

LEARNING ASSESSMENT

Survey of Pupil Knowledge
following completion of the
Alive-O Religious Education Programme
for Catholic Primary schools in Ireland

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Note on Author: Éanna Johnson has broad professional experience in education as secondary teacher, university lecturer/researcher & director of a masters degree programme, and consultant to private & public sector organizations in the fields of education and training. He has given religious education to children, adolescents, and adults. He was awarded a PhD in Theology by the Pontifical University, St Patrick's College, Maynooth, Ireland; his research project was a theological and pedagogical analysis of the Alive-O Programme (thesis accessible in the John Paul II Library at St Patrick's College: <http://eprints.nuim.ie/3076/>).

Dr Johnson carried out this Learning Assessment Survey to complement his analysis of the Alive-O Programme. This Survey Report and other writings in the field of Catholic catechesis are available at www.eannajohnson.org.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The *Alive-O Religious Education Programme* is prescribed for use in all Catholic primary schools in the island of Ireland by the Catholic Bishops. Dr Éanna Johnson undertook an in-depth theological and pedagogical analysis of the *Alive-O programme* published materials for a PhD in Theology at the Pontifical University, St Patrick's College, Maynooth. The conclusion of this analysis was that the *Alive-O Programme* falls short of satisfactory, both theologically and pedagogically.

The importance of formal learning assessment is widely acknowledged in educational circles. Therefore to complement his analysis of the *Alive-O* published materials, the author conducted a Learning Assessment study of pupils who had completed all eight years of the *Alive-O Programme*. This study showed unsatisfactory levels of knowledge of the basics of Catholic faith, correlating closely with the analysis of *Alive-O* published materials.

The *Alive-O Programme* should be replaced as soon as possible with a programme that is authentically Catholic and pedagogically effective (specifically, in perfect harmony with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*¹, and giving due consideration for the norms and criteria in the *General Directory for Catechesis*²).

Alive-O is published by Veritas Publications, with copyright held by the Irish Episcopal Commission on Catechetics. The *Alive-O Programme* was introduced into Catholic primary schools over the period 1996 to 2004, replacing the earlier *Children of God* series. An Irish language edition of the *Alive-O Programme* is also available, under the title *Beo go Deo*. *Alive-O* is described as a 're-presentation' of the *Children of God Series*, which may suggest that *Alive-O* is little changed from the *Children of God*, but there is in fact substantial change; *Alive-O* is effectively a new programme. The *Children of God* series for primary schools, also published by Veritas for the Irish Episcopal Conference, was originally introduced over the years 1976 to 1978. A 're-presentation' (new edition) was introduced from 1983 to 1987.

The *Alive-O* published materials include: a Pupil's book for each year; workbooks with exercises and drawings to colour; audio-tapes / CDs of *Alive-O* songs; a video / DVD for classroom use each year. For each year there is a Teacher's Book, which is quite substantial (up to 520 pages of small print). Each Teacher's Book contains detailed lesson material for each day of the school year, along with a significant amount (up to 90 pages) of information for teachers only. The information contained in the pupils' materials is quite limited, while the programme is essentially contained in the Teacher's Books.

Pope John Paul II strongly encouraged memorisation in catechesis³. The Church repeated this encouragement of memorisation in 1997⁴. The *Alive-O Programme* is weak on memorisation of the basics of the Faith.

There are no learning assessment instruments built into the *Alive-O programme*, as commonly occurs in good catechetical programmes. The absence of learning assessment is one of many pedagogical problems in the *Alive-O Programme*. As far as the author has

¹ Libreria Editrice Vaticana, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1999.

² Congregation for Clergy. *General Directory for Catechesis*, Dublin: Veritas Publications, 1997, 284.

³ John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, *Catechesi Tradendae*, 1979, 55; 'A certain memorization of the words of Jesus, of important Bible passages, of the Ten Commandments, of the formulas of profession of the faith (Creeds), of the liturgical texts, of the essential prayers, of key doctrinal ideas, etc, far from being opposed to the dignity of young Christians, or constituting an obstacle to personal dialogue with the Lord, is a real need. The blossoms of faith and piety do not grow in the desert places of a memoryless catechesis. What is essential is that texts and prayers that are memorised must at the same time be taken in and gradually understood in depth, in order to become a source of Christian life'.

⁴ *General Directory for Catechesis*, 154. 'Catechetics forms part of the "memory" of the Church which vividly maintains the presence of the Lord among us'.

been able to ascertain, no objective assessment was ever conducted of the learning achieved by pupils undertaking the *Alive-O programme*, or its predecessor, the *Children of God series*⁵.

This Learning Assessment Survey was conducted with pupils in the early part of their first year of secondary schooling in the 2006/07 academic year, focusing on the basic Catholic religious knowledge that could be expected of pupils after completion of primary school. Ten Catholic secondary schools participated, large and small, located in both urban and provincial areas, and in all Ecclesiastical Provinces – Armagh, Dublin, Cashel and Tuam. The Survey covered 456 pupils, approximately equal numbers of boys and girls. The pupils involved in the Survey are the second age cohort to have experienced the *Alive-O programme* through all eight years of primary school. As secondary schools normally draw pupils from several primary schools in their hinterland, the pupils in the survey are probably representative of 50 or more primary schools.

A Questionnaire was prepared as the survey instrument, comprising multiple-choice questions and questions requiring short definite answers. These two types of question were chosen as the best way of obtaining an understanding of the pupils' knowledge base, while maintaining their interest in applying themselves to the questionnaire.

The questions were selected to cover a broad range of aspects of faith. The level of difficulty of questions was varied, but never exceeding that which could be expected of pupils at their age and stage of education. The questionnaire was designed for a 30 minute completion time, to fit within a normal class period.

The survey was administered by the participating schools' own staff, usually the RE teacher. The survey respected strict pupil confidentiality – pupils were instructed not to put their names on the questionnaire forms. The survey results are based on the total of 456 completed questionnaires that were returned by the participating schools. Those administering the survey were requested to exclude questionnaires of pupils who were educationally disadvantaged, such that they would experience significant difficulties in comprehension or writing. Schools reported that pupils participated in the survey willingly and diligently.

