

# Guidelines for the Faith Formation and Development of Catholic Students

Leaving  
Certificate  
Religious  
Education  
Syllabus

Religious  
Education:  
A Curriculum  
Framework  
for Senior  
Cycle

The Irish  
Catholic  
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Conference



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Abbreviations:

*CCC: Catechism of the Catholic Church; CT: Catechesi tradendae; DV: Dei verbum;  
GCD: General Catechetical Directory; GDC: General Directory for Catechesis;  
NA: Nostra aetate; RDECS: Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School;  
SC: Sacrosanctum concilium*

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Leaving Certificate  
Religious Education  
Syllabus







## Introduction

We welcome the introduction of the Department of Education and Science (*DES Leaving Certificate Religious Education Syllabus*) as a valuable contribution to the religious education of young people in Ireland. It offers young people the language to engage in open dialogue with others of their own faith, with people of different faiths and with those who propose a non-religious worldview. The Syllabus also contributes to the spiritual and moral development of the student. This is in keeping with the Church's central mission of building up the Christian community within the context of the Kingdom/Reign of God. A faith based on genuine knowledge and understanding, as well as reflective attitudes and skills, makes an important contribution to the formation of young people.

Faith is a way of living life, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, based on a loving and trusting relationship with God, who is most fully revealed in Jesus Christ. Our response to the Risen Lord involves developing our Christian faith and spirituality: deepening our knowledge of the faith, liturgical and moral formation, prayer, belonging to community, and engaging in ecumenical and inter-faith dialogue (*GDC* 85–6).

## Faith Formation in Religious Education

The 'general aim of Religious Education is to awaken people to faith and to help them throughout their lives to deepen and strengthen that faith' (*Religious Education Syllabus* 1982, p.4).

Faith formation in Religious Education as outlined in the *General Directory for Catechesis* (1997) identifies the following elements:

### Knowledge of the faith

The personal faith of young people is nourished when they are offered the opportunity to engage with questions of meaning and to explore a variety of responses to these questions. By deepening their knowledge of the faith, an opportunity is provided for them to explain their faith to others.

### Liturgical education

Young people are invited into a full, conscious and active participation in the various forms of liturgy, and especially in the Eucharist, which occupies a unique place as 'the Sacrament of sacraments' (*CCC* 1211).

### Moral formation

Young people are called to conversion, walking in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. As they mature in the moral life, they discover 'the social consequences of the demands of the Gospel', which is the climax of all saving truth and moral teaching (*GDC* 85).

### Prayer

Helping people to learn how to pray as Jesus prayed invites them to discover the action of God in their lives. Prayer is the living relationship between God and humanity; it is the response of faith to the promise of salvation and a response of love to the Son of God.





### Community life

Christianity is lived in a community, united in Christ and centred on him. Formation in faith prepares young people to live in community and to participate actively in the life and mission of the Church, including commitment to the ecumenical dimension of renewal among Christians.

### Missionary initiation

Formation in faith prepares young people to live as disciples of Jesus in their professional, cultural and social lives. This discipleship invites them to proclaim the message of Christ to the whole world while joyfully embracing respectful dialogue among religions.

## Supporting Faith Formation in Religious Education

The school does not exist in isolation. There needs to be partnership and shared responsibility between home, school and parish in working to support the journey of young people towards maturity of faith. For faith formation to flourish in a school setting, the following factors should be considered:

- The faith formation of Catholic students takes place within the wider context of the whole school environment. In keeping with the spirit of Catholic education, the potential of the students will be attained in such personal, social and spiritual values as honesty, justice, telling the truth, respect, compassion, love and mercy.
- The effectiveness of religion classes is enhanced when entrusted to those teachers who are committed to the faith, professionally qualified to teach religion, and willing to do so.
- School-based Religious Education, like any other subject, should have the support of the whole school. In this regard, diocesan advisers have a key role in supporting religion teachers and school management.
- The role of the school chaplain is fundamental in sustaining the personal and spiritual growth of the young person. The chaplain has a vital contribution to make to the ongoing discussion of the school's characteristic spirit. He/she works with the school principal and authorities, the teachers and, in a special way, the pastoral care team and parent body. Together they can build a truly Christian environment in the school.
- The publishing and use of good quality teaching and learning resources is to be encouraged. These include school textbooks, texts dealing with specific related areas, interactive resources, CD-ROMS, videos, other relevant material, and resource rooms and places of sacred space.
- The parish has the responsibility of *integrating* all Catholic students into the life of the Church. These guidelines draw our attention to the importance of catechesis and its relationship with home, school, parish and the wider Church community.



