he collapsed from a sudden stroke. He was beatified in 1963, and canonized by Pope Paul VI in June 1977.

VI. PRAYER

1. Traditional
 - a. *The Way of the Cross*
 - b. *The Rosary*
2. Personal Prayer
 - a. Spontaneous prayers of praise
 - b. Spontaneous prayers of intercession
 - c. Spontaneous prayers of thanksgiving
 - d. Spontaneous prayers of sorrow
3. Various prayer expressions (*See Pages 21-28*)
 - a. The "Jesus Prayer"
 - b. Choral Speech (Praying in Common)
 - c. Song and Gesture
 - d. Meditation

VII. SOCIAL JUSTICE

“The Church’s social teaching is a rich treasure of wisdom about building a just society and living lives of holiness amidst the challenges of modern society.... In this time of widespread violence and diminished respect for human life and dignity in our country and around the world, the Gospel of life and the biblical call to justice need to be proclaimed and shared with new clarity, urgency, and energy.”
Sharing Catholic Social Teaching Challenges and Directions, USCC, 1998, p. 4

Major Themes:

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers

Solidarity of the Human Family

A. AWARENESS OF THOSE WHO SUFFER HUNGER

1. Participate in the Holy Childhood Association (HCA), the Bishops' Relief Fund, Operation Rice Bowl
2. Encourage children to be more careful and not waste food

B. AWARENESS OF THE GOSPEL CALL TO BE PEACEMAKERS

1. At home
2. In school
3. In the community

Third Trimester

I. GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

Rom. 5:1-5

A. THE THIRD PERSON OF THE TRINITY

B. THE ONE WHO LIVES WITHIN US AND GIVES US THE GIFT OF GRACE

Lk. 3:15-16, 21-22,
Rom. 8:14-17,
2 Cor. 1:21-22

1. We receive the Holy Spirit for the first time at
Baptism.

(1265-70)

2. The Holy Spirit is the gift of God's love to us.

1 Jn. 4:7-13, (733-35)

C. THE ONE WHO HELPS US TO DO THE RIGHT THING

(1827, 1939-42, 2318,
2319, 2415-18)

1. Helps us respect ourselves

2. Helps us respect others

3. Helps us care for all creation

4. Helps us in our prayer

Rom. 8: 26-27

5. Helps us to tell the truth, to obey, to forgive

II. SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION

A. BAPTISM

Mt. 28:16-20,
Lk. 3:21-22, Eph. 4:1-6

1. Effects

(1262-65)

- a. Forgives all sin
- b. We are born again as children of God. (1213)
- c. We become temples of the Holy Spirit.

2. Symbols

- a. Water (1238)
- b. Oils (Oil of Catechumens and Chrism) (695, 1237)
- c. Sign of the Cross (1235)
- d. White Garment (1243)
- e. Candle (697)

3. Words (1240)

"*Name*, I baptize you in the name of the Father,
and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

4. Minister (1256)

- a. Ordinary minister - bishop, priest, deacon
- b. Case of necessity - any person who has
the right intention

B. CONFIRMATION

- 1. The Holy Spirit gives us special strength. (1285)
- 2. Chrism signifies the Holy Spirit. (1289)

C. EUCHARIST

- 1. Sacrament of Christian Initiation (1322)
- 2. Sacrament of love and a sign of unity (1323, 1380)

III. MARY

A. DAYS THAT HONOR MARY

March 25 Solemnity of the Annunciation

The Annunciation is the feast commemorating the appearance of the Angel Gabriel to Mary. The angel told her that she had been chosen to be the Mother of Jesus Christ, the Son of the Most High God. Mary, through the power of the Holy Spirit, became the Mother of Jesus.

May 31 Feast of the Visitation

After the Annunciation, Mary left immediately to visit her cousin, Elizabeth, who in her old age was soon to be the mother of John the Baptist. As soon as Elizabeth saw Mary, her own child leapt for joy within her. Elizabeth greeted Mary as the Mother of the Lord. Mary responded with the prayer known as the *Magnificat*. Mary's whole life was filled with joy at the good news that Jesus was coming. Mary brought Christ to the world and she brings him to everyone by the holiness of her words and example.

July 16 Memorial of Our Lady of Mount Carmel

Mount Carmel is located on the coast of Israel. For many centuries, many people who wanted a quiet place to pray and to live closely with God came together at Mount Carmel. Here a large monastery was built to honor the Mother of God. The members of the monastery were called Carmelites. On July 16, 1251, Mary appeared in England to St. Simon Stock, who was in charge of the Carmelite Order, and gave him a brown scapular as a sign of her love and protection. Wearing a scapular medal or cloth scapular has become a popular way of honoring the Blessed Mother.