The results of each school were returned to that school, along with the overall results for comparative purposes. Participating schools were given an assurance of confidentiality in relation to their individual school results and school identity. While there were significant differences between schools in answers to some questions, the general pattern of responses was very similar from school to school.

The results of this survey showed a significant degree of correlation with two Surveys of Christian Knowledge commissioned by the Iona Institute and the Evangelical Alliance, which were carried out by Millward Brown (a leading global research agency) in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland during 2007 (see Section 5 for details).

While this Survey was primarily aimed to complement the analysis of the *Alive-O Programme* materials, it was also hoped that it would be of service to RE teachers in each participating secondary school to help them plan their own religious education programmes, and would be of benefit to all those interested in Catholic catechesis of our young people, especially at primary school level.

⁵ A study was carried out by Martin Kennedy in 1999 into the *Children of God* series for senior (3rd – 6th classes) primary-school children. This study was published by Veritas Publications in 2000 under the title, *'Islands Apart'*. The principal purpose of the study was to assess the views of teachers about the *Children of God series*. In relation to pupils the author visited eighteen classrooms, asked questions, discussed issues, and conducted a small survey, all focusing on how the pupils liked/disliked and related to the programme. There was no assessment of pupil religious knowledge.

2. SUMMARY OF SURVEY RESULTS

OVERALL – While there are some encouraging responses to the Survey, nevertheless the results indicate that, after completion of the eight years of the *Alive-O* religious education Programme in primary school, pupils are generally lacking in basic knowledge of authentic Catholic Faith. Particularly worrying are the deficits in knowledge of the Blessed Trinity and Jesus Christ as Second Divine Person of the Trinity, true God and true Man, the Saviour of humanity. The results correlate closely with the strengths and significant weaknesses revealed in the author's analysis of the *Alive-O programme*. The Survey results also mirror the surveys commissioned by the Iona Institute and Evangelical Alliance, which found unsatisfactory levels of Christian Knowledge in the general population, and a pattern of declining Christian Knowledge the younger the age-group.

Revelation – Responses indicate reasonable familiarity with the Gospels, but shortfalls in knowledge of the rest of the New Testament and of the Old Testament. Pupils showed a reasonably satisfactory understanding of Sacred Tradition.

Profession of Faith - The responses indicate an unsatisfactory knowledge of the basic truths of Christian faith as expressed in the Apostles Creed, with only 10% of pupils able to correctly complete all the statements in the Creed.

The Blessed Trinity - Knowledge of the Blessed Trinity (the foundational truth on which all other truths of Christian faith are based) is unsatisfactory. Only one-third of pupils could name the Trinity correctly. A majority opted for descriptions of Jesus as a human being rather than both God and man, while an even greater majority opted for descriptions of the Holy Spirit as an impersonal spirit or sense, rather than a Divine Person.

Jesus Christ - The responses indicate that most pupils are familiar with Jesus and know many good things about him. However, the great majority lack an authentic Christian understanding of Jesus: most are weak on understanding Jesus as truly divine, a person who is more than an exceptionally good human being, while only 10% understand Jesus as our Saviour from sin.

Angels & Devils – Pupils showed a poor knowledge of angels and devils as spiritual beings created by God. Most think that angels are people who have died that God sends back to earth to help us, and that the devil is merely a symbol for evil.

The Church - Responses indicate a good understanding of the mission of the Church and a readiness to learn from her about God -- though a reluctance to follow the Church in matters of morality. The Pope was correctly identified by a large majority, twice as many as were able to identify their own bishop.

Mary and the Saints – Responses indicate knowledge deficits of Mary and martyr-saints, but a high knowledge of St Brigid, consistent with *Alive-O's* content.

The Last Things – Much less than half the pupils had an adequate understanding of the last things (eschatology), consistent with *Alive-O's* deficient treatment of the topic.

Liturgy and Sacraments – Responses varied greatly, from excellent to very poor. Most knew Advent, but only half connected Pentecost with the Holy Spirit. Many were able to name the seven sacraments, but only 1% understood the nature of a sacrament. Understanding of Eucharist & Mass, of Reconciliation and Holy Orders tended to be uneven, and weak overall, consistent with *Alive-O's* treatment of liturgy and sacrament.

Life in Christ / Morality – Responses were generally disappointing. Responses on virtue, conscience, and original sin were poor. On the Ten Commandments, the average rate of completion of each commandment was only one third, while nearly 40% were unable to make any response at all.

Prayer – Pupils showed a reasonable level of familiarity with the Lord's Prayer, but less than should be expected, given the importance of this greatest of Christian prayers.

3. SURVEY RESULTS IN DETAIL

The figure on the right of each row in the tables below is the percentage of responses to that particular option or item for 456 pupils in first year of secondary school in the ten Catholic secondary schools that participated in the survey.

Correct answers are highlighted in italics.

Where relevant, model answers to questions are given in italics below.

SECTION ONE

1-1. He was sold by his brothers into slavery in Egypt:

a. Joshua		11
b. Judah		18
<i>c. Joseph</i>		48
d. Jeremiah		21
No Answer		2

1-2. Knocked off his horse on road to Damascus, he became the 'apostle to the Gentiles':

<i>a. Paul</i>		23
b. Peter		25
c. Luke		28
d. Matthew		19
No Answer		5

1-3. Which best describes what is in the Acts of the Apostles:

a. The life of Jesus		59
b. The end of the world		2
<i>c. The spread of the early Church</i>		36
No Answer		3

1-4. For which parts of the Bible can we accept God as author, being written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit:

<i>a. The entire Bible</i>		47
b. Some parts of the Bible		36
c. None of it		15
No Answer		2

1-5. Sacred Tradition is:

a. The traditions the Church developed through the ages		23
b. Writings of great saints of the Church		12
<i>c. What Jesus taught the apostles, which has been handed on by the Church</i>		62
No Answer		3

1-6. We can best learn about what God is like by:

a. Studying nature and our own experience of life		11
b. Comparing what different religions believe about God		10
<i>c. Listening to the teaching of the Church</i>		78
No Answer		1

1-7. Name the four Gospels,.....