## Section A: The Search for Meaning and Values

*‘The human person’s openness to truth and beauty, sense of moral goodness, freedom, conscience and longings for the infinite and for happiness, provokes questions about God’s existence.’ (CCC 33)*

Section A of the Syllabus offers a philosophical foundation for the study of religion. It situates religious belief in the context of a universal experience – the quest for meaning and values – and grounds its study in human experience. Study of this section of the Syllabus can, therefore, contribute enormously to an understanding of the place of the Christian religion in conjuring with the questions of meaning asked by humankind throughout the centuries.



### Aims of State Syllabus

To present religions as systematic responses to perennial questions common to all peoples about the meaning of life in the world.

To develop an understanding of the nature of this search for meaning through an examination of questions arising in personal experience.

To examine philosophical and religious answers to the questions of the meaning of life and its ultimate grounding.

To examine the philosophical and religious answers to the questions of the existence of God and the nature of divine revelation.

To examine the role of religion in the secular world.

### Philosophical Aspects for Catholic Students

There is a common set of questions to be found in each and every recorded culture since the dawn of civilisation.

The history of philosophy is an important reminder that the issues surrounding religious belief are ones that define human nature.

The core issue of the objectivity of values such as justice, goodness, truth and love.

The transcendent dimension of the quest for meaning and values.

The manner in which Christianity can be understood as a response to foundational questions.

The possibility of encouraging students to grapple with non-theistic worldviews within an overall framework that is hospitable to religious belief.

### Catholic Guideline References for State Syllabus

- Part 1.1 ‘The contemporary context’, *General Catechetical Directory*, par. 84.
- Part 1.2 ‘The tradition of search’, *Presbyterorum ordinis*, par. 15, Vatican II.
- Part 2.1 ‘The language of symbol’, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pars. 1146–52.
- Part 2.2 ‘The tradition of response’, *Dei verbum*, pars. 3, 5, Vatican II.
- Part 3.1 ‘The gods of the ancients’, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pars. 203–9, 2112.
- Part 3.2 ‘The concept of revelation’, *Dei verbum*, pars. 1–26, Vatican II.
- Part 3.3 ‘Naming God past and present’, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pars. 31–5, 39, 43.
- Part 4.1 ‘Religion as a source of communal values’, *General Catechetical Directory*, par. 66; 1 Cor 12:26–27.
- Part 4.2 ‘Secular sources of communal values’, *General Directory for Catechesis*, pars. 171, 193, 194.





## Section B: Christianity: Origins and Contemporary Expressions

*‘The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch, but also in communion and intimacy, with Jesus Christ.’ (CT 5)*

Section B emphasises the main elements of Jesus’ teaching, his death and his resurrection. In offering a socio-cultural perspective of Jesus, it opens the student to meeting and knowing the historical Jesus and his message. Study of this section of the Syllabus can deepen our understanding of the Christological aspects of Christianity.

### Aims of State Syllabus

To present the study of origins as the key to evaluating the present and envisaging an alternative future.

To develop an appreciation of the early Christian movement and to correlate this with contemporary expressions of Christianity.

To identify the distinctive features of Christianity within the historical, social and religious context of both the Palestinian and the Greco-Roman society of the first century CE.

To recognise the diversity and adaptability of the movement in addressing the search for meaning that was a feature of life at that time.

To examine contemporary religious and Christian identity in the light of our understanding of its founding vision and its earliest expressions.

### Christological Aspects for Catholic Students

Jesus is the Son of God.

Jesus is divine-human.

Jesus died to save us and unite us with God and one another.

Jesus transformed the value of suffering and death.

Jesus’ choice of his disciples and the foundation of the Church as a way of bringing his message of forgiveness, peace and love to the world.

The understanding that Christians see themselves as called to live the life of Jesus, bringing the Good News to all, guided and challenged by the Holy Spirit.

