

# Curriculum and Instruction

## In-depth Study: Religion

### What Students Learn

**The school provides a challenging, coherent, and relevant curriculum for each student that fulfills the mission and philosophy, strengthens Catholic identity and results in student achievement of the Religion Curriculum expectations.**

Holy Angels School follows the curriculum guidelines for religion set by the Archdiocese of San Francisco. The faculty and staff maintain the integrity of the full Gospel message and the validity of Catholic Church teachings. Continual reinforcement of basic Catholic doctrine occurs throughout all nine grades. Particular emphasis is given to the preparation and participation of liturgical celebrations by our school and parish communities.

The religion curriculum reflects the school's mission and philosophy. It is deeply rooted in the Student Learning Expectations (SLE's) in which students strive to *Be Like Jesus, Be the Best You Can Be* and *Be Responsible Citizens*. Faculty and staff are committed to the development of a faith-filled program to meet the spiritual and academic needs of its diverse student population. They enhance knowledge of the meaning of the liturgy, the commandments and sacraments which includes prayer, praise, thanksgiving and reconciliation within the school community.

Resources for Christian Living's Faith First religion series and Benziger's Family Life series are utilized in kindergarten through eighth grade. Both are based on Scripture and rooted in the teachings of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Teachers supplement textbook lessons with the use of Bibles, sacramental preparation materials, audio tapes, videotapes, DVD's and Catholic Tele-media Network programming.

*K-8 Textbooks:*

*Faith First-  
Resources for  
Christian living*

*Family Life  
-Benziger*

*Handwriting  
series*

The teaching of religion is integrated in all subject areas. Catholic and societal values are taught in Social Studies class through

discussions of current events. Art projects often have religious and moral themes. The music program emphasizes liturgical music. In Language Arts, students are regular participants in annual essay contests sponsored by the Archdiocese, Knights of Columbus, Young Men's Institute and the Lion's Club. The annual Christmas celebration is always centered around a moral issue and focuses on the birth of Jesus.

Effective communication is put into practice through daily school prayer, including the Safe and Caring Pledge on closed circuit television, classroom prayers, retreats, guided meditation, liturgy participation, sharing of faith experiences, role playing of scriptural stories, praying of the Rosary and presentation of the Stations of the Cross.

Students are taught to think conceptually and critically. They learn to clarify thoughts, ideas and perceptions through discussions, journals, written essays, reports and drawings. Lessons are structured to move students from examining their own specific life experiences to understanding general human experiences and Catholic spirituality.

Moral decision-making and conflict resolution principles help prepare students for conscientious Catholic living. Students are taught to view Jesus Christ as a primary role model. They are challenged to *Be Like Jesus (SLE)* and are encouraged to treat one another with mutual respect and acceptance. The use of The Safe and Caring School Program helps promote moral decision making and problem solving principles. As part of the program the pledge, "Stop, Think, Pray, and Choose" is reinforced daily by faculty and students during the morning prayer telecast.

Students practice their faith in realistic situations through community centered projects. This fosters students to *Be Responsible Citizens (SLE)*. Each year, before Thanksgiving and Christmas, the Student Council sponsors a food drive to aid parish families. Proceeds are given to the St. Vincent de Paul Society for distribution. Money is collected for the Holy Childhood Association during the Advent and Lenten seasons. The Student Council sponsors a penny drive benefiting the Wheelchair Foundation for the purchase of wheelchairs

for the needy. Students sing and visit local rest homes or senior care homes during the year.

Students are encouraged to participate in parish life as lectors, choir members, cantors, gift bearers, altar servers and ushers in school sponsored liturgies. Each grade is responsible for the planning and sponsorship of one school Mass and one Sunday family Mass during the year. Liturgy in Motion dancers display their talents during school Masses and school sponsored activities. Choir members share their vocal talents during the 4:30 PM Mass every Sunday, as well as Masses for Simbang Gabi (Christmas Novena), Christmas Vigil and Easter. Students are also involved in supporting parish outreach through the Christmas Giving Tree.

The Religion curriculum is in alignment with the school's mission and philosophy and Catholic identity. It challenges the students to live the Gospel values in their daily lives. At each grade level, students are encouraged to know their faith, understand their call to live in the love of God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Students are taught the life of Jesus through age appropriate studies and activities. They are nurtured in their faith and are trained in the sacraments of Reconciliation, Holy Eucharist and Confirmation.