1 right		0
2 right		6
3 right		7
4 right		62
None right / no answer		25

.....and four other books of the New Testament:

1 right		11
2 right		5
3 right		3
4 right		1
None right / no answer		80

SECTION TWO

2-1. The mystery of the Blessed Trinity is:

a. Three Gods acting together as one		19
<i>b. Three divine persons in one God</i>		52
c. Three different ways in which God acts		26
No Answer		3

2-2. The best understanding of the truth about God is:

<i>a. There is only one true God, the Blessed Trinity</i>		58
b. Each religion has some of the truth about God		20
c. What's true for me is my own experience of God		20
No Answer		2

2-3. Angels are:

<i>a. Intelligent spiritual creatures without bodies</i>		25
b. Great stories for children, which we don't have to believe when we grow up.		5
c. People who have died that God sends back to earth to help us		68
No Answer		2

2-4. The best description of the Holy Spirit is:

a. A spirit of love and peace		32
b. A sense that God is with us		44
<i>c. A divine person of the Blessed Trinity</i>		23
No Answer		1

2-5. The day the Church celebrates the descent of the Holy Spirit:

<i>a. Pentecost</i>		52
b. Trinity Sunday		13
c. Corpus Christi		3
d. Easter		28
No Answer		4

2-6. Name the Blessed Trinity: *Best answer: God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit.*
Acceptable: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (Not acceptable: God, Jesus, Holy Spirit).
For a Right Answer, all three must be named.

<i>Right</i>		31
Wrong		16
No Answer		53

2-7. Complete the sentences below from the Apostles' Creed:

The blanks that were to be filled in are highlighted in italics below.

I believe in God the Father Almighty, <i>creator of heaven and earth.</i>		61
I believe in Jesus Christ, <i>his only Son, our Lord .</i>		47
He was conceived <i>by the power of the Holy Spirit</i>		21
and born <i>of the Virgin Mary.</i>		23
He suffered under Pontius Pilate, <i>was crucified, died, and was buried.</i>		36
He descended to the dead. On the third day he <i>rose again.</i>		71
He ascended into heaven and <i>is seated at the right hand of the Father</i>		47
He will come again to <i>judge the living and the dead.</i>		39
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the <i>holy catholic Church,</i>		12
the communion of saints, <i>the forgiveness of sins,</i>		10
the resurrection <i>of the body,</i>		11
and <i>life everlasting.</i> Amen		19
	AVERAGE OF ANSWERS	33%
No Answer		17

SECTION THREE

3-1. The Devil (Satan) is:

<i>a. a fallen angel</i>		33
b. a symbol for evil		62
c. a story to frighten kids to be good		4
No Answer		1

3-2. Jesus was born in the town of:

a. Nazareth		9
b. Jerusalem		4
<i>c. Bethlehem</i>		86
No Answer.		1

3-3. Which of these best describes Jesus Christ:

a. a great son of God		30
b. a great teacher & leader		29
<i>c. true God & true man</i>		40
No Answer.		1

3-4. Circle the names of those who were apostles chosen by Jesus:

<i>a. Peter</i>		88
b. Zacheus		14
<i>c. Judas</i>		55
d. Mark		75
<i>e. John</i>		84
<i>f. Andrew</i>		54
No Answer		2

3-5. Name three miracles performed by Jesus:

Miracles of Jesus e.g. *Marriage Feast at Cana; Draught of Fishes (x2); Widow's Son Raised to Life; Feeding of 5,000 & of 4,000; Jairus' Daughter Raised to Life; Raising of Lazarus from Death; Jesus Walks on Sea; Tempest Stilled; Change bread & wine into his body & blood.* (major healings of Jesus also acceptable)

One miracle		17
Two miracles		20
Three miracles		37
No miracles		5
No Answer		21

What do miracles tell us about Jesus?

Jesus' miracles and healings are signs of his divinity. (CCC 517, 1507)

<i>Right</i>		13
Wrong		24
No Answer		63

3-6. What do you think were the two most important things that Jesus did for us:

<i>Redemption / salvation; died to save us from sin.</i>		10
<i>Other good reasons</i>		44
Not good reasons		11
No Answer		35

SECTION FOUR

4-1. The principal mission of the Church is to:

<i>a. spread the Gospel</i>		76
b. care for the poor & hungry		9
c. give example of love		13
No Answer		2

4-2. The name of the present Pope is:

a. Bernard XVI		1
b. John Paul II		9
c. Paul VI		1
<i>d. Benedict XVI</i>		88
No Answer		1

4-3. Mary consented to be the mother of Jesus. The Church celebrates this event as:

a. The Assumption		20
b. The Immaculate Conception		51
<i>c. The Annunciation</i>		23
No Answer		6

4-4. He was stoned to death:

a. St Thomas More		11
<i>b. St Stephen</i>		48
c. St Augustine		34
No Answer		7

4-5. She founded a convent in Kildare and was famed for her charity:

a. St Ita		5
<i>b. St Brigid</i>		84
c. St Clare		8
No Answer		3

4-6. St Joseph was Jesus':

a. real father		29
b. uncle		9
<i>c. foster-father</i>		59
No Answer		3

4-7. What happens to people after they die?

a. Everyone finds peace with God		33
<i>b. People will be judged by God, and will live forever in heaven or in hell</i>		43
c. A person's soul could get re-born in a different body		21
No Answer		3

4-8. Purgatory is:

<i>a. A place of temporary purification before heaven</i>		57
b. Where un-baptized babies go who have died		15
c. No longer part of the Church's official teaching		18
No Answer		10

4-9. What diocese is your school in, and which Archbishop / Bishop leads the diocese?

Close-neighbouring diocese, or Auxiliary Bishop, where relevant, accepted as right answer.

<i>Bishop right</i>		43
Bishop wrong / no answer		57
<i>Diocese right</i>		46
Diocese wrong / no answer		54

4-10. What is the Communion of Saints?