Christians, moved by God’s Holy Spirit, pray to Jesus and, through Jesus, to his loving Father.

*(Section G may be used to look at the various ways in which Christians pray.)*

Within Christianity, the support and challenge of community in living the life of Christ, is not only crucial but requires of us all an ecumenical hunger that ‘all may be one’ (Jn 17:21).

### Catholic Guideline References for State Syllabus

Part 1.1 ‘The pattern of return’, *General Directory for Catechesis*, par. 32.

Part 1.2 ‘Jesus and his message in contemporary culture’, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, par. 477.

Part 2.1 ‘The impact of Rome’, *Populorum progressio*, pars. 7, 10, 11, Paul VI.

Part 2.2 ‘Evidence for Jesus of Nazareth’, *Dei verbum*, par. 10, Vatican II.

Part 2.3 ‘The teachings of Jesus and their impact on the community’, *Evangelii nuntiandi*, par. 8, Paul VI.

Part 2.4 ‘Jesus as Messiah’, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pars. 712–16, 840.

Part 3.1 ‘Conflict with establishment’, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pars. 574–6.

Part 3.2 ‘The death and resurrection of Jesus’, *Sacrosanctum concilium*, pars. 5, 6, Vatican II.

Part 4.1 ‘The first Christian communities as seen through the writing of Paul’, *Ad gentes*, pars. 13, 14, Vatican II.

Part 5.1 ‘Interpreting the message today’, *Populorum progressio*, par. 81, Vatican II, Paul VI.

Part 5.2 ‘Trends in Christianity’, *General Catechetical Directory*, par. 53.



## Section C: World Religions

*‘The link between the Church and non-Christian religions is, in the first place, the common origin and end of the human race, as well as the “many seeds of the word which God has sown in these religions”.’ (GDC 86)*

Section C involves the study of world religions and is to be welcomed as an important aspect of the Syllabus, adding flavour to the whole programme as well as providing the focus for this section. For the Catholic student, an understanding of other religions contributes to a deeper appreciation of what membership of the Christian community offers. Study of this section shows that the Church expects all its members to engage in inter-faith dialogue. Vatican II underlined an appreciation of other religious faiths when it stated:

*‘The Catholic Church rejects nothing of those things which are true and holy in these religions. It regards with respect those ways of acting and living and those precepts and teachings which, though often at variance with what it holds and expounds, frequently reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens everyone.’ (Nostra aetate 2).*

### Aims of State Syllabus

To identify religion as a living and evolving phenomenon and to examine some of the different types of religion.

To explore at least two of the major living religious traditions and to compare and contrast elements of these.

To examine some contemporary manifestations of religion in major traditions, minor traditions and in new religious movements.

### Inter-faith Aspects for Catholic Students

When approaching the study of particular religions, it is important to allow the religious tradition to have its own voice.

Whenever possible, invite a member of the religious tradition to meet the students with a view to dealing with the issues explored in this section.

Emphasis should be placed on the experience and living reality of how the particular religion is practised.

Comparisons and contrasts may be dealt with as they emerge.

The study of other religions enables students to recognise that other faiths provide identity within their respective communities.



### Catholic Guideline References for State Syllabus

- Part 1.1 ‘Religion as a worldwide phenomenon’, *General Catechetical Directory*, par. 5.
- Part 1.2 ‘Primary religion’, *Evangelii nuntiandi*, par. 26, Paul VI.
- Part 1.3 ‘The Holy’, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pars. 2012, 2029. Is 5:6; Nm 28:22; Mk 1:24; Eph 1:4.
- Part 2.1 ‘The vision of salvation’, *Evangelii nuntiandi*, par. 53, Paul VI.
- Part 2.2 ‘The community of believers’, *Nostra aetate*, par. 1, Vatican II.
- Part 2.3 ‘A celebrating tradition’, *General Catechetical Directory*, par. 3.
- Part 2.4 ‘Challenges to the tradition’, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, par. 2120.
- Part 2.5 ‘Inter-faith dialogue’, *Dignitatis humanae*, pars. 2–8, Vatican II.
- Part 3.1 ‘Cults and sects’, *Evangelii nuntiandi*, par. 52, Paul VI.
- Part 3.2 ‘Some new religious movements’, *Gravissimum educationis*, par. 3, Vatican II.
- Part 4.1 ‘A living tradition’, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, par. 2104.
- Part 4.2 ‘Traditions in dialogue’, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, par. 2105.





