

The Fraternity of Christian Doctrine

Publications Department

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INSTRUCTIONS FOR LAY TEACHERS

"Whoever carries them [the commandments] out and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:19).

The Chairman of Lay Teachers. When impracticable for a priest or religious to be superintendent of school year religious instruction classes, the Chairman of Teachers may be superintendent under the priest's direction. He or she consults with the priest director and coöperates in his plans for recruiting lay teachers. College and high school graduates, Catholic public school teachers, and persons who qualify by attendance at demonstration lessons are all prospects for the teachers' division of the Fraternity.

Lay teachers attend the regular meetings of the parish unit of the Fraternity in order to have a clear understanding of its purpose and organization. At the first division meeting of teachers, read and discuss the Fraternity *Constitution and Plan for Organizing Parish Units.*

SCHOOL YEAR RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION

The lay catechist has an important place, as it is hard to staff the instruction schools with an adequate number of religious. The lay teachers make it possible to group the



children properly by grades and to adapt the program to their individual needs and interests. The standard which the Confraternity is endeavoring to establish for the school-year instruction classes calls for a minimum of one and one-half hours of instruction, in one or two periods, each week for thirty-six weeks. In the Confraternity course of study, as embodied in the *School Year Religious Instruction Manuals* (Grades I, II; III-V; VI-VIII), the lessons of the Catechism are enriched with picture study, sacred stories, liturgy and suitable applications to everyday life. The goal of the catechist must be, not only to impart knowledge, but also to develop ideas, to instil ideals, to foster spiritual growth and to train in the practice of Christian virtue. Lay teachers who are privileged to take part in this apostolic work should study carefully the courses outlined and familiarize themselves with the materials designated by the Diocesan Office.

VACATION SCHOOLS

"The vacation school seeks to impress the message of religion through every faculty of the child capable of receiving it. Only one short period a day is devoted to the recitation of the Catechism. Teachers must be sought and trained to explain the simple prayers in a simple manner; to interpret sacred pictures to the children; to lead them in sacred music; to recount the Biblical stories and the lives of the saints in a way that will interest the children and at the same time point a message; to dramatize the Sacred History; to awaken the children to the beauty of the round of the Church's year; to develop an understanding love for the Mass and reverence for the privilege of serving at Mass; to cultivate taste and capacity for the care of the Altar and the sacred vestments — all this in addition to explaining simply the lessons of the Catechism;

moreover, to promote and supervise recreation and games, which may not be neglected as a religious influence . . .” (Most Rev. Edwin V. O’Hara, Bishop of Great Falls).

A working knowledge of the *Manuals of Religious Vacation Schools*, Grades I, II; III-V; VI-VIII, and of the materials listed therein, should be acquired.

CURRICULUM

The Confraternity suggests for the religious instruction curriculum of Catholic children attending public schools the courses indicated in leaflet No. 3B (*The Religious Vacation School*). Of course the schedule is possible only in the religious vacation school, with its half-day sessions.

Grading. Grading of classes follows general school grading. Grade grouping in small schools should follow the plan of the year-round small school grouping, rotating the courses of study within the group.

POINTS ON TEACHING

Prayer. The catechist should teach only a small part of each prayer at a time, and should take special pains to see that the child knows well what the words mean so that he may have an understanding, according to his capacity, of what the prayer conveys. The teacher will find it most satisfactory to correlate the prayers with the Christian Doctrine topics being discussed: for example, the Act of Contrition with instruction being given on the Ten Commandments and Sin, and on the Sacrament of Penance.

Picture Study and Sacred Story. We know that whatever enters the mind comes through the senses. The sense of sight and the sense of hearing are engaged in learning

through picture and story. Biblical, historical and liturgical pictures are available in abundance (the *Confraternity Manuals* contain lists of publishers). The lessons of the *Manuals* indicate also the Scriptural sources of the doctrines taught and point to other sources for stories of saints' lives, etc. Teachers should be encouraged to familiarize themselves with the Biblical sources of doctrine, and to give the children the simplified Bible stories.