The members of the Church on earth, the souls in Purgatory, & the saints in heaven. (CCC 962)

<i>Right</i>		1
Partly right		5
Wrong		18
No Answer		76

SECTION FIVE

5-1. A time of preparation for Christmas:

a. Lent		2
<i>b. Advent</i>		91
c. Holy Week		5
No Answer		2

5-2. The Church says that Catholics have an obligation to attend Mass on:

a. All Sundays		18
<i>b. Sundays & Holy Days</i>		68
c. Christmas & Easter		5
d. Most Sundays		4
No Answer		5

5-3. The Sacrament of the Eucharist is:

a. <i>Jesus' real body & blood under the appearance of bread and wine</i>		55
b. A celebration meal which helps us remember Jesus' Last Supper		16
c. The spirit of Jesus in the blessed bread and in our hearts		21
No Answer		8

5-4. The Church does not have the power to ordain women to the priesthood:

a. <i>agree</i>		33
b. disagree		30
c. don't know / not sure		31
No Answer		6

5-5. What is a sacrament? *The sacraments are given to the Church by Christ to give us grace. Each sacrament has an outward visible sign and an inner unseen grace. (CCC 1131).*

<i>Right</i>		1
Partly right		10
Wrong answer		12
No Answer		77

Name the seven sacraments:

Baptism		49
Confirmation		46
Eucharist / Communion		49
Penance/Reconciliation/Confession		34
Anointing of Sick		34
Holy Orders		31
Marriage		46
No Answer		48

5-6. What do you understand the Mass to be?

The Mass is a thanksgiving celebration of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for our salvation, and a banquet where we are nourished by the Word of God in Scripture and by receiving Jesus Christ truly present in the Eucharist. (CCC 1407, 1408)

<i>Mass as sacrifice of cross</i>		6
<i>Hear Word of God in Scripture</i>		8
<i>Receive Jesus in the Eucharist</i>		4
Other answer		53
No Answer		31

5-7. What are the principal spiritual powers the priest receives through the Sacrament of Holy Orders?

To preside at Mass / Eucharist and change the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ through the words of consecration. (CCC 1566).

To forgive sins in the Sacrament of Penance / Reconciliation / Confession. (CCC 1461).

To anoint the sick in the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick (CCC 1516)

To act as preacher/teacher and leader in the Church (CCC 1592).

<i>Eucharistic consecration</i>		11
<i>Forgive sins</i>		7
<i>Anoint Sick</i>		0
<i>Preach/teach & lead</i>		3
<i>Other reasonable answer</i>		6
Wrong answer		7
No Answer		73

5-8. Write the Our Father:

Our Father who art in heaven,		76
Hallowed be thy name.		73
Thy kingdom come.		71
Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.		68
Give us this day our daily bread,		60
And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us,		52
And lead us not into temptation,		44
But deliver us from evil. Amen.		42
No Answer		20

SECTION SIX

6-1. In matters of morality (what is right & wrong) Catholics should:

a. <i>be guided by the teaching of the Catholic Church</i>		38
b. consider all views (may include Church teaching) before making a decision		15
c. simply trust their own feelings and sense of right & wrong		24
No Answer		23

6-2. To have sex before marriage is:

a. <i>always wrong</i>		24
b. ok, if engaged		20
c. ok, if using contraception		38
No Answer		18

6-3. Complete the sentences below of the Ten Commandments:

The blanks that were to be filled in are highlighted in italics below.

I. I am the Lord your God, <i>you shall not have strange gods before me.</i>		32
II. You shall not take <i>the name of the Lord your God in vain.</i>		35
III. Remember to keep <i>holy the Lord's Day.</i>		34
IV. Honour <i>your father and your mother.</i>		50
V. You shall not <i>kill.</i>		37
VI. You shall not <i>commit adultery.</i>		27
VII. You shall not <i>steal.</i>		49
VIII. You shall not <i>bear false witness against your neighbour.</i>		15
IX. You shall not covet <i>your neighbour's wife.</i>		34
X. You shall not covet <i>your neighbour's goods.</i>		33
	AVERAGE OF ANSWERS	35%
No Answer		38

6-4. What is conscience?

Conscience is the judgment of our minds which tells us that our acts are good or bad, right or wrong. (CCC 1778)

<i>Right</i>		12
Partly right		8
Wrong		9
No Answer		71

6-5. What is a virtue?

Virtues are habits of the mind which lead us to do good. (CCC 1804).

<i>Right</i>		2
Partly right		6
Wrong		5
No Answer		88

6-6. What are the effects of Original Sin? (CCC 418)

<i>Human nature weakened</i>		1
<i>Subject to ignorance, suffering and death</i>		1
<i>Inclined to sin</i>		2
<i>Reasonable attempt</i>		8
Wrong answer		9
No Answer		80

6-7. What are the main things you must do in order to make the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Penance, Confession) properly? (CCC 1491)

<i>Have sorrow (repentance, contrition) for your sins</i>		7
<i>Confess sins to the priest</i>		7
<i>Carry out the penance that the priest gives, and repair wrong done</i>		1
<i>Other reasonable answer</i>		7
Wrong answer		12
No Answer		70

4. ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

A key issue is the degree to which pupil learning is influenced by the *Alive-O Religion Programme* itself, in comparison with the influence of other factors. The Programme itself must be a significant factor of influence, most probably the dominant factor for several reasons.

Teachers are of course a very important factor for any subject in the curriculum; but the system in Irish primary schools is that there is one teacher in each class. Teachers are therefore under significant pressure to cover all subjects, in classes with 30 or more pupils and are likely to rely heavily on the programmes provided for each subject, including religion. The author has spoken with several primary teachers who are not happy with the *Alive-O Programme*, and who use the programme's materials very selectively while drawing on their own knowledge of the Catholic faith to teach the pupils. However, this situation is likely to be the exception, because Catholic catechesis programmes in general have been unsatisfactory since the mid-1970s, so knowledge of Catholic Faith is unlikely to be strong among teachers in general.

Parents are another significant factor, but again, like teachers, most parents of the pupils in the Survey did not have good Catholic catechetical programmes in primary and secondary school, and so will probably be lacking in knowledge of the faith.

Visits of parish clergy⁶ and Diocesan Advisers are another factor to be considered, but these classroom visits tend to be brief and are unlikely to significantly influence pupil learning.

A final factor which indicates the significant influence on pupil learning of *Alive-O Programme* itself is the high degree of correlation between the Programme content and the responses of pupils to the questions in the Survey.