August 15 Solemnity of the Assumption

Pope Pius XII, on November 1, 1950, infallibly defined what Catholics always believed: Mary was assumed body and soul into heaven. (CCC #966)

B. PRAYERS TO MARY

1. The *Hail Mary*
2. The *Rosary*

C. MAY DEVOTIONS

1. In the Church, the entire month of May is dedicated to Mary. Traditional color is light blue

2. Special activities
 - a. Make a shrine in the classroom and/or at home
 - 1) Statue or picture of Mary
 - 2) Rosary
 - 3) Flowers
 - b. Pray the Rosary
 - c. Encourage the family Rosary

IV. SAINTS AND HOLY PEOPLE

March 3: St. Katherine Drexel

St. Katharine Drexel was raised right here in Philadelphia. She was born in 1858 to an extremely wealthy family. The Drexel home was opened to the poor three days a week. From a young age, Katharine was shown what it means to be compassionate and charitable towards the poor. During a trip to Italy in 1886, Pope Leo XIII encouraged her to become a missionary and devote herself to God. She did and donated her massive inheritance to charity. In 1891, she took her first vows and established the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. She worked to change racial attitudes towards African Americans and American Indians. Her nuns labored to provide education and care to these under-served communities. St. Katharine established many missions for American Indians throughout the United States. During her life, she was known for her love of the Eucharist, her work promoting equal education for all, and her desire to reach out to those on the margins of society. She died in 1955 and was canonized by Blessed Pope John Paul II in 2000.

March 17: St. Patrick

St. Patrick is one of the most well-known saints in the Catholic Church. He lived in Roman Britain during the 5th century. When he was sixteen, he was kidnapped and sold as a slave in Ireland. He worked as a shepherd and spent much of his captivity in prayer. He escaped after six years and made his way home. Later, he had a vision in which he was called back to Ireland to convert the pagan people. He became a bishop and began his work in Ireland. St. Patrick became known for using local customs to better explain Christian truths. Legend tells us that he used a shamrock, a sacred plant to the pagan Irish, to help explain the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. He died in 460 after converting thousands.

July 26: Ss. Anne & Joachim

Tradition tells us that Anne and Joachim were the parents of Mary. Although never mentioned by name in any of the gospels, many legends tell the story of how Anne and Joachim were childless for many years. After prayer and penance, an angel appeared and promised them a child. In return, they promised to dedicate this child to God. Although we may never know any historical facts about Anne and Joachim, we know that Mary was raised to be pure, full of grace, and a dedicated mother and wife. Her parents must have given her a strong example of love and faith, and it is for this reason that we know they are worthy of honor of being called the patron saints of mothers and fathers.

V. WORSHIP

Foster full, conscious and active participation in liturgy by becoming familiar with key phrases in the Mass

1. Entrance Song - we gather as a community ready to celebrate
2. Responsorial Psalm - the Church's response to God's WORD
3. Response to the Reading - "Thanks be to God."
4. Response to the Gospel - "Praise to you, O Lord Jesus Christ."
5. Responses - "...and with your spirit," and "Amen."
6. Become familiar with phrases from the *Creed*
7. Memorial Acclamations
 - a. "We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you come again."
 - b. "When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we proclaim your Death, O Lord, until you come again."
 - c. "Save us, Savior of the world, for by your Cross and Resurrection you have set us free."

VI. SACRAMENTALS

Grade 1

- A. Blessed Ashes
- B. Palms
- C. Sign of the Cross
- D. Cross/Crucifix
- E. Paschal Candle
- F. Blessed statues, pictures, icons
- G. The Rosary

HOLYDAYS OF OBLIGATION

In the United States, there are six holydays:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Mary, Mother of God, January 1 | 4. All Saints, November 1 |
| 2. Ascension Thursday | 5. Immaculate Conception, December 8 |
| 3. Assumption, August 15 | 6. Christmas, December 25 |

Prayer

The Jesus Prayer

The **Jesus Prayer** is used as a “prayer word” simply by uttering the word “Jesus” or the phrase “Lord, Jesus, have mercy on me” in harmony with one’s breathing. This technique is a help to become “centered” or still within one’s being.

All the various activities in a child’s life can distract her/him from the important task of building a relationship with the all-holy, transcendent God. This *prayer form* is especially helpful if the classroom mood is restless or emotionally charged. It allows you and the children to become still, to become more aware of the Presence of God and to rest in that Presence.

