

BASICS IN TEACHING SUNDAY SCHOOL

THE PREPARATION OF SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

1 WHAT IS A SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON?

1. It is not a record of events that we convey to the students with the hopes of appearing to satisfy the required preparation process in front of other people. Neither is it a lecture that we deliver to our audience or student regardless of their interest in the matter.
2. However, it is, on one hand, a fruit of the live reaction between the servant and the lesson and, on the other hand, between the servant and the students. The Holy Spirit matures this fruit and directs this service towards the salvation of the students and towards the glory of God.

For if the servant who teaches the people does not teach himself, the voice of the Lord will rebuke him saying, " You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? " (Romans 2:21), and again in James 3:1, "My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgement."

Therefore, the servant should engage himself in the lesson through prayers, relevant spiritual readings, and practical application, so that when the servant speaks with his students from experience and true knowledge, he says, with St. John the Beloved, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life-" (1 John 1:1)

If a servant is not aware of the spiritual level of his students, he may burden them with instructions and lessons, which they cannot handle nor apply, and this, in turn, may cause the students to go astray and lose their eternal life. Therefore, it is crucial for the servant to establish a healthy, trustworthy, and fruitful relationship with his students; as well as to share in their joys and cheers, and their sadness and fears. This is what St. Paul refers to in his epistle to the Galatians when he says, "My little children, for whom I labour in birth again until Christ is formed in you..." (Galatians 4:19). This close relationship with the students allows the servant to choose the most appropriate lesson that caters to their needs.

Hence a Sunday school lesson is:

A live mixture between the personal lives of the servants and the students through the lesson; the Holy Spirit creates this mixture and allows it to result in the bearing of fruit.

2 THE REQUIREMENTS FOR SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

1. Humility in prayer before God. God said, "...for without Me you can do nothing." (John 15:5) My beloved brethren, sit down in peace and tranquility with the Lord and talk to Him about your personal need for Him in your service. Ask for the guidance of the Holy Spirit and pray saying, "Guide me dear God. What would you like my students and I to learn this week?" Be obedient to His voice. It would be suitable to maintain a prayer time which equals that of the lesson.

2. Accurate knowledge of the meanings contained within the lesson. This is achieved through:

- a) Occupying yourself throughout the week with understanding the new lesson, starting from the end of the previous lesson until the beginning of the new one. It is wise to use your free

time, time before sleep, and time with fellow servants to increase and enhance your understanding of the lesson.

b) Resorting to spiritual and religious references and literature to help you develop the right understanding and concepts behind the lines.

c) Resorting to general educational references and literature to embody this understanding and these concepts, making them clear in the minds of your students.

3. Aids of presentation.

It is important that you transform your understanding of the lesson into a simple and clear presentation. It has been stated and proved that 85% of knowledge acquired is acquired through the sense of sight and visual learning, as opposed to the 10% that is acquired through the sense of hearing. The rest of the knowledge acquired is done through the other three senses.

In reality, the least effective way of transmitting knowledge to others is by merely talking; this has the weakest influence on the students. In contrast, the most effective way to teach is to use the "Learning by Doing" method, which requires enough time as well as experience.

What differentiates between the effectiveness of the two means of presentation, are the tools used in the presentation. These tools aid the students in effectively understanding and retaining the purpose of the lesson by engaging both senses of sight and sound. These tools may include audiovisual devices such as pictures and movies, spiritual trips and outings, role playing during class, intellectually stimulating games, etc.

C. RECORDING THE LESSON.

It is recommended that the servant records the following during the preparation of the lesson:

Date of the preparation of the lesson.

Date of the delivery of the lesson.

Title of the lesson.

Purpose of the lesson.

References.

Preface.

Lesson.

Inference.

Bible verse.

Homework.

Aids of presentation.

Other points for memory.

SONGS.

Personal reflections of the servant.