The *Alive-O Programme* was introduced one book a year, starting in 1996, with a year's break in 2000, and concluding with *Alive-O 8* in 2004. The pupils in this Learning Assessment survey are the second group to have used the *Alive-O Programme* through all eight years from Junior Infants (age 4/5 years old) to Sixth Class (age 11/12 years old). So one could consider that the pupils participating in this survey are the first thoroughly *Alive-O* cohort, since there could be familiarisation issues for teachers in the first year they taught the programme.

In assessing the results, one must consider what is a satisfactory level of response to the various questions. There were 5 of the 45 questions which the pupils obviously knew well and recorded an 80% or higher level of correct answers. (By way of comparison, the Survey Questionnaire was administered to a group of 31 foreign Catholic students, attending First Year secondary schooling in Ireland to improve their knowledge of English, and they recorded 80% or higher correct answers for 23 of the questions; this in spite of limited English language capability). As all the questions in the Survey are about basic elements of Catholic religious knowledge, 80% or higher correct answers would be a reasonable expectation; less than 80% should be considered unsatisfactory.

Multiple-choice questions have many advantages, but also the disadvantage that some pupils who have no idea of the correct answer may still select the right option by chance.

⁶ The influence of parish clergy is likely to be limited by lack of knowledge of what is in the RE Programme in the schools. As has been already noted, the *Alive-O Programme* is essentially contained in the Teachers Books, which priests are unlikely to have seen, or if they have seen the Books to have studied them thoroughly because of the huge volume of material. Martin Kennedy surveyed parish clergy in the course of his 1999 study (*Islands Apart*) on the *Children of God* series, Books 5-8; 86% of the priests said they knew a little or nothing about the primary-school religion programme, even though the *Children of God* series had been in use in all Ireland's primary schools for 23 years at that time.

Revelation

The response to Question 1-7 on the Gospels indicates a moderate level of familiarity with the Gospels, with 60% naming all four Gospels and another 15% able to name two or more; however, one would expect over 80% to name all four Gospels and there is particular concern that one pupil in four was unable to name even one Gospel. Responses to Q.3-4 on the Apostles also indicate moderate familiarity with the Gospels.

However, the responses to Question 1-2 on St Paul, Q.4-4 on St Stephen, Q.1-3 on the Acts of the Apostles, and the second part of Q.1-7 (on New Testament) indicate a poor level of familiarity the Acts of the Apostles, and little knowledge of the rest of the New Testament. This correlates with *Alive-O's* frequent inclusion of the Gospels, but limited treatment of other books of the New Testament. *Alive-O* has a teaching on the conversion of St Paul, but while there is a reasonable account in the Teacher's Book, the account that pupils will see in their own Pupil's Book is unsatisfactorily limited.

Question 1-1 deals with the Old Testament. It is unsatisfactory that less than half the pupils identified Joseph, whose fascinating story is one of the best known and loved in the Bible, and is a popular story even outside Judaeo-Christian circles. This correlates with *Alive-O's* treatment of Joseph. There is a reasonable account of Joseph's story in the Teacher's Book, which teachers may or may not read to the pupils; the Pupil's Book has only a poem which is fanciful fiction and contains minimal real information about Joseph.

The response to Question 1-5 on Sacred Tradition indicates a moderate understanding of the nature of Sacred Tradition, and also implies a positive attitude to the Church. However, the response to Q.1-4 on the inspiration of Scripture is unsatisfactory, with less than half the pupils indicating belief in divine inspiration of the whole Bible.

Overall, the responses indicate a less than satisfactory knowledge of Revelation.

Profession of Faith in the Creed

Question 2-7 on the Apostles Creed asks pupils to complete the statements of the Faith contained in the Creed. The responses indicate an unsatisfactory knowledge of the basic truths of Christian faith, with an average completion rate of only one third and only 10% of pupils able to correctly complete all of these fundamental statements of the Faith.

This correlates with the *Alive-O Programme*, which gives minimal attention to understanding and memorising of the basic truths of faith. In Book 7 after giving pupils the Apostles' Creed, they are not asked to learn it, but to write their own 'personal creed', and then consider if they might possibly modify their 'personal creed' in the light of the Apostles' Creed.

The Blessed Trinity

Questions 2-1, 2-2, and 2-6, deal with the Blessed Trinity, and the results are most discouraging. In Question 2-1 on the mystery of the Trinity only half the pupils chose the correct statement; the others opted for two statements (three Gods acting as one, and three different ways God acts) which are heretical, contrary to the Faith of the Church (CCC 253, 254). Question 2-2 on the best understanding of God could be seen as a small improvement, with nearly 60% indicating belief in the Trinity, but it is most unsatisfactory that fully 40% opted for positions of religious relativism. Question 2-6 gives even greater cause for concern, with only 31% of pupils able to name the Trinity correctly.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) tells us that the Trinity is the most important truth of Christian faith, the foundation on which all other truths of the Faith are built in the 'hierarchy of truths' (CCC 234). If the foundation is unsound, then the whole building will be shaky, and instead of a 'hierarchy of truths' we can expect a 'hierarchy of errors'.

The poor response in the survey on the Trinity correlates with *Alive-O's* weak and confusing treatment of the Trinity. *Alive-O* mostly presents 'God' (not 'God the Father') as the First Person of the Trinity, adding that God is like a mother and a father; 'Jesus, Son of God' (but not 'God the Son'), a remarkable godly person but not quite God; and the 'Holy Spirit' or 'Spirit of God' (not 'God the Holy Spirit'), which comes across as more a godly presence than a distinct Divine Person. (This *Alive-O* presentation of the Holy Spirit is reflected in the answers to Question 2-4).

Jesus Christ

Questions 3-2, 3-3, 3-5, 3-6 and 4-6 dealt explicitly with Jesus Christ.

The great majority of pupils know Jesus was born in Bethlehem (Q.3-2). It was also good that a majority could name at least one of Jesus' miracles (Q.3-5), but not so positive that one in four could not name any miracle, and that only 13% saw Jesus' miracles as signs of his divinity. This correlates with *Alive-O*, which teaches many of Jesus' miracles, but does not explain them as signs of Jesus' divinity, nor always describe them as 'miracles'.