Technique:

Address the children in words similar to these:

1. Let’s settle down and become very quiet so that we can experience God’s Presence here in this room, within us. God is as close to us as our own breath. Now close your eyes and take in a deep breath.
DO THIS WITH THE CHILDREN at this point.
Then, let it out very, very slowly.
2. Now let us breathe and pray all together.
Breathe in. **PAUSE**. Breathe out. **PAUSE**.
Breathe in and pray, “Jesus” or “Lord Jesus.”
Breathe out and pray, “have mercy on me.”

Repeat this as you continue to breathe.

Continue this exercise until you feel the room quiet. Then join the children entrusted to your care in prayer to the God who has loved them - and you - into being.

3. Time: Primary grades: 3 - 4 minutes
Intermediate: 4 - 5 minutes
Upper: 5 - 8 minutes

4. Other Prayer Words that could be used as a substitute:

“Lord Jesus - I love you.”

“Spirit of God - fill me with love.”

Feel free to use your favorite phrases.

Choral Speech (Praying in Common)

This *prayer form* invites all to pray as one voice in response to another through the use of selected religious readings or Scripture. The **Psalms** lend themselves to this type of reading. To develop an understanding of praying in unison, or as reply to another, it is necessary to communicate a sense of rhythm by reading, singing within parts, speaking in different voices.

Examples: “O” antiphons, Canticles (Magnificat, Benedictus), psalms, hymns, prayers, litanies, novena, etc.

Technique:

1. Make copies of the *choral reading* for each of the students.
2. Divide the children into groups and assign the parts to be read in unison rhythmically by each group.
3. Decide if any parts are to be read individually and assign those parts.

Song and Gesture

Singing is particularly popular with young children, but can be used when praying with children of all ages. Gesture helps the children to express their feelings through the use of body language. Combining song and gesture makes for a very expressive prayer form.

Technique:

1. Explain that gesture and song are acceptable *prayer forms*. Prayer is not just rote-recited prayers.
2. Choose a song with gestures with which you are familiar. Listen to the song and teach the gestures to the class.
3. Explain to the children that they are now going to create gestures of their own for a given song.
4. Upon choosing an appropriate hymn for the liturgical season, divide the children into groups. Assign each group a verse of the hymn. Instruct the group to create their own gestures for the assigned verse or chorus.
5. Have each group present their gestures to be learned by the entire class. This song can now be used during a prayer service.

Journal Keeping

This *prayer form* (tool) enables a student to reflect on the goals and directions of his/her life, and to appreciate and deepen a personal relationship with a loving Father. It provides a method to assess these experiences.

Technique: Grades 1 - 3

Journal Keeping could be adapted to the level of the student. Responses could be in written or picture form. Springboards to follow a religion lesson could be:

1. How would you feel if you had been at the Last Supper?
2. How do you think Jesus felt when His friends, the apostles, all walked away from Him?
3. If you were blind, how would you feel if Jesus helped you to see? What would you say to Him?

Grades 4 - 8

1. Present the value of journal-keeping as a means of writing personal thoughts and feelings.
2. Differentiate “diary” from “journal.” A diary records personal thoughts and feelings; a journal records personal feelings and thoughts addressed to God as Father, Jesus as Brother, Friend.
3. There is no one particular format. Journaling may be in the form of an informal letter (Dear Father, from Your son/daughter), (Dear Jesus, from Your pal), or a poem, etc.
4. A copybook should be set aside for this special purpose. This helps to make it a special book for conversations with God.

Discuss the idea of a spiritual journey with students: one in which they will discover things about themselves and God. Ask them to think of pictures, symbols, and words that help them to think about God and the things He has created.

Decorate the cover with pictures and / or words which represent aspects of the student’s self.

Discuss titles that would express the above discussion. Allow each student to design artistically a title page.

5. Establish a quiet atmosphere in the classroom for this special time. As a class, journal several times a week. However, students should feel free to use the journal at any time to express their thoughts and feelings to God.
6. Students need to be assured that no one will read their journals without permission. Periodic evaluation with students can take place to determine effectiveness of journaling.
7. Journaling is a student’s personal response from a springboard initiated by the teacher. Such springboards can come from:
 - the Religion lesson (Is there enough evidence to convict you of being a Christian? What are some signs in your life?)
 - a particular Scripture passage
 - inspirational quotes, such as found on calendars, etc.
 - reflections on personal talents, gifts or on those shared with us by others (In your life who reminds you of God and makes you feel special?)
 - problems encountered by the age group or within your class, e.g., How does it feel to be left out of a group, to be ignored?

Meditation

Meditation is a form of mental prayer in which one thinks reflectively about God, the Blessed Mother, the saints, or the mysteries of faith.

Technique:

1. Select a Scripture passage. Choose one that is suggested in the Religion textbook.
2. Establish quiet time for approximately two or three minutes before the reading of the passage.
3. Read the passage slowly, aloud or softly. Repeat a word or phrase to capture the attention of the listener.
4. Allow about three or four minutes of quiet time to awaken feelings.
5. Respond with or without words. Remind students of different types of prayer, praise, love, thanksgiving, and petition.