The school philosophy reflects a dedicated Catholic community committed to the formation of the whole child, spiritually, morally, academically and physically. Students learn the challenges of living full Catholic lives as individuals and as members of a faith community in a secular society.

*Parent/Student  
Handbook and  
Holy Angels  
School Brochure*

A prayerful staff and faculty, made up of religious and lay personnel, provide a peaceful, secure and love-filled environment where students can realize their full potential and prepare for their mission as Catholics. The Dominican Sisters of the Most Holy Rosary, on staff since 2000, provide witness to Christ through dedication, compassion and love. They teach the power of prayer through example. Together with the committed lay staff and faculty, students are taught to follow the Gospel and to *Be Like Jesus (SLE)* in their daily lives.

The entire curriculum strives to be inclusive of all learners. The staff and faculty continually create new ways to address learning

*Special Needs  
Program*

differences among students. Student projects, reports, group work and written assignments are varied in appreciation of different modalities and styles of learning. Expectations are tailored to meet students' visual, auditory and kinesthetic abilities.

Communication with parish staff enables teachers to prepare students for liturgies and the Sacraments. The pastor, priests and deacons are resources for liturgy and sacrament preparation. The second and eighth grade teachers, along with other school and parish personnel, provide training for the Sacraments of First Reconciliation and the Eucharist in second grade and the Sacrament of Confirmation in eighth grade.

*First Communion  
videos, photos,  
yearbook*

Students new to the school and who have not had previous formal religious education are given the opportunity to receive the sacraments via additional instruction. On a case by case basis, these students are trained in the sacraments through the Holy Angels School of Religion (the CCD program) or by Holy Angels classroom religion teachers.

## **How Students Learn**

**The professional staff designs and implements a variety of learning and formational experiences which actively engage students and are consistent with the school's philosophy and mission.**

Teachers are required by the Archdiocese to be certified to teach religion. Over a two year period, teachers new to the Catholic school system participate in Archdiocesan sponsored workshops to know Catholic truths, values and doctrines. Once certification is achieved, teachers continue to participate in religious workshops, seminars and conventions scheduled by the Archdiocese.

Teachers implement techniques that enhance student learning. Library books, DVD's, videos and Catholic Telemedia Network programming are presented to illustrate scripture, the life of Jesus and the lives of the saints. Large and small group discussions, as well as role-playing, are used to creatively present the religion curriculum. There are opportunities for scripture study and for the learning of

prayers. Student participation in class retreats, Masses and reconciliation services, bring religious learning to a personal level.

Involvement in the learning process is shown through active participation in projects, role-playing, group discussion, dramatization, art activities, school-wide assemblies and celebrations. In addition, students are involved in programs such as Student Families, the Buddy Program, Thanksgiving and Christmas food drives, Holy Childhood Association and Wheelchair Foundation money drives. As a community, students prepare and participate in the yearly Parish Fiesta, Christmas program, Blessing of the Animals, Thanksgiving feast, Living Stations of the Cross, Easter Butterfly Prayer Service, Holy Thursday Prayer Service, Simbang Gabi and Early Easter Sunrise Service.

Parents, as primary educators of their children, are encouraged to assist their children in doing homework, memorizing prayers and attending weekend liturgies, including the 4:30 PM Sunday school sponsored Masses. In addition, the Benziger Family Life program, the Faith First religion textbooks and sacrament preparation texts include take-home activities for family participation.

The school's philosophy emphasizes parents as the primary educators of their children. They model and witness the Christian life in the family. In a continuous effort to support and encourage parents, meetings and activities are scheduled during the school year. The purpose is to aid them in the responsibility of educating their children in the Catholic faith. Participation and involvement have included Reconciliation, Holy Eucharist, Confirmation preparation meetings, altar server installation meetings, and serving as Eucharistic ministers, lectors and ushers. The school plans to give additional in-services to better equip parents to meet the needs of children in this changing world.

Proficient communication is taught through group projects, class discussions and peer tutoring. Student Families (kindergarten through eighth grades) and the Buddy Program (an inter-grade support system) are additional ways for students to work together to achieve a common goal.