In Question 3-2 the majority of pupils opted for descriptions of Jesus as a great human being, rather than true God and true man. In answering Q.4-6 it is good that a majority identified Joseph as Jesus' foster-father, but most unsatisfactory that nearly a third saw Joseph as Jesus' real father, implying an understanding of Jesus as no more than a human being.

Responses to Q.3-6 give rise to concern that only a small majority were able to correctly name important things that Jesus did for us. More serious is the fact that only 10% identified salvation from sin as one of the two most important things that Jesus did for us. It is a basic Christian belief that salvation is *the* most important thing that Jesus did for us, *the* greatest expression of the love of God for the human race and for each individual. Salvation from sin could only be won for us by a person who was God as well as man. It is of the gravest possible concern that 90% of pupils did not indicate knowledge of Jesus as saviour, which is an essential component of authentic Christian faith.

The answers to these questions about Jesus Christ indicate that most pupils are familiar with Jesus and know many good things about him. However, the answers also indicate that the great majority of pupils lack a truly Christian understanding of Jesus: most are weak on understanding Jesus as truly divine, God the Son, a person who is more than an exceptionally godly and holy human being, while only 10% indicated understanding of Jesus as Saviour. This correlates with the way that Jesus is presented in *Alive-O*.

The Holy Spirit

Question 2-4 asks for the best description of the Holy Spirit. Less than a quarter chose the correct option that the Holy Spirit is a divine Person of the Trinity, while the majority opted for descriptions of the Spirit as an impersonal spirit or sense, rather than a real Divine Person. As noted above, this correlates with the way that the Holy Spirit is presented in *Alive-O*.

This question on the Holy Spirit, along with questions above on the Trinity and Jesus, indicate that the great majority of pupils lack an authentic Christian understanding of the nature of God. This raises the most serious of concerns.

Angels & Devils

Question 2-3 on angels indicates poor knowledge of what angels are, with only a quarter of pupils choosing the correct option. The great majority of pupils favoured the idea that angels are people who have died that come back to earth (as portrayed in popular TV programmes and movies). The related Question 3-1 on Satan showed a similar lack of

authentic Christian knowledge with the majority opting for the incorrect, though popular, concept of the devil as only an impersonal symbol, not a real personal spiritual being, a fallen angel.

This correlates with the *Alive-O programme*, in which angels are mentioned (though not illustrated), but there is no teaching on what an angel actually is, and nothing at all for pupils about the Devil. It seems probable that positive input from teachers or parents is to be credited for the sizeable minorities that chose the correct options on angels and devils.

The Church

Questions 1-6, 4-1, 4-2, and 4-9 relate to the Church. The high level of correct responses on the mission of the Church (Q.4-1) and the identity of the Pope (Q.4-2) are very encouraging. However, the fact that less than half of the pupils know what Diocese they were in and who is their Bishop suggests lack of Episcopal involvement and/or communication.

The responses to Question 1-6 are most encouraging in that four out of five pupils opt for listening to the Church to learn about God, but not so encouraging that one in five prefer to look to self or other religions. (There seems to be some contradictory thinking when it comes to morality and priesthood, with only a minority of pupils following the Church – see Questions 5-4, 6-1 and 6-2).

Alive-O is weak on teaching about the Catholic Church, but nevertheless these responses are encouraging, indicating a generally positive attitude to the Church, with an openness to learn from her. Therefore, the shortfalls noted in this Survey in knowledge of basic tenets of Faith could not arise from pupils' general rejection of the Church and her teachings, but rather from lack of being taught these basic truths of faith.

Mary and the Saints

Questions 4-3, 4-4 and 4-5 deal with Mary and the saints. In Q.4-3 the poor level of correct answers in identifying the Annunciation indicates a lack of understanding of the importance of Mary's free consent to the Incarnation, consistent with *Alive-O's* poor teaching on this topic. In Q.4-4 only half the pupils correctly opted for St Stephen as the martyr who was stoned to death; this correlates with the lack of familiarity with the Acts of the Apostles noted above in the section on 'Revelation', and also the deficit on martyrs in *Alive-O's* treatment of the Saints. The high level of correct answers on St Brigid (Q.4-5) is consistent with *Alive-O's* positive focus on this great Irish saint.

The Last Things (eschatology)

Questions 4-7, 4-8 and 4-10 are concerned with the Last Things (eschatology). In Q.4-7 much less than half opt for the Church's belief in judgment, heaven and hell, with a third opting for the idea that everyone achieves happiness with God after death, no matter what, while an extraordinary 20% opt for reincarnation! The response to Q.4-8 yielded only a small majority correctly identifying Purgatory.

For Question 4-10 on the Communion of Saints, the very low percentage of correct answers and the high proportion not answering at all would suggest inadequate teaching on the Communion of Saints, even though it is an article in the Apostles Creed. The responses to this set of questions points to an inadequate understanding of the Catholic vision on the Last Things, consistent with *Alive-O's* very poor treatment of the Last Things (eschatology).

Liturgy and Sacraments

Question 2-5, questions 5-1 through 5-7, and Q.6-7 address liturgy and sacraments. The responses show great variation, from excellent to very poor.

In Q.5-1 91% of pupils correctly identified Advent as the time of preparation for Christmas, which correlates with *Alive-O's* repeated teaching on Advent as a time of waiting for the Birth of Jesus (though *Alive-O* is weak on the Second Coming theme of Advent, consistent with the poor responses noted above on the Last Things).

However, in Q.2-5 only half of pupils identified Pentecost as the day when the Church celebrates the descent of the Holy Spirit. With only half the pupils connecting Pentecost with the Holy Spirit (Q.2-5), and only a quarter understanding who the Holy Spirit is (Q.2-4), one must be concerned about the preparation for Confirmation given through the *Alive-O Programme*.

The pattern of responses to Question 5-5 on the Sacraments showed intriguing variations. When asked to name the seven sacraments, half the pupils did not answer at all, while the other half that did answer showed good familiarity with the sacraments, with two-thirds of them naming all seven. However, the level of understanding of the nature of a sacrament plummeted to only 1%, with another 10% getting it partly right. This corresponds with *Alive-O*, which contains information about all seven sacraments, but omits teaching what a sacrament is and omits the graces particular to each sacrament (& omits all actual graces).