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON:

It is necessary for the servant to clearly understand the purpose of the lesson at the beginning of their preparation. It is also necessary that the purpose of the lesson agrees with the maturity level

of the students. For example, it is more appropriate for children to learn about God's love. On the other hand, learning about the power of God in their lives and in the lives of the saints is more appropriate subject matter for youth. As for young adults, learning about Christian virtues and spiritual practices is most appropriate. Most importantly, the purpose of the lessons should agree with Coptic Orthodox Christian teachings, whether in specific occasions or in general.

REFERENCES:

References could include:

- a. Stories, examples, verses, etc. from the Holy Bible.
- b. Spiritual books and literature.
- c. General educational books and literature.

Recording the references is very useful for the servant because it helps the servant to refer back to them, if forgotten.

PREFACE:

The preface is the background of the lesson. It cultivates the thoughts of the students and directs their thoughts towards the lesson. This allows the lesson to be implanted in their minds and to, eventually, bear fruit. It is important that the preface remain simple, short, and concise. The introduction could be in the form of focused questions, but should not be in the form of stories. Several stories in one lesson may deteriorate its effectiveness.

THE LESSON:

The lesson could be divided into the following sections:

1. Introduction - it should be quick and concise and related to the preface. It should introduce the lesson smoothly without interrupting the chain of thoughts.
2. Body of the lesson - it contains the principle subject of the lesson, and follows these guidelines:
 - a. You must be accurate and careful when explaining theological concepts.
 - b. You must be careful when relating events and examples to elucidate the subject of the lesson, in order to properly guide the students' imagination without restricting it.
 - c. You must diligently expose the Coptic Orthodox doctrine in the lesson.
 - d. You should not use more than one story during the lesson and the story used should be relevant to the subject matter.
3. Focal Point - the point during the lesson at which the purpose of the lesson is clearly defined. (Examples: The Lord responds to the prayers of a needy person, or the angels come to give the saints their heavenly crowns and take them to heaven after many trials and persecutions.)
4. Conclusion - it should be, like the introduction, short and concise. It can summarize the

purpose of the lesson, without introducing any new concepts.

INFERENCES:

Inference is a method used to determine how much the students have absorbed and retained from the lesson. It should be in the form of questions with the following guidelines:

- a. They should clearly show the purpose of the lesson.
- b. They should suit the maturity of the students.
- c. They should be simple and direct.
- d. They should relate to each other.
- e. They should not be 'Yes' or 'No' questions.
- f. They should each have one correct answer.

BIBLE VERSE:

The memorization of a Bible verse is an excellent way to help the students remember the purpose of the lesson. The chosen Bible verse should meet the following guidelines:

- a. It should show the purpose of the lesson clearly.
- b. It should be short which allows it to be easily memorized.
- c. Children can easily memorize, as well as understand it.

HOMEWORK:

The height of your diligence in preparing the lesson is in choosing the proper and effective homework or application. The homework should have the following characteristics:

- a. It should contain practical applications that apply to everyday life.
- b. It should suit the maturity level of the students.
- c. It should help in mastering the comprehension and retention of the lesson.
- d. It should not include more than one instruction, in order to simplify the application of the lesson.

GUIDELINES IN TEACHING EACH GRADE

TEACHING PRE-SCHOOLERS (Ages 4 to 5 years old)

1. This age is characterized by the inclination towards movements, playing and exploring the world around the child through his or her personal experimentation.
2. In this age the child forms the idea of “I” and concentrates on himself or herself and wants to take everything for himself or herself. We must not expect the child to get rid of the love of himself quickly but it will take time, effort and prayer.
3. Some of the children also at this stage would like to do opposite of what they are told to do. Kindness and understanding are key factors in treating the children with this respect.
4. Imitation is one of the key characteristics of this age. This can be positively utilized to enhance the love of the children to worship, to get used to going regularly to church, to learn to give to the poor, to learn to deal nicely with people, to learn the polite way of talking, etc. The child is very flexible and ready to be shaped. As the adults around the child follow good manners, the child also easily imitates them.
5. In addition to all the above, the teacher must: start from simple to more difficult facts, from the known to the unknown and from the total to the parts and back to the total again. Children must love the teacher, the class, the lesson and come very eager to attend the class.
6. The story must be given as a story without too many comments. Illustration means limiting the wide imagination of the children at this age. More effective than the illustration means, are the good stories, the hymns accompanied with music, the class activities such as coloring, cutting and pasting pictures, etc.