## Section D: Moral Decision-Making

*'The Sermon on the Mount, in which Jesus takes up the Decalogue, and impresses upon it the spirit of the Beatitudes, is an indispensable point of reference for the moral formation which is most necessary today.'* (GCD 85)

Section D involves the study of many aspects of morality. For Catholic students this leads to a deeper understanding of morality as accepting self and others as part of God's plan of creation; Christians act out of love of God and neighbour. In this section students should deepen their understanding that growth in morality requires the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the knowledge and practice of the teachings of the Church.

### Aims of State Syllabus

To examine some understandings of 'morality' and the implication of these understandings for personal decision-making.

To identify the elements and context of a moral decision.

To introduce and examine the Christian moral vision and the moral vision of other major world religions.

To explore the relationship between morality and law.

### Moral Aspects for Catholic Students

In presenting the Hebrew experience of morality, especially the Decalogue, alert students to its specific covenantal context, and highlight morality as a response to a God who has taken the initiative in love.

Morality and the Christian tradition involves discipleship – Jesus invites people to follow him rather than an ethical code or vision.

Following Jesus involves a radical personal conversion (*metanoia*).

Christian morality is not only about what we do, but who we are becoming.

The fundamental response to sin in the teachings of Jesus is one of forgiveness. The Christian Gospel begins with a call to repent and believe.

The statement of the Irish Bishops on Conscience (1998) provides useful clarifications on the objective nature of morality and the role of moral teaching in a pluralist society.

While it is necessary to present different ethical theories critically, it is important not to leave students with the impression that all the theories are equally valid and that moral decision-making is simply a matter of applying one's preferred theory.

The life of St Thomas More highlights the authority of conscience and the potential conflict that may emerge between the demands of conscience and civil authority.

### Catholic Guideline References for State Syllabus

Part 1.1 'The meanings of morality', *Gaudium et spes*, par. 30, Vatican II.

Part 1.2 'Why be moral?' *General Directory for Catechesis*, par. 18.

Part 1.3 'The common good and individual rights', *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pars. 1905–12.

Part 2.1 'The relationship between morality and religion', *General Directory for Catechesis*, par. 23.

Part 2.2 'Morality and the Christian tradition', *General Catechetical Directory*, par. 63. Ex 20:1–7; Jer 32:38; Mt 28:20.

Part 2.3 'Religious perspectives on moral failure', *Veritatis splendor*, pars. 1–120, John Paul II.

Part 3.1 'Morality in a pluralist society', *General Directory for Catechesis*, pars. 193, 194.

Part 3.2 'Moral theories in action', *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pars. 1929–33. Mt 5:13–48.

Part 4.1 'Towards moral maturity', *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pars. 1711–16, Mt 5:3–12.

Part 4.2 'Conscience', *Gaudium et spes*, par. 16, Vatican II.

Part 4.3 'Decision-making in action', *Veritatis splendor*, pars 84–108, John Paul II.



## Section E: Religion and Gender

*‘God transcends the human distinction between the sexes.  
God is neither male nor female, just God.’ (CCC 239)*



Section E identifies that human dignity, and its expression in the complementarity of female and male, is, in every generation, a significant issue, both in society and for the Church. Male and female students should be encouraged to understand that their search for meaning and values is of equal importance. This section shows that Scripture, tradition and contemporary teachings of the Church can contribute usefully to a deep understanding of the relationships between people and the significance of gender issues in religion.

### Aims of State Syllabus

To develop a knowledge and understanding of the role of gender in religious experience and tradition.

To explore the relationship between gender roles in societies and religions, in particular the Christian traditions.

To develop an awareness of the particular contribution of women to the development of religious traditions.

### Gender Aspects for Catholic Students

According to the scriptures, both the Old and the New Testaments, women and men are created with equal dignity. Human beings are created in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:27). Human beings are equal in the eyes of Christ (Gal 3:28).

The mothers of the faith, alongside the fathers, played their part in the history of salvation. God’s revelation comes just as effectively through Eve as through Adam; through Sarah and Hagar (the wives of Abraham) as through Abraham; through Hannah, the mother of Samuel, as through Samuel himself.