Questions 5-2, 5-3, and 5-6 address the Eucharist and Mass; again we find significant variation in responses. In Q.5-2 the great majority indicate knowledge about Catholics' obligation to attend Mass. In Q.5-3 just a small majority opt for the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, while sizeable minorities opt for a celebratory meal or the spirit of Jesus. In Q.5-6 pupils gave many reasonable answers (and some not reasonable) as to their understanding of the Mass, but nearly a third gave no answer and less than 10% could identify the three unique characteristics of the Mass, which distinguish it from prayer meetings or other liturgical gatherings. These results correlate with *Alive-O's* weak and uneven treatment of Mass and the Sacrament of the Eucharist, and give rise to grave concern, considering that the Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life (CCC 1324).

Questions 5-4 and 5-7 address the Sacrament of Holy Orders. Q.5-4 shows a one third minority support the Church's understanding that Jesus intended that only men should be priests, another third disagree, while the remaining third are not sure. The responses to Q.5-7 on the spiritual powers bestowed through Holy Orders indicate that pupils have little understanding of the unique sacramental characteristics of the priesthood, which distinguish it from other Christian vocations. *Alive-O* often includes the priest, presenting him as one who serves the community and leads the liturgy, but *Alive-O* is inadequate on teaching the essential sacramental nature of the Catholic priesthood.

Question 6-7 addresses the Sacrament of Reconciliation / Penance / Confession, and the responses indicate little understanding of the sacrament, with the great majority either not answering or giving a wrong answer. *Alive-O's* presentation on the Sacrament of Penance is weak: the sacramental power of the priest to forgive sin is vague (see also comment on Q.5-7 above), inviting an understanding that the Sacrament is simply celebrating the fact that God's forgiveness has already been given.

Overall, the responses on liturgy and sacraments fall well short of what young Catholics should know after completion of eight years of primary school Catholic religious education. The fact that pupils could answer some questions very well or reasonably well (Q.5-1, 5-5, 5-2), while giving poor responses to other questions, is consistent with the *Alive-O Programme's* uneven treatment of the sacraments and liturgy.

Life in Christ / Morality

Questions 6-1 through 6-6 address Life in Christ / Morality. The results overall are disappointing, which correlates with *Alive-O*'s weak teaching on Catholic morality, but may also be influenced by prevailing attitudes and values in secular society to which the young are exposed, especially through the media.

In Q.6-1 only a little over a third of pupils chose the option of being guided by the Church on moral matters, while in Q.6-2 only a quarter agreed with the Church on the morality of sex before marriage. (These responses contrast with Q.1-6 where nearly 80% are happy to be guided by the Church when it comes to learning about God).

Questions 6-4, 6-5 and 6-6 addressed conscience, virtue and original sin. The responses to all three questions were unsatisfactory.

Question 6-3 addressed the pupils' knowledge of the Ten Commandments. The responses were not encouraging, with an average response of only one third correct completions of the blanks in the Commandments, while nearly 40% made no response at all. *Alive-O* does include the Ten Commandments, but the treatment is inadequate and by no means in harmony with the clarity and prominence given to the Decalogue in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. *Alive-O* must confuse pupils by presenting them with three different versions of the Decalogue (the standard version from the CCC, along with two *Alive-O*-written versions) and encouraging pupils to construct their own moral codes.

Prayer

Question 5-8 asked pupils to write the Lord's Prayer: the 'Our Father'. The CCC gives great prominence to the Lord's Prayer, describing it as the fundamental Christian prayer and a summary of the whole Gospel (CCC 2759, 2761), & exhorts that catechesis should include memorisation of basic prayers, along with explanation of their meaning (CCC 2688).

The great importance the Church places on the Our Father means that pupils should know the prayer thoroughly, so that one should expect correct responses in excess of 80%. It is not satisfactory that while 76% could start the first line, only 42% could complete the prayer, and one in five did not respond at all. *Alive-O* includes the Lord's Prayer often, but does not explain and develop the meaning of the prayer, or give it due prominence, as called for in the CCC.

5. COMPARISON WITH IONA INSTITUTE SURVEYS

The Iona Institute, in association with the Evangelical Alliance, commissioned two Surveys of Christian Knowledge, which were carried out by Millward Brown (a leading global research agency) during 2007. The Survey results were published and are also available at www.ionainstitute.ie. The first survey gave results for the general population in the Republic of Ireland. The second survey was carried out in Northern Ireland and gave separate results for Catholics, Protestants and other religions; eight of the questions were the same in the second survey, while two questions were changed to reflect the ecumenical nature of the population surveyed.

The surveys provided for various breakdowns of the population. A particularly relevant breakdown was that by age group. Radical changes were made to Catholic catechesis in schools, with new programmes being introduced at primary and secondary levels, firstly in the 1970s, ostensibly to give expression to the renewal of the Second Vatican Council, and again in the 80s, 90s and 2000s. The over-50 age groups would have experienced little of these major changes.

If these major changes in Catholic school catechesis were faithful to Vatican Council II, then one would expect the surveys would reveal progressive improvement in knowledge of the Faith the younger the age group. (This expected trend of better knowledge the younger the age-group would be reinforced by the shorter time since leaving school, given that little adult catechesis has taken place in Ireland). However, the opposite is the case. The levels of knowledge revealed in the surveys of the basics of Catholic faith across the age groups (15-24, 25-34, 35-49, 50-64, and 65+) showed a general pattern of decreasing knowledge of faith the younger the age-group.

The pattern of knowledge by age-group therefore indicates, not an improvement but rather a deterioration, in school catechesis programmes since the 1970s. This evidence goes contrary to a viewpoint, often expressed in catechetical circles, which strongly criticizes 'pre-Vatican II' catechetical programmes, while giving generous praise to the catechetical programmes that have been introduced into our Catholic schools since the mid-1970s.