Suggestions for Levels

Primary:

Stress that mental prayer or meditation is listening and talking quietly to God. Encourage students to listen to a selected Scripture story or view a slide presentation or audio-visual reflection. Children should be directed to think about what God is saying to them in this story. Encourage a short response such as the following:

Thank you, God.
I love you, God.
I am sorry, God, etc.

One acclamation should be selected by the child and repeated silently. Allow approximately three minutes for this prayer. Some may choose to share their response with others, to draw a picture of themselves in the Scripture story, or print their short response in their prayer notebook.

Intermediate:

Repeat all or any of the above. Children may write their own prayer. They may volunteer to read their prayer. In order to keep the spirit of prayer, no more than one child=s prayer should be read at a given time.

Junior High:

Use any of the above suggestions.

Follow - up activity: Write a modern day story which parallels the Scripture story. Teacher would ask questions after the meditation such as: Whom would you like to be in the story? Why? What struck you about the story? Why?, etc.

Guided Meditation

Guided Meditation allows the children to consider a Bible verse. It encourages the children to consider their feelings and their relationship with God.

Technique:

1. Call the children to prayer, invite them to be still.
2. When they are still and quiet, invite the children to close their eyes. Remind them to listen very carefully and to try to keep their minds really focused on what you are going to read to them.
3. When they are quiet, read to them the story of Jesus blessing the children (Matthew 19: 13- 15). You may want to read it again after a short pause.
4. Allow a few minutes to pass. Then suggest the children imagine themselves as one of the children whom Jesus blessed. Encourage them to see themselves with Jesus, to imagine where they are. Suggest that they think about how it felt to be near Jesus, how it felt to be sent away from Jesus, and how it felt to be blessed by Jesus. Any ideas of your own would be great!
5. Allow a few minutes for children to consider this. Encourage the children to remember a time when they felt loved and blessed. Who was there? When did this happen? Where did his happen?

Grade 1

6. Older children may be more comfortable seated in a circle facing away from the center.
7. Many other gospel stories lend themselves to guided meditation. For example: The Ten Lepers, Jesus on the Road to Emmaus, or the parable of the Good Samaritan.

Follow Up:

Primary: Draw what you imagined. Write a prayer thanking Jesus for his blessing.

Intermediate: Discuss the blessings they have received. Write a prayer thanking God for these blessings.

Junior High: Journal their feelings during this meditation. Discuss times when you have not felt loved or blessed. Discuss how to help others feel loved and blessed.

Shared Prayer

This *prayer form* helps the students to become more aware and sensitive to God's presence in their lives and in the world around them and to aid them in responding to that presence by sharing prayer with others. This prayer may be spontaneous by having them respond to a few questions relating to a passage read from scripture, or it may take on a more structured format such as creating a litany or the format of the *Prayer of the Faithful* in the Eucharistic Liturgy.

Technique:

1. Take the time to create a prayerful environment. In some way, make a conscious effort to change the area from what the students ordinarily experience. Prepare the students by setting a tone of quiet reverence.
2. For **Intermediate** or **Junior High** levels select one of the students to do the reading of the Scripture passage. Give him/her the selection ahead of time and have him/her carefully prepared, read slowly, etc. For **Primary** levels, it may be best to do the reading yourself. You may want to use a children's Bible for easier understanding.
3. During the Lenten Season, we take on a new awareness of Jesus' life in the light of His passion, death, and His new life in glory. Select a passage from one of the Gospels on the passion of Jesus.

4. Allow for a period of silent reflection following the reading.
5. For **Primary** levels, prepare beforehand materials needed for drawing: paper, crayons, markers, etc. Have the children draw a picture of the story and then describe what they drew. You may aid them by asking a few questions, e.g. How do you think Jesus felt when the crowd mocked him and his close friends deserted him? Have they ever felt that no one cared?
6. For the **Intermediate** and **Junior High** levels, prior to the prayer experience, it will be necessary to prepare the students by familiarizing them with the formula used for the *General Intercessions* at Mass.
7. Help them to move from the time of Jesus to our own time. In the reflection on the passion of Jesus we are able to see that we are not alone in our suffering. When we condemn others because of race, color, or religion we are repeating the action of Pilate. Mary's sorrow today is shared by the families of sons and daughters of all the war-torn nations of the world. Reflected in Jesus' innocence are the innocent children in famine-afflicted countries, etc.
8. Invite them to write a prayer about one of the many concerns of our world today. These can be put together to be used as a *Prayer of the Faithful*.