TEACHING GRADE 1 (Age 5 to 6 years)

- 1) This age is characterized by an important mental development. A sense of cause and effect is developed: An ability to organize and classify and an interest in simple planning and carrying out of a plan. We can see this reflected in their play.
- 2) There is now a far more clear consciousness of “justice” than there had been before. The instinct of ownership was already present at an earlier age, but now there is a fairly clear understanding of what is “mine” and “not mine”. Along with the sense of “law” and conscious “law breaking”, there is a growth, a development of finer feelings: compassion, desire to protect someone weaker than oneself and acceptance of certain moral standards.
- 3) Children in this age will show interest in cause and effect, and, in listening to Bible stories will show interest in God’s plan for the world.
- 4) The story must be given as a story without too many comments. Lessons should be accompanied by hymns and class activities such as colouring, cutting and pasting pictures, etc.

5) Though it is too early to discuss with children the problem of suffering, and especially the suffering of the innocent, it is sometimes unavoidable. We can establish in their minds the image of the Lord Jesus Christ as the one who was innocent and accepted suffering, except that His suffering and death were not the end, because He rose from the dead. If the children have really assimilated the Passion and the Resurrection, we have provided them with a basis for a Christian approach to the problem of suffering. They will have to deal intellectually with it at a later age.

6) In addition to all the above, the teacher should: start from simple to the more difficult facts, from the known to the unknown and from the total to the parts and back to the total again.
Children should love the teacher, the class, the lesson and come very anxiously to class.

TEACHING GRADE 2 (Ages 7 to 8 years)

1. This age range is characterized by an important mental developmental stage. A sense of cause and effect is developed, as well as an ability to organize and classify, and an interest in simple planning and carrying out a plan. We can see this reflected in their daily life.

2. There is now a far clearer consciousness of “justice” compared to previous experiences. The instinct of ownership was already present at an earlier age, but now there is a fairly clearer understanding of what is “mine” and “not mine”. Along with the sense of “law” and the conscious of “law breaking”, there is a growth, a development of finer feelings, compassion, the desire to protect someone weaker than oneself, and acceptance of certain moral standards.

3. Children at these ages will show interest in cause and effect, and, upon listening to Bible stories, will show interest in God’s plan for the world.

4. The story must be given without too many comments. Lessons should be accompanied by relevant hymns and class activities such as colouring, cutting and pasting pictures, etc.

5. Though it is too early to discuss with children the problem of suffering, and especially the sufferings of the innocent, it is sometimes unavoidable. We can establish in their minds the image of the Lord Jesus Christ as the one who was innocent and accepted suffering, but His suffering and death were not the end, because He rose from the dead. If the children have really assimilated the Passion and the Resurrection, we would have provided them with a basis for a Christian approach to the problem of suffering. They will have to deal intellectually with it at a later age.

6. In addition to all the above, the teacher should start with the simplest known facts, to lead the children discover the unknown. Children will end up loving the teacher, the class, the lessons and come eagerly to class.

TEACHING GRADE 3 (Age 8 to 9 years)

1) This age is characterized by an important mental development. A sense of cause and effect is developed: an ability to organize, classify and an interest in simple planning and carrying out a plan. We can see this reflected in how they play.

2) Now, there is a far more clear consciousness of "justice" than there has been before. The

instinct of ownership was already present at an earlier age, but now there is a fairly clear understanding of what is "mine" and "not mine". Along with the sense of "law" and conscious "law breaking", there is a growth, and a development of finer feelings: compassion, desire to protect someone weaker than oneself and acceptance of certain moral standards.