Jesus gave women a place of prime importance. Of the woman who washed his feet with her hair, Jesus told those who complained, that what she had done ‘would be told in memory of her’ (Mk 14:6); he allowed many women who had followed him from Galilee to *minister* to him (Mt 27:55); he showed himself as the Messiah to the Samaritan woman, who would have been seen as outside the community of believers at that time (Jn 4:39); he raised Lazarus from the dead out of his love for Mary and Martha (Jn 11:5); he revealed himself risen from the dead to Mary Magdalene, whom he commissioned as apostle to the apostles (Jn 10:18).

God entered the womb of a woman for the salvation of humankind (Lk 1:30–31). Mary, the mother of Jesus, is a woman of the Church, situated in time and history. She says ‘Yes’ to God’s call, and in Luke she recites the *Magnificat*, glorifying God for his

wonderful deeds (Lk 1:46–56). She gives men and women an understanding of what it means to be a Christian disciple (Paul VI).

In the writings of the Church, the voices of men have been heard to a greater degree than those of women. The role and place of women and men in society and in religion needs to be explored creatively in order to shape a just and mutually respectful future together. In particular, the Church’s teaching on Mary is best understood as primarily revealing, to both men and women, the mystery of Christ and his Church.

The baptised share in the priesthood of Christ. The roles of both lay and ordained ministries are important to the life of the Church by contributing to the Reign/Kingdom of God.

### Catholic Guideline References for State Syllabus

- Part 1.1 ‘Gender and society’, *Gaudium et spes*, par. 9, Vatican II. Gal 3:28.
- Part 1.2 ‘The place of women and men in the sacred texts and living traditions of different religions’, *Gaudium et spes*, pars. 8, 9, 60, Vatican II. Gen 1:27; Gal 3:28.
- Part 2.1 ‘Woman and men in the Hebrew scriptures’, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, par. 489. Gen 2:1–25; 11:27; 12:10; Ex 2:11–25.
- Part 2.2 ‘Women and men in the Christian scriptures’, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pars. 355, 383. Mt 28:1–9; Mk 16:12–13; Acts 18:26.
- Part 2.3 ‘Changing perspectives on Mary, mother of Jesus’, *Marialis cultus*, pars. 1–58, Paul VI. Lk 1:26–38; 46–56; Jn 2:1–12; 19:25–27.
- Part 2.4 ‘Gender perspectives on empowerment and exclusion’, *Apostolicam actuositatem*, par. 2, Vatican II.
- Part 3.1 ‘Feminist theologies and spiritualities’, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, par. 2853. Rom 16:5–7; Phil 4:3; Col 4:15.
- Part 3.2 ‘The contributions of women’, *Mulieris dignitatem*, pars. 28–31, John Paul II.





## Section F: Issues of Justice and Peace

*'Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world, fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel.'* (*Justice in the World*, 1971)

Section F shows that issues of justice and peace are an essential element in the preaching of the Gospel and provide a welcome engagement with faith as a way of living in the world conscious of our relationships with others. In this section, young people are encouraged to show interest in the issues that affect the world and its peoples, and this section provides the possibility of involving them in serious discussion about the practical issues associated with love of neighbour.

### Aims of State Syllabus

To introduce the principles and skills of social analysis.

To encourage the application of these principles and skills in the local context and in a selection of national and global contexts.

To identify and analyse the links between religious belief and commitment, and action for justice and peace.

To explore the relationship between the concepts of justice and peace and the challenge to sustain this relationship, particularly in relation to the Irish context.

### Justice Aspects for Catholic Students

Familiarise students with the body of documents known as 'Catholic Social Teaching'.

Vatican documents on Liberation Theology (1984 and 1986) will help students to approach the question of 'social analysis' from a perspective hospitable to a faith stance. The main points in this regard might keep in mind that:

- not all injustice can be explained in terms of politics and/or social structures;
- personal sin and personal conversion should be addressed;
- no particular worldview can be seen as the cause of all wrongs in society;
- a valid pluralism of approaches in the human and social sciences is a positive contribution;
- it is difficult to read the Bible as a means of justifying any particular set of political convictions.