The principal is involved with the students in a number of ways. The principal emphasizes spiritual values and the importance of prayer during daily morning telecast. With the assistance of faculty members, she conducts yearly class retreats for kindergarten through eighth grades. At student assemblies, the principal always provides opportunity for prayer. The school song, "Vision of Commitment," was co-written by the principal and reflects the philosophy and mission of the school community. The principal intervenes in helping students with conflict resolution and, on occasion, acts as a mediator for parents, students and teachers.

Teachers work with students to build an atmosphere of acceptance, openness and support in the classrooms. In conjunction with the Safe and Caring Program, moral decision-making skills are emphasized and practiced. Classroom and school rules along with their consequences help students strengthen moral behavior in light of Catholic values.

Students are expected to be role models for each other and are encouraged to be of service to the school and church communities. Christian service through global awareness includes involvement in various projects such as Holy Childhood Association collections, Starlight Foundation fundraisers, the Wheelchair Foundation Drive and the St. Vincent de Paul food drives. Eighth graders are required to complete at least ten hours of community-oriented service as part of their sacramental preparation for Confirmation. Many students in grades six through eight are involved in the parish as altar servers. Students in grades three through eight participate in Masses as choir members. Students in grades five through eight, with talent in dance and movement, can choose to be part of the Liturgy in Motion dance group.

Critical thinking skills are developed and encouraged when students are reading religion textbooks, the Bible and other religious materials. Students are constantly reminded to assess how personal behavior measures up to their Catholic values.

Outside resources used in religion include library books, videos, DVD's, the Internet and the Catholic Tele-media Network. Guest speakers are invited to talk to classes on various issues including

vocations, the missions, self-worth, morality and the sacraments. Invitations to visit Holy Angels School are extended to priests, sisters, brothers and lay ministers to teach certain aspects of Christian living.

## **How Assessment Is Used**

**Teacher and student use of assessment is frequent and integrated into the teaching/learning process. Assessment data is the basis for:**

- **measurement of each student's progress toward the grade level subject expectations;**
- **regular evaluation and improvement of curriculum and instruction;**
- **allocation of resources**

Teachers of religion realize that there is no form of evaluation that precisely assesses a student's growth in faith. However, teachers evaluate what the child has learned by employing various strategies. Students' prior knowledge is evaluated through oral and written activities, testing of content and through teacher observation.

Methods of assessment at different grade levels include chapter and unit tests, oral testing, mastery of prayers, group and class discussions, written essays, reports, role-playing, participation in liturgies and art projects. Continual teacher in-services help improve the quality of instruction. Differences in learning styles are acknowledged and addressed. Students of non-Catholic religious backgrounds are invited to participate in Catholic prayers and Masses, while their individual religions are respected.

Rubrics are used to help students in the assessment of their own learning. Rubrics are used throughout the grades, so children have realistic guidelines for achieving their goals. In this way, the children are involved in real life assessment. Authentic assessment is used in the form of portfolios in various formats (hanging folders, binders or electronic) among the grade levels. Under teacher guidance, students select appropriate work to be placed in portfolios which are reviewed quarterly. Teachers use these assessments to help improve instructional strategies as well as allocate resources for religion. The school is working with the Archdiocese and is in the process of initiating ACRE Testing for eighth grade in February 2009.

The school encourages the parents to be primary educators of their children, witnessing the Christian life in the family. The school gives special attention to parents via activities and meetings, in order to aid them in their responsibility of educating their children in the Catholic faith. Parent involvement includes participation in Reconciliation, Holy Eucharist, Confirmation preparation meetings, altar server installation meetings, serving as liturgical ministers, lectors and ushers.

## Faith Experience

**The school community places high priority on frequent prayer and liturgical experiences which are developmentally and liturgically appropriate and meaningful. Spiritual formation and support of the religious mission of the school are a priority.**

Daily prayer is central to the faith life of the children and staff. The faculty and staff meet daily before school for prayer. The entire school prays together in the morning via closed circuit television. Teachers lead the students in prayer at lunchtime and at the end of the school day. Age appropriate prayers are taught and practiced in every classroom. The Rosary is part of regular classroom prayer during October and May.