3) Children in this age will show interest in cause and effect, and, in listening to Bible stories; they will also show interest in God's plan for the world.

4) The story must be given as a story without too many comments. Lessons should be accompanied by hymns and class activities such as, cutting and pasting pictures, etc.

5) Though it is too early to discuss with children the problem of suffering, and especially the suffering of the innocent, it is sometimes unavoidable. We can establish in their minds the image of the Lord Jesus Christ as the one who was innocent and accepted suffering, but His suffering and death were not the end, as He rose from the dead. If the children have really assimilated the Passion and the Resurrection, we have provided them with a basis for a Christian approach to the problem of suffering. They will have to deal intellectually with it at an older age.

6) In addition to the above, the teacher should: start from simple to more difficult facts, from the known to the unknown and from the total to the parts and back to the total again. Children should love the teacher, the class, the lesson and come very anxiously to class.

TEACHING GRADE 4 (Age 9 to 10 years)

1) This age is characterized by an important mental development. A sense of cause and effect is developed, an ability to organize and classify and an interest in simple planning and carrying out a plan. We can see this reflected in their play.

2) There is now a far more clear consciousness of "justice" than there had been before. The instinct of ownership was already present at an earlier age, but now there is a fairly clear understanding of what is "mine" and "not mine". Along with the sense of "law" and conscious "law breaking" there is a growth, a development of finer feelings: compassion, desire to protect someone weaker than oneself and acceptance of certain moral standards.

3) Children in this age will show interest in cause and effect, and, in listening to Bible stories, and will show interest in God's plan for the world.

4) The story must be given as a story without too many comments. Lessons should be accompanied by hymns and class activities as colouring, cutting and pasting pictures, etc.

5) Although it is too early to discuss with children the problem of suffering, and especially the suffering of the innocent, it is sometimes unavoidable. We can establish in their minds the image of Our Lord Jesus Christ as the One who was innocent and accepted suffering, but His suffering and death were not the end, as He rose from the dead. If the children have really assimilated the Passion and the Resurrection, we have provided them with a basis for a Christian approach to the problem of suffering. They will have to deal intellectually with it at a later age.

6) In addition to the above, the teacher should: start from simple to the more difficult facts, from the known to the unknown and from the total to the parts of back to the total again. Children

should love the teacher, the class, the lesson and come very anxiously to class.

TEACHING GRADE 5 (Age 10 to 11)

(1) Children at this age have molded into a certain shape, into certain patterns of behaviour that were superimposed on their natural character. They have been exposed for years to the influence of their family background, their parents, brothers and sisters and relatives. The cultural and ethical standards of the family have influenced their attitudes, made them different from each other.

Whatever their special situation within the family did to affect their personality: jealousy, rejection, possessiveness, competitiveness, etc., these have left deep traces. They are less spontaneous and more self-conscious than at an earlier age. Sunday school teachers will find children less open at this age than at earlier ages.

(2) Sunday School teachers have another difficulty in trying to relate to the students' homes. As Sunday school instruction progresses, it often happens that the religious ideas conveyed there are not in agreement with the concepts of the parents. Thus the teacher has to show great understanding and tact when dealing in class with a child's statement, "Yes, but Daddy says that..." or "Mother says that the Church teaches..." The teacher must always try to see the element of truth in whatever beliefs are held at home: "Yes, this is very interesting. I think the reason for this is that..." He can then add and expand the ideas he wants to convey.

(3) Relations between boys and girls are very self-conscious. They are definitely two different groups usually critical of each other and slightly inimical towards one another.

(4) The search for meaning is now at the start of a new intensive phase, for the onset of clearer thought creates problems in the child's religious ideas. Childish concepts are clung to, but the doubts and confusions are already appearing. At previous stages the child happily kept together unrelated and often contradictory ideas, but now he is becoming aware of the need to relate and reconcile these apparent contradictions.