Environmentalism should be taught on the basis of accurate scientific knowledge and theory.

Students should be helped to develop sensitivity to a variety of perspectives, while also being alert to the risks of relativism and intolerance.

### Catholic Guideline References for State Syllabus

Part 1.1 'Social analysis', *Populorum progressio*, pars. 1-87, Paul VI.

Part 1.2 'Social analysis in action', *The Work of Justice*, pars. 6–129, Irish Bishops. Is 1:17; Lk 4:18; 16:19–25.

Part 2.1 'Visions of justice', *Justice in the World*, par. 5, Synod of Bishops. Jer 5:26–28; Amos 5:1–17; Lk 6:20–26.

Part 2.2 'Visions of peace', *Pacem in terris*, par. 116, Paul VI. Ps 122:1–9; Is 2:4–5; Mt 5:9; Jn 14:27–31.

Part 2.3 'Religious perspectives on justice and peace', *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, pars. 1–49, John Paul II. Pss 7–10.

Part 2.4 'Violence', *Human Life is Sacred*, pars. 45–47, Irish Bishops. Mt 5:43–44; Jn 13:34–35; Rom 7:21–23.

Part 3.1 'Religion and the environment', *Justice in the World*, par. 70, Synod of Bishops.

Part 3.2 'Religious traditions and the environment', *The Work of Justice*, par. 65, Irish Bishops. Lev 25: 23–28; Pss 19, 148.



## Section G: Worship, Prayer and Ritual

*'In the living tradition of prayer, each Church proposes to her faithful, according to her historic, social and cultural context, a language for prayer: words, melodies, gestures, iconography.'* (CCC 2663)

Section G of the programme holds open the possibility of inviting students to a lively encounter with the lived tradition of prayer, ritual and worship in our society. From a Catholic perspective, the Syllabus allows for experiences of prayer and sacrament which are completely integrated into the Catholic tradition. Young Catholics should be given real experience of the variety of prayer, worship and ritual styles available in the Catholic tradition and be helped to understand how the rituals of other religions place their members in relationship with God.



### Aims of State Syllabus

- To develop an awareness of the spiritual dimension of human life.
- To explore some of the expressions of this spiritual dimension in a variety of cultures and contexts.
- To examine some of the patterns of ritual and worship found in religions, with particular attention to the Christian traditions.
- To analyse and evaluate the impact of those patterns on Irish society and culture.
- To encourage an openness to personal spiritual development.

### Liturgical Aspects for Catholic Students

- Invite the local priest to meet the class to discuss his work (especially the sacramental dimension).
- The sacraments confer the grace they signify when they are celebrated worthily in faith.
- Visit local monastic sites and places of pilgrimage.
- Attendance at baptisms and funerals.
- Encounters with prayer and liturgy preparation groups.
- When the presence of God has been encountered, the person of faith responds in prayer and worship.
- Prayer is the living relationship between God and humanity; it is a response of faith to the promise of salvation and a response of love to the Son of God.
- The Eucharist contains and expresses all forms of prayer.

### Catholic Guideline References for State Syllabus

- Part 1.1 'Symbol', *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pars. 1146–9.
- Part 1.2 'Ritual', *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pars. 1153–5.
- Part 1.3 'Sacrament', *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, par. 1116.
- Part 2.1 'The need for reflection', *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pars. 2725, 2786–8.
- Part 2.2 'The human being as pray-er', *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pars. 2568, 2599.
- Part 2.3 'Contexts for prayer', *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pars. 2628, 2696.
- Part 2.4 'The praying tradition', *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pars 17, 2625, 2698. Pss 1–150; Mt 6:9–15; Rom 1:10.
- Part 3.1 'Meditation', *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pars. 2705–8. Mt 14:23.
- Part 3.2 'The contemplative traditions', *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pars. 2709–19. Mt 26:36–46.
- Part 3.3 'The mystic tradition', *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. pars. 2692–6.



## Section H: The Bible: Literature and Sacred Text

*‘Catechesis will always draw its content from the living source of the word of God transmitted in Tradition and the Scriptures.’ (CT 27)*

Section H of the course gives students a rich introduction to the Bible, both as sacred text and as literature. It should help students to appreciate what the Bible is, how it came to be, and why this collection of books is seen as normative for the faith of the Church.

