



Objective: To provide an archdiocesan model for instruction of Theology in grades 8-12 (high school) that utilizes the Doctrinal Elements of a Curriculum Framework presented by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

### Structure

8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Core I: The Revelation of Jesus Christ in Scripture Theology of the Body for Teens-Middle School Edition (four weeks)
9 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Semester 1- Core II: Who is Jesus Christ? (Christology) Semester 2- Core III: The Mission of Jesus Christ (The Paschal Mystery)
10 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Semester 1- Core IV: Jesus Christ's Mission Continues in the Church (Ecclesiology) Theology of the Body for Teens-High School Edition (four weeks) Semester 2-Core V: Sacraments as Privileged Encounters with Jesus Christ
11 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Semester 1- Core VI: Life in Jesus Christ (Personal Morality) Semester 2- Core VII: Living as a Disciple of Jesus Christ in Society (Social Morality)
12 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Semester 1- Core VIII: Responding to the Call of Jesus Christ (Vocations) Semester 2- Schools may choose one of the following electives to be taught during Senior year: Sacred Scripture, Ecumenical and Interreligious Issues (World Religions), or History of the Catholic Church

**Theology Teaching Requirements:** Teachers of students in grades 8-12 will have already completed a minimum of six hours of Theology credit from an accredited Catholic university, college or seminary before teaching high school Theology. All teachers will have accomplished one of the following at the time of being hired or within three years of their hire date:

- Master's degree in Theology or Religious Education
- Bachelor's degree in Theology or Religious Education
- 24 credit hours in Theology or Religious Education (covering the core areas of Catholic Theology: Creed/Christology, Scripture, Sacraments/Worship, Ecclesiology, and Morality) from an accredited Catholic university, college, or seminary

Upon completion of these requirements, all Theology teachers - regardless of degree status - will engage annually in Ongoing Formation as outlined at <https://noladceff.org/ongoing-formation>.

### Rationale for Changes to High School Curriculum Structure

The intention of, and the order of the courses in the USCCB Doctrinal Elements of a Curriculum Framework is to "form the content of instruction as well as to be a vehicle for growth in one's relationship with the Lord" (*Introduction to Doctrinal Elements of a Curriculum Framework*, 1).

1. This new structure respects the integrity of the framework while allowing for this process to begin in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, when students begin attending high school in the Archdiocese of New Orleans.

- Since 8<sup>th</sup> grade is the universal starting point for our high schools in the Archdiocese it would seem that there is a unique opportunity to adapt the USCCB framework in a

complete and effective way. Beginning the framework at the outset of the high school experience can only be helpful for building a strong catechetical foundation and also opens up several other possibilities later in the curriculum.

- Course 1 on the *Revelation of Jesus Christ in Scripture* is designed to be the foundational starting point for effective catechesis and in terms of content and flow could easily be taught in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. An exploration of Divine Revelation in 8<sup>th</sup> grade could help students, at that particular stage of development, to encounter Christ and stand on a strong foundational understanding of Scripture before more nuanced questions are naturally raised later in their academic life. (Questions of the coherence of Faith and Science, Historicity, etc.) Familiarity with the Gospels will assist their growth in a personal relationship with Jesus.

2. The new structure includes Theology of the Body as a supplement: *Theology of the Body for Teens. Middle School Edition* (8<sup>th</sup> grade) and *YOU. Life, Love, and the Theology of the Body* (10<sup>th</sup> grade).

- Using this curriculum in the first semester will put all Theology courses in the framework of authentic Christian anthropology and respect for the dignity of the person. Taking course 1, and only course 1, into the 8<sup>th</sup> grade level leaves room for courses/mini units on the particular charism of the individual school and allows more time for a complete approach to human formation (*Theology of the Body*) both in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade and later on in curriculum.
- By placing Theology of the Body (*YOU. Life, Love, and the Theology of the Body*) in sophomore year, the themes of TOB from 8<sup>th</sup> grade will be revisited and developed further. This content is particularly suited for the sophomore year, the year prior to personal morality and social justice. By placing both Theology of the Body courses in high school, schools may have more trained teachers available for instruction.

3. The new structure allows for Social Justice to be taught as its own subject and not as an add-on to other courses. Social Justice also pairs well with Personal Morality in junior year. In the Archdiocese of New Orleans, this structure allows for greater implementation of Priority 5 of the archdiocesan synod: Be a Voice and Witness for Catholic Social Teaching.

- Moving course 1 to 8<sup>th</sup> grade creates space for *Social Justice/ Catholic Social Teaching* during the Junior Year. While this is an elective in the USCCB curriculum, its importance, perhaps particularly for the young people we serve, warrants Social Justice to be taught in all schools.
- An alignment of Life in Christ and Catholic Social Teaching in the Junior Year provides for an even more coherent flow of content and an understanding of a personal and social ethos that are joined together.
- Considering the vision of, “Our Family Prayer,” and the larger priorities of our Archdiocese it seems to make sense that all students are formed well in their understanding of Catholic Social Teaching.

4. While immediate preparation for Confirmation takes place in the parish, the placement of Ecclesiology and Sacraments in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade provides good remote preparation for Confirmation. This promotes better synergy with immediate sacramental preparation in the parishes.