We require an intensive effort in teaching religion at this stage to help them grow into a "one-world" view of life, rather than a dualistic system which separates religion from the rest of life.

(5) The teacher has to have a real theological maturity to be able to put down things clearly, simply and briefly.

(6) Another type of thinking that one frequently meets at this age is a conscious separation of knowledge into two different parts - one that is learned at school, read about in books, or heard about on TV, and the other that is taught in Church and in Sunday school. The task of the Sunday school teacher in this period is to help them in this process. It has to be relevant to their experience of life, to their interests and curiosity, to the secular knowledge they are acquiring at school, to the human relations they are developing. In other words, the Christian doctrine taught must become part of their own thinking and their knowledge of life as a total experience.

(7) The children's knowledge of the Bible, especially of the New Testament, is very uneven. There are a few stories that they have heard over and over again, and this gives them a false sense of "knowing" the Bible. On the other hand their very limited knowledge of the scriptures,

both in facts and in meaning, is quite clear. Not even the Sermon on the Mount has reached their attention in full, and they have no idea of the meaning of the Old Testament, except for a few stories. This age is a good time to train the children on the use of the Bible and especially the New Testament as a resource book. Learning to know which parts of the Bible are used during the church services they attend, and how to find the appropriate readings, increases their familiarity with the scriptures.

TEACHING GRADE 6 (Age 11 to 12)

1) Children at this age have molded into a certain shape, into certain patterns of behavior that were superimposed on their natural character. They have been exposed for years to the influence of their family background, their parents, brothers and sisters and relatives. The cultural and ethical standards of the family have influenced their attitudes, made them different from each other.

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3) Relations between boys and girls are very self-conscious. They are definitely two different groups — usually critical of each other and slightly inimical toward each other.

4) The search for meaning is now at the start of a new intensive phase, for the onset of clearer thought creates problems in the child's religious ideas. Childish concepts are clung to, but the doubts and confusions are already appearing. At previous stages the child happily kept together unrelated and often contradictory ideas, but now he or she is becoming aware of the need to relate and reconcile these apparent contradictions.

We require an intensive effort in teaching religion at this stage to help him or her grow into a "one-world" view of life, rather than a dualistic system, which separates religion from the rest of life.

5) The teacher has to have a real theological maturity to be able to put down things clearly, simply and briefly.

6) Another type of thinking that one frequently meets at this age is a conscious separation of knowledge into two different parts - one that I learn at school, read about in books, or hear about on TV, and the other that is taught in Church and in Sunday school. The task of the Sunday school teacher in this period is to help them in this process. It has to be relevant to their experience of life, to their interests of curiosity, to the secular knowledge they are acquiring at school, to the human relations they are developing. In other words, the Christian doctrine taught

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TEACHING GRADE 7 AND 8: (Age 13 to 14)

(1) This age is characterized by an important mental development. A sense of cause and effect is developed, an ability to organize and classify and an interest in simple planning and carrying out a plan. We can see this reflected in their play.

(2) There is now a far more clear consciousness of "justice" than there has been before. The instinct of ownership was already present at an earlier age, but now there is a fairly clear understanding of what is "mine" and "not mine". Along with the sense of "law" and consciousness of "law breaking" there is a growth, a development of finer feelings: compassion, desire to protect someone weaker than oneself and acceptance of certain moral standards.

(3) Children in this age will show interest in cause and effect and, in listening to Bible stories, will show interest in God's plan for the world.

(4) The story must be given as a story without too many comments. Lessons should be accompanied by hymns and class activities as colouring, cutting and pasting pictures ... etc.

(5) Though it is too early to discuss with children the problem of suffering, and especially the suffering of the innocent, it is sometimes unavoidable. We can establish in their minds the image of the Lord Jesus Christ as the one who was innocent and accepted suffering, but His suffering and death were not the end, but He rose from the dead. If the children have really assimilated the Passion and the Resurrection, we have provided them with a basis for a Christian. Approach to the problem of suffering and they will have to deal intellectually with it at a later age.