### Aims of State Syllabus

To explore how the Bible has functioned as a literary and sacred text since its formation.

To examine the impact of the Bible on contemporary society.

To examine how the Bible was formed as a text.

To introduce the variety of literary genres found in the Bible.

To explore the understanding of the Bible as Word of God and as expression of the relationship between God and humankind.

### Biblical Aspects for Catholic Students

Help the students to read the Bible more critically through an appreciation of the traditions that underlie the text, the different literary forms used by the writers and the use of symbolic language. This includes the study of individual texts.

In Sacred Scripture, God speaks to humankind in a human way, and the reader must be attentive to the text and context.

The course as outlined should help to give students an appreciation of the profound influence that the Bible has had on religious thought and on the cultural life of people down the ages (language, literature, art and music).

In a Catholic context, reference to the importance and relevance of the Prophets in the Judaeo-Christian tradition could be addressed. It would, among other things, help students to appreciate how traditions that developed in oral form are preserved in written documents.

The Pauline literature, which has had such a profound influence on Christian theology, should be explored by the students.

The course leaves plenty of scope for the teacher to apply the Bible to the religious life and faith experience of the pupils in a way that supports their religious commitment.

### Catholic Guideline References for State Syllabus

- Part 1.1 ‘The Bible as living classic’, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pars. 101–8.
- Part 1.2 ‘The Bible as sacred text’, *Dei verbum*, par. II, Vatican II. Heb 1:1–3.
- Part 2.1 ‘The formation of the Hebrew Scriptures’, *Dei verbum*, pars. 14–16, Vatican II.
- Part 2.2 ‘The gospels’, *Dei verbum*, pars. 7–8, 10, Vatican II.
- Part 3.1 ‘The language of story’, *General Directory for Catechesis*, pars. 71, 95.
- Part 3.2 ‘The language of reflection’, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pars. 2585–9. Pss 4:1–8; 8:1–9; 16:1–11; 19:1–6; 38:1–22.
- Part 3.3 ‘The language of symbol’, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, par. 1145.
- Part 4.1 ‘The Hebrew Scriptures’, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pars. 121–3. Ex 20:1–21; 1 Sam 2:1–10; Is 52:13–53:12.
- Part 4.2 ‘The New Testament’, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pars. 124–7. Mk 9:2–13; Lk 6:20–49, Jn 1:1–18.



## Section I: Religion: The Irish Experience

*'Catechesis... proposes the Gospel in a vital way, profoundly, by going to the very roots of culture and of the cultures of humankind.'* (GDC 204)

Section I focuses on Pre-Christian Ireland, Christianity in Ireland and Contemporary Patterns of Religious Belief, which offers great possibilities for the religious development of Irish Catholics. The Syllabus is deeply rooted in the cultural heritage of the past and it enables the student to appreciate the religious dimension of that past. This is particularly important in these times, when so many people are trying to return to their 'roots', and when many Christians are seeking inspiration in 'Celtic Christianity'.

### Aims of State Syllabus

To develop a knowledge and understanding of some of the characteristics of religion in Ireland from ancient times to the present day.

To compare and contrast these characteristics with religious trends and movements in Europe and around the world.

To explore the nature of the Christianity that came to Ireland and its impact at key moments in Irish history.

To become aware of the plurality of religious traditions that have existed, and continue to exist, in Ireland.

### Irish, Religious and Cultural Aspects for Catholic Students

Studying our pagan past and the religious insights that may be detected in archaeological and literary remains, bears witness to the religious sensibilities of our pre-Celtic and pre-Christian ancestors.

The focus on early Christian times enables the student to appreciate the rich religious culture of the so-called 'Golden Age' of Irish Christianity.

An awareness of the role of Irish monks on the Continent will remind the student that the Irish have always been part of Europe.

A study of the Reform movements (Céili Dé, twelfth-century reform, reformation and counter-reformation in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, contemporary reform movements) will bring out the strengths and weaknesses of our Christian past in Ireland.

The final part of the section on 'Christianity in

Ireland' brings the student face to face with contemporary issues in Irish Christianity, as well as the changing pattern of belief in Ireland today.