Students participate in liturgies and prayer services throughout the school year. Each grade sponsors at least one school Mass and one Sunday Family Mass a year.

The sacramental program consists of First Reconciliation and First Eucharist for second grade and Confirmation for eighth grade. The eighth graders have an annual retreat, complete a minimum of ten hours of service, answer a faith-based questionnaire and submit a research paper on a saint as part of their preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is scheduled for grades two through eight during the school year.

Each grade attends a yearly retreat led by the principal and retreat team. During Lent, the principal leads the school in the Stations of

*Liturgies and  
Prayer Services:  
All Saints Day  
Crowning of Mary,  
Ash Wednesday,  
Stations of the  
Cross, Holy  
Thursday, Advent,  
Catholic Schools  
Week*

the Cross on closed circuit television. During Holy Week, the primary grades participate in an Easter Butterfly Prayer Service, seventh graders present the Living Stations of the Cross and Liturgy in Motion dancers conduct a Holy Thursday prayer service.

*Displays of Faith Experience:*

*Bulletin Boards*

*Prayer Services*

*Liturgies*

*Art and Craft Projects*

*Service Projects*

Students experience the larger faith community of Holy Angels through service to their parish. They attend weekend liturgies with their families. Students volunteer as altar servers, choir members, and as aides in the Holy Angels School of Religion. Some students are members of the parish Youth Ministry Group.

*Masses*

*Statues and Religious Items found in classrooms*

*Prayer Centers*

Beyond the parish, students occasionally visit a local rest home. They all join the Holy Childhood Association and contribute to its support at Christmas and Easter. Students also assist the parish chapter of the St. Vincent de Paul Society at Thanksgiving and Christmas with donated food, money and gifts. Donations of cereal are made to the North Peninsula Food Pantry and Dining Center of Daly City. The Student Council raises funds for the Wheelchair Foundation and the Starlight Foundation.

Students and teachers plan all school Masses, participate in daily prayers and experience varieties of liturgical music and dance. Faculty meetings, parent meetings and Holy Angels Parent Advisory Council (HAPAC) meetings begin and end with prayer. Prior to the beginning of every school year, annual retreats provide a spiritual and emotional renewal for the faculty and staff and HAPAC members. The principal organizes additional retreats for staff during Advent and Lent.

Catholic Schools Week is given a high priority at Holy Angels School. The whole school begins the week with an assembly and prayer service. Different organizations, outside and within the school community, are recognized and appreciated for their continuous support. The week also includes a faculty luncheon on Friday and an Open House on Sunday. At the annual Open House, the school invites students, alumni and parents as well as those interested in enrolling at Holy Angels for the following year to attend.

The sacramental program consists of First Reconciliation and First Eucharist for the second grade and Confirmation for the eighth grade.

The eighth graders also have an annual retreat as part of their preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is scheduled for grades two through eight during the school year.

School and parish sacramental preparation teams work together with parents and children for First Reconciliation, First Eucharist and Confirmation. Sessions for parents include prayer, lectures, handouts and instructions for helping the child and the family grow in their faith life. The children prepare for their sacraments with appropriate supplemental textbooks. Confirmation candidates are required to complete at least ten hours of community service during their sacramental preparation. Mandatory meetings provide opportunities for parents to work with the sacramental preparation teams in order to reinforce their role as primary educators.

*Sacramental  
Preparation  
textbooks:*

*The Gift of  
Reconciliation  
The Gift of  
Eucharist.  
Silver Burdett  
Ginn*

*The Spirit Sets Us  
Free.  
Sadlier*

The pastor participates in the spiritual life of our students and expresses his support for the ministry of Catholic schools. The pastor presides at school masses, Family Masses and reconciliation services. He and the principal meet regularly to discuss the needs of the school.

The principal supports and encourages spiritual growth among faculty, staff, students and families. The principal is flexible and works successfully with the students, teachers, parents and other members of the school community, and is an effective spiritual role model.

The faculty and staff, consisting of religious and lay personnel, are viewed as a community of faith, which has the obligation to model Catholic moral and Gospel values. The involvement of the members of the school community in church ministry (as lectors, commentators, Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist, ushers, music ministers and teachers in Holy Angels School of Religion) indicates a commitment to nurture the ongoing religious formation of the students.