Doctrine is the very heart of the work. All the other activities must center around it. The catechist should in conscience be well prepared for this imparting of the teachings of Christ. No teacher can hope for results in the matter of religious instruction from the old, parrot-like question-and-answer method. The catechist, imbued with a deep religious spirit and having the needed basic knowledge, must take time to see that each child understands as fully as he can the content of the doctrine.

Conduct and Religious Practice. The *Manuals* suggest practices for each lesson designed to apply to life the teaching of that lesson. A child must make use of the truths he learns in religion lessons by the daily practice of those truths, if religion teaching is not to be in vain. Practicing the fundamentals of English grammar makes for correct speech and writing; practicing the fundamentals learned in religion lessons makes for character building, for the formation of Christians who know their obligations as members of the Mystical Body. This is *essential* to the success of the program. One of the greatest means for making the child's religious practice fruitful is to have him offer up the particular practice he is engaged in for some definite purpose.

Liturgy. When the child is old enough to appreciate that every year the Church in her Liturgy lives through

all the great events in the life of Christ, and honors the saints, he should be taught the temporal and sanctoral cycles, especially by using the Missal. The *Confraternity Manuals* suggest liturgical teaching for each lesson.

PROJECT BOOKS

The Value of Making a Religious Project Book.

1. The development of a project gives the child an excellent opportunity for creative activity. After two hours of instruction and recitation in the vacation school, the child finds joy in applying the information he has acquired. He learns through doing.
2. The child remembers his lesson longer through having written the text in his book. It is a constant reminder and a review of the lessons.
3. The project book is often referred to by the child's parents and proudly shown to friends who visit the home. A well-made project book recalls again and again the religious truths which it presents.
4. Pictures for the projects have been chosen for their teaching value, and since they are selected from masterpieces, they also cultivate an appreciation for religious art.

Teacher's Model Project Book. It is essential that teachers develop in advance a model of the project book they are to use, not only to gain experience, but also to be able to present clearly to the pupils the work they are to undertake.

General Plan. Children are classified by school grades, so that those with like backgrounds of preparation will be grouped together. A project with accompanying instructions is provided for each class. Prayers, hymns, stories

and projects all correlate with the day's religious instruction.

Using the Project Book. Each book is designed for twenty lessons. The content of each is *taught* when the lesson is presented; otherwise the benefit of the project will be lost. Before the children put the day's lesson in the book, question them to see that they understand what they are doing.

The day's work should be put on the blackboard. When none is available, wrapping paper and crayolas make a fair substitute. Careful instruction should be given to the children before they begin work, and a completed book should be shown them. Help them to realize the kind of book they are going to make, to take pride in it, and to do the very best they can, even though this best does not compare with the work done by the more talented members of the class. Some of the children write or print very slowly, and for these it is often necessary to shorten the lesson. Others, who are very quick, can be given crayolas to color and decorate the pages.

Materials needed. Each child should have a booklet, pencil, eraser, ruler, crayolas, and an envelope in which to keep the work. Pictures, paste and patterns are supplied as needed.

Ruler — Narrow strips of cardboard 6 inches long may be used. Mark off lengths of 1, $\frac{1}{2}$ and $\frac{1}{4}$ inch.

Envelope — Keep each child's work in a separate envelope. These can be made from wrapping paper or strong wall paper. Make them 2 inches longer than the project book. Write the child's name plainly in the upper right-hand corner.

Patterns — A sheet of patterns usually accompanies each project.

Pictures — If each child cannot be supplied with scissors, it is a good plan to have all the pictures that will be needed for one lesson cut and trimmed. Keep pictures of the same kind in a separate envelope or box.

Nihil obstat. Henry J. Zolzer, Censor librorum.

Imprimatur. † Thomas H. McLaughlin, Bishop of Paterson.

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In ordering, designate Form No. 4B.

It is a good plan to have all the pictures that will be needed for one lesson cut and trimmed. Keep pictures of the same kind in separate envelopes or boxes. A lesson will be lost if the pictures are not ready to be used when the lesson is presented; otherwise the interest of the children will be lost. Before the children put the day's lesson in the book, question them to see that they understand what they are doing.

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