The presence in Ireland today of people from other faith traditions and of people with no faith tradition suggests the possibility of a lively and stimulating debate and the opportunity to engage in ecumenical and inter-faith dialogue.

### Catholic Guideline References for State Syllabus

- Part 1.1 'Patterns of change in religious belief', *Evangelii nuntiandi*, par. 25, Paul VI.
- Part 2.1 'Local evidence', *Ad gentes*, par. 6, Vatican II.
- Part 2.2 'National evidence', *Ad gentes*, par. 6, Vatican II.
- Part 3.1 'The coming of Patrick', *General Directory for Catechesis*, par. 58.
- Part 3.2.1 'Religion, spirituality and land', *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pars. 295–300. Gen 1:1–31; 2:1–17; Rom 8:19–23.
- Part 3.2.2 'Religion, spirituality and monasticism', *Perfectae caritatis*, pars. 1–5, Vatican II.
- Part 3.2.3 'Religion, spirituality and reforms', *Lumen gentium*, par. 1, Vatican II.
- Part 3.2.4 'Religion and the ideas of the Enlightenment', *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, par. 2111.
- Part 3.2.5 'Religion in contemporary Ireland', *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, par. 2087, *Instruction on Christian Liberation and Freedom*, par. 80. Mk 12:13–17.







## Section J: Religion and Science

*‘The student who is able to discover the harmony between faith and science will, in future professional life, be better able to put science and technology to the service of men and women, and to the service of God.’ (RDECS 54)*

Section J points out that it is impossible to live in the world today without being affected, directly or indirectly, by the findings of modern science. New discoveries and the ever-expanding horizons of knowledge are significant sources of awe and wonder about the universe we inhabit. Viewed through the eyes of faith, they have the capacity to deepen our experience and understanding of the mystery of God.

### Aims of State Syllabus

To develop an awareness of the changing nature and methods of the scientific and theological enterprises.

To examine some key moments in the history of the relationship between religion and science.

To examine some of the issues and debates concerning the contemporary relationship between religion and science.

To explore the ethical implications of scientific progress.

### Religious/Scientific Aspects for Catholic Students

Contrary to popular perception, the relationship between science and religion today is not one of permanent hostility. Many see important points of convergence and complementarity between science and religion, as well as points of divergence and difference.

Equally important is the fact that the dialogue between science and religion reveals that there is no such thing as a value-free, neutral approach to science or theology. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994) points out: ‘It is an illusion to claim moral neutrality in scientific research and its applications. On the other hand, guiding principles cannot be inferred from simple technical efficiency, or from the usefulness accruing to some at the expense of others or, even worse, from prevailing ideologies. Science and technology by their very nature require unconditional respect for fundamental moral criteria. They must be at the service of the human person, of his/her inalienable rights, of his/her true and integral good, in conformity with the plan and will of God’ (CCC 2294).

What is most important about the module dealing with religion and science is that it offers an opportunity to bring students beyond the standard stereotypes, to enable them to become engaged in this new dialogue, and to discover that faith can be enriched by exchanges between religion and science.

### Catholic Guideline References for State Syllabus

- Part 1.1 ‘Questioning in context’, *Gaudium et spes*, par. 36, Vatican II.
- Part 1.2 ‘Community’, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, par. 2294.
- Part 2.1 ‘Science and religion go their separate ways’, *General Catechetical Directory*, par. 5.
- Part 2.2 ‘Science versus religion’, *Gaudium et spes*, par. 5, Vatican II.
- Part 2.3 ‘Science and religion in tension’, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pars. 198, 301.
- Part 2.4 ‘Science and religion in dialogue’, *Octogesima adveniens*, par. 21, Paul VI.
- Part 3.1 ‘The debate about origins’, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, par. 2293.
- Part 3.2 ‘The new physics and religion – emerging questions’, *Gaudium et spes*, par. 3, Vatican II.
- Part 4.1 ‘The life questions’, *Gaudium et spes*, par. 27, Vatican II.
- Part 4.2 ‘The genetics debate’, *Human life is Sacred*, par. 48, Irish Bishops. Also refer to *Assisted Human Reproductions: Facts and Ethical Issues*, Veritas, and *US Catholic Bishops’ Secretariat for Pro Life Activities* (ref: Cloning, Embryo research, stem cell research).