5. Many teachers and department chairs have lamented the fact that the framework forces them to choose from what is called “Electives” courses that they consider crucial to their curriculum. The new structure allows them to include those electives in an intentional and systematic sequence.

#### Core I. The Revelation of Jesus Christ in Scripture

The purpose of this course is to give students a general knowledge and appreciation of the Sacred Scriptures. Through their study of the Bible they will come to encounter the living Word of God, Jesus Christ. In the course they will learn about the Bible, authored by God through Inspiration, and its value to people throughout the world. If they have not been taught this earlier, they will learn how to read the Bible and will become familiar with the major sections of the Bible and the books included in each section. The students will pay particular attention to the Gospels, where they may grow to know and love Jesus Christ more personally.

#### Core II. Who Is Jesus Christ?

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the mystery of Jesus Christ, the living Word of God, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. In this course students will understand that Jesus Christ is the ultimate Revelation to us from God. In learning about who he is, the students will also learn who he calls them to be.

#### Core III. The Mission of Jesus Christ (The Paschal Mystery)

The purpose of this course is to help students understand all that God has done for us through his Son, Jesus Christ. Through this course of study, students will learn that for all eternity, God has planned for us to share eternal happiness with him, which is accomplished through the redemption Christ won for us. Students will learn that they share in this redemption only in and through Jesus Christ. They will also be introduced to what it means to be a disciple of Christ and what life as a disciple entails.

#### Core IV. Jesus Christ’s Mission Continues in the Church

The purpose of this course is to help the students understand that in and through the Church they encounter the living Jesus Christ. They will be introduced to the fact that the Church was founded by Christ through the Apostles and is sustained by him through the Holy Spirit. The students will come to know that the Church is the living Body of Christ today. This Body has both divine and human elements. In this course, students will learn not so much about events in the life of the Church but about the sacred nature of the Church.

#### Core V. Sacraments as Privileged Encounters with Jesus Christ

The purpose of this course is to help students understand that they can encounter Christ today in a full and real way in and through the sacraments, and especially through the Eucharist. Students will examine each of the sacraments in detail so as to learn how they may encounter Christ throughout life.

#### Core VI. Life in Jesus Christ

The purpose of this course is to help students understand that it is only through Christ that they can fully live out God’s plans for their lives. Students are to learn the moral concepts and precepts that govern the lives of Christ’s disciples.

#### Core VII: Living as a Disciple of Jesus Christ in Society

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the Church’s social teaching. In this course, students are to learn how Christ’s concern for others, especially the poor and needy, is present today in the Church’s social teaching and mission.

## Core VIII: Responding to the Call of Jesus Christ

The purpose of this course is to help students to understand the vocations of life: how Christ calls us to live. In this course, students should learn how all vocations are similar and how they differ. The course should be structured around married life, single life, priestly life, and consecrated life. Students should learn what it means to live life for the benefit of others and the value in considering a vocation in service to the Christian community.

### Electives

#### Sacred Scripture

The purpose of this course is to give an overview of Sacred Scripture with an introduction to the basic principles for understanding and interpreting the Bible. Because of the extent of the scriptural material, this outline will not try to cover the vast content but rather offer comments about Scripture's purpose and religious significance. Given the limits of a semester of study, it will not be possible to introduce all the books of the Bible here. But every effort is made to project a sense of the unity of the narrative for the divine plan of salvation, the presence of God's action in this record of his Revelation, and his desire to share his merciful love with us. It is suggested that for the detailed curriculum, comments on authorship, date of composition, and formation of text of each book of the Bible be drawn from introductions in the New American Bible or from the Catholic Study Bible for the New American Bible. This outline cites catechetical references from the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), the Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church (Compendium), and the United States Catholic Catechism for Adults (USCCA) for various explanations of Scripture, with the intention of integrating catechesis and Scripture. (This elective is meant to engage the student in a deeper understanding of Sacred Scripture and its centrality in the faith and life of the Church.)

#### Ecumenical and Interreligious Issues

The purpose of this course is to help the students understand the manner in which the Catholic Church relates to non-Catholic Christians as well as to other religions of the world. Building on the foundational truth that Jesus Christ established the Catholic Church and entrusted to her the fullness of God's Revelation, the course is intended to help students to recognize the ways in which important spiritual truths can also be found in non-Catholic Christian churches and ecclesial communities as well as in non-Christian religions. It is also intended to help them to recognize the ways in which other systems of belief and practice differ from the Catholic faith.

#### History of the Catholic Church

Course Four presented a catechesis of the Church and the Body of Christ in history: its nature and meaning, images, marks, life and ministry, guide to moral life, and the role of prayer. This elective can supplement that catechesis on the Church. The purpose of this course is to supply the students with a general knowledge of the Church's history from apostolic times to the present. They will be introduced to the fact that the Church was founded by Christ through the Apostles and is sustained by him throughout history through the Holy Spirit. The students will come to know that the Church is the living Body of Christ today and, as such, has both divine and human elements. In this course, students will learn about the Church's 2,000 years of history and about how the Church is led and governed by the successors of the Apostles.

#### Further Notes:

1. Schools may teach Vocations Core VIII in fall or spring.