(6) In addition to the above, the teacher should: start from simple to the more difficult facts, from known to the unknown and from general to specific and going back to the bigger picture. Children should love the teacher, the class, and the lesson and come very anxiously to class.

TEACHING GRADE 9 (Adolescence: Age 14 To 15)

1) By definition adolescence is the period between childhood and adulthood. The potential intellectual ability reached during this series is equal to that of adults. Adolescents go very rapidly through a period of physical changes which causes awkwardness, self-consciousness, and increased emotional instability.

2) One of the main characteristics of this period is the young people's **Sensitivity and dissatisfaction**. They are dissatisfied with themselves, with their families and with their own

appearance (wherein lies the cause of infatuation with any fashion of the day). Adolescents go through a period of painful dissatisfaction with their social life too. All these traits, though they often seem negative and painful, are part of a positive process. What adolescents are trying to do is to discover themselves and to discover their relationship to others - to adults, to their peers of their own sex as well as of the opposite one.

3) The rapid growth of technological civilization during the last decades has made our children much more knowledgeable about sex, social problems, race, crime, violence, science and technology. They are not more mature than adolescents used to be, but they know more, even though they often lack the maturity to digest this knowledge.

4) What is the task of the Church in dealing with our adolescents then? Basically, the Church has to offer them **meaningful values** that young people can consciously accept out of their own free choice at this special level of maturity and insecurity. The Church has to give them an image, a taste of what life should be, of what is meant by holiness, what is truth, faith, and loyalty. The Church is where they can find forgiveness, understanding, and love when they have done wrong and are confused and mixed-up. Adolescents need security-in-freedom.

5) Our adolescents need urgently two aspects of religious education in order to help them gain maturity. They need the opportunity to make religion a part of their own experience of life, their own thinking, their own motivation, through very informal free discussions, through participation in church work and through friendship. They also need to acquire information that will allow them to think intelligently, and will, at the same time, provide some material for evaluation and judgement.

6) All the teaching they need to acquire about the Bible and about the Church will be better assimilated if they feel a need for it. Thus teaching should be structured around questions and problems that are real to young people. The information must be presented as a means of finding answers. This kind of approach is very demanding on the leader, not only because he or she must be well informed, and must know where he or she can find information, but also because he or she must be flexible and sensitive to what takes place in the students' minds. Basically adolescents need information in the same areas that shaped our program for younger grades - doctrine, liturgies, Bible study, church history, spirituality, and ethics.

7) Most important of all is the kind of relationship that is established between the adult leader and the young people. The leader should earn their trust as a friend, with understanding and sympathy, yet with firmness in his own convictions and genuine interest in their adolescent problems

TEACHING GRADE10 (Adolescence: Age 15 to 16)

1) By definition adolescence is the period between childhood and adulthood. The potential intellectual ability reached during this period is equal to that of adults. Adolescents go very rapidly through a period of physical changes, which causes awkwardness, self-consciousness and increased emotional instability.

2) One of the main characteristics of this period is the young people's **sensitivity** and dissatisfaction. They are dissatisfied with themselves, with their families, with their own appearance (wherein lies the cause of infatuation with any fashion of the day). Adolescents go through a period of painful dissatisfaction with their social life too. All these traits, though they

often seem negative and painful, are part of a positive process. What adolescents are trying to do is to discover themselves, and to discover their relationship to others - to adults, to their peers of their own sex as well as of the opposite one.

3) The rapid growth of technological civilization during the last decades has made our children much more knowledgeable about sex, about social problems, race, crime, violence, science and technology. They are not more mature than adolescents used to be, but they know more, even though they often lack the maturity to digest this knowledge.

4) What then is the task of the Church in dealing with our adolescents? Basically, the Church has to offer those **meaningful values** that young people can consciously accept out of their own free choice at this special level of maturity and insecurity. The Church has to give them an image, a taste of what life should be, of what is meant by holiness, what is truth, faith and loyalty. The Church is where they can find forgiveness, understanding and love when they have done wrong and are confused and mixed-up. Adolescents need security-in-freedom.

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7) Most important of all is the kind of relationship that is established between the adult leader and the young people. The leader should earn their trust as a friend, with understanding and sympathy, yet with firmness in his own convictions and genuine interest in their adolescent problems.

TEACHING GRADE 11:

1) By definition adolescence is the period between childhood and adulthood. The potential intellectual ability reached during this period is equal to that of adults. Adolescents go very rapidly through a period of physical changes, which causes awkwardness, self-consciousness and increased emotional instability.

2) One of the main characteristics of this period is the young people's **sensitivity** and dissatisfaction. They are dissatisfied with themselves, with their families, with their own appearance (wherein lies the cause of infatuation with any fashion of the day). Adolescents go through a period of painful dissatisfaction with their social life too. All these traits, though they often seem negative and painful, are part of a positive process. What adolescents are trying to do is to discover themselves, and to discover their relationship to others - to adults, to their peers of

their own sex as well as of the opposite one.

3) The rapid growth of technological civilization during the last decades has made our children much more knowledgeable about sex, about social problems, race, crime, violence, science and technology. They are not more mature than adolescents used to be, but they know more, even though they often lack the maturity to digest this knowledge.

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7) Most important of all is the kind of relationship that is established between the adult leader and the young people. The leader should earn their trust as a friend, with understanding and sympathy, yet with firmness in his own convictions and genuine interest in their adolescent problems.

TEACHING GRADE 12:

1) By definition, adolescence is the period between childhood and adulthood. The potential intellectual ability reached during this period is equal to that of adults. Adolescents go very rapidly through a period of physical changes, which causes awkwardness, self-consciousness and increased emotional instability.

2) One of the main characteristics of this period is the young people's **sensitivity** and dissatisfaction. They are dissatisfied with themselves, with their families, with their own appearance (wherein lies the cause of infatuation with any fashion of the day).

Adolescents go through a period of painful dissatisfaction with their social life too. All these traits, though they often seem negative and painful, are part of a positive process. What adolescents are trying to do, is to discover themselves, and to discover their relationship to others - to adults, to their peers of their own sex as well as of the opposite one.

3) The rapid growth of technological civilization during the last decades has made our children much more knowledgeable about sex, about social problems, race, crime, violence, science and technology. They are not more mature than adolescents used to be, but they know more, even though they often lack the maturity to digest this knowledge.

4) What then is the task of the Church in dealing with our adolescents? Basically, the Church has to offer those **meaningful values** that young people can consciously accept out of their own free choice at this special level of maturity and insecurity. The Church has to give them an image, a taste of what life should be, of what is meant by holiness, what is truth, faith and loyalty. The Church is where they can find forgiveness, understanding and love when they have done wrong and are confused and mixed-up. Adolescents need security-in-freedom.

5) Our adolescents urgently need two aspects of religious education in order to help them gain maturity. They need the opportunity to make religion a part of their own experience of life, their own thinking, and their own motivation, through very informal free discussions, through participation in church work and through friendship. They also need to acquire information that will allow them to think intelligently, and will, at the same time, provide some material for evaluation and judgement.

6) All the teaching they need to acquire about the Bible and about the Church will be better assimilated if they feel a need for it. Thus teaching should be structured around questions and problems that are real to young people. The information must be presented as a means of finding answers. This kind of approach is very demanding on the leader, not only because he must be well informed, and must know where he can find information, but also because he must be flexible and sensitive to what takes place in the students' minds. Basically adolescents need information in the same areas that shaped our program for younger grades - doctrine, liturgies, Bible study, church history, spirituality and ethics.

7) Most important of all is the kind of relationship that is established between the adult leader and the young people. The leader should earn their trust as a friend, with understanding and sympathy, yet with firmness in his own convictions and genuine interest in their adolescent problems.