Analysis of the programmes themselves also reveals progressive deterioration. At primary level, there were significant problems with the *Children of God series*, and a further deterioration with the *Alive-O Programme*. At secondary level, a good religious education programme was simply abandoned in the 1970s, without a replacement programme, so that each school / teacher followed their own inclination. The 2000s saw the introduction of religiously relativist syllabi for State public examinations at Junior and Leaving Certificate levels, but less than half the pupils take the Junior Certificate religion exam, and only 5% take the Leaving Cert.

This deterioration in catechetical programmes is hardly surprising, given that an anthropological-experiential approach has been followed since the 1970s⁷, not the Church's required approach, which is the 'pedagogy of God' based on transmission of the truths of Divine Revelation.⁸

Comparison of the results of this Learning Assessment Survey ('LA Survey') with the results of the Iona Institute / Evangelical Alliance Surveys would seem helpful in order to see if improvements in religious knowledge were found in those who had followed the *Alive-O Programme* relative to those who had followed earlier programmes, especially the next higher age-group, 15-24 years (16-24 in Northern Ireland).

⁷ Anne Hession & Patricia Kieran, *Children, Catholicism & Religious Education*. Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2005. Page 103. 'The syllabus for the *Children of God* series, while unpublished, has changed in the course of its second presentation and representation [the *Alive-O programme*] yet the general methodological approach, the anthropological-experiential approach which has guided the Irish National Catechetical Programme from 1973 to 2005, has remained the same'.

⁸ *General Directory for Catechesis*. 1997. Part 3, 137-162.

There are similarities between the LA and Iona surveys and also some differences. The LA Survey was limited to Catholic pupils, while the Iona Survey in the Republic of Ireland covered the general population, which would have included Protestants and other religions in addition to the majority Catholics. The Iona Survey in Northern Ireland reported separate results for Catholics, Protestants and others.

There was a significant degree of correlation between the results of the LA and Iona surveys. Most of the questions in the Iona Surveys were the same or similar to questions in the LA Survey. The relevant Iona Institute Survey questions are given below, with percentage of right answers recorded, along with comparable results from the LA Survey (*given in italics*). These results indicate that the *Alive-O Programme* does not yield general improvement in learning of the basic truths of Faith in comparison with the unsatisfactory levels of knowledge revealed in the Iona Institute / Evangelical Alliance surveys.

Iona Institute Question: Name the writers of the Gospels.

- ROI: Over 65s – 77% Total Population – 66% 15-24 yr olds – 52%
- NI Catholics: All Catholics – 63% 16-24 yr olds – 47%

LA Survey Question 1-7: Name the four Gospels. Right answer – 62%

Iona Institute Question: Name the Holy Trinity.

- ROI: Over 65s – 76% Total Population – 64% 15-24 yr olds – 47%
- NI Catholics: All Catholics – 65% 16-24 yr olds – 39%

LA Survey Question 2-6: Name the Blessed Trinity. Right answer – 31%

Iona Institute Question: What is the First Commandment of the Ten Commandments?

- ROI: Over 65s – 43% Total Population – 25% 15-24 yr olds – 5%
- NI Catholics: All Catholics – 39% 16-24 yr olds – 20%

LA Survey Question 6-3: Fill in the blank of the First Commandment, as follows.

I am the Lord your God, Right answer – 32%

(Note: Filling in a blank is easier than answering the full question)

Iona Institute Question: According to Catholic Church, how many Sacraments are there?

- ROI: Over 65s – 63% Total Population – 50% 15-24 yr olds – 38%

LA Survey Question 5-5: Name the seven sacraments: 33% got all seven right.

(Note: Naming sacraments more difficult than giving the number).

Iona Institute Question: What name is given to the changing of the bread and wine into the

- | | | | |
|------------------------|----------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------|
| | | body and blood of Christ in the Mass? | |
| • <u>ROI:</u> | Over 65s – 34% | Total Population – 19% | 15-24 yr olds – 15% |
| • <u>NI Catholics:</u> | | All Catholics – 20% | 16-24 yr olds – 3% |

LA Survey: There was no exactly equivalent question, but there were three questions on the same theme – the presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, as follows:

Question 5-3 (multiple choice): The Sacrament of the Eucharist is:

55% chose the correct option –

Jesus' real body & blood under appearance of bread & wine.

Question 5-6: What do you understand the Mass to be?

4% included receiving Jesus in the Eucharist in their answers.

Question 5-7: What are the principal spiritual powers of priest through Holy Orders?

11% included power to change bread & wine into body & blood of Christ.

Iona Institute Question: What is meant by the Immaculate Conception?

- | | | | |
|---------------|----------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| • <u>ROI:</u> | Over 65s – 32% | Total Population – 19% | 15-24 yr olds – 10% |
|---------------|----------------|------------------------|---------------------|

LA Survey Question 4-3 (multiple choice): Mary consented to be the mother of Jesus. The Church Celebrates this event as: (correct option: The Annunciation)

51% incorrectly chose the option of The Immaculate Conception.

(Note: Choosing a correct multiple-choice option is easier than answering question).

Iona Institute Question: Where was Jesus born?

- | | | | |
|------------------------|----------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| • <u>ROI:</u> | Over 65s – 86% | Total Population – 81% | 15-24 yr olds – 68% |
| • <u>NI Catholics:</u> | | All Catholics – 84% | 16-24 yr olds – 80% |

LA Survey Question 3-2 (multiple choice): Jesus was born in the town of:

86% chose the correct option: Bethlehem.

(Note: Choosing a correct multiple-choice option is easier than answering question).

Iona Institute Question: What is celebrated by the Church on Easter Sunday?

- | | | | |
|------------------------|----------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| • <u>ROI:</u> | Over 65s – 84% | Total Population – 75% | 15-24 yr olds – 65% |
| • <u>NI Catholics:</u> | | All Catholics – 86% | 16-24 yr olds – 74% |

LA Survey Question 2-5 (multiple choice): The day the Church celebrates

the descent of the Holy Spirit:

28% incorrectly chose Easter.

Iona Institute Question: Name Apostle who wrote most of letters of the New Testament.

- NI Catholics: All Catholics – 37% 16-24 yr olds – 23%

LA Survey Question 1-2 (multiple choice): Knocked off his horse on the road to Damascus, he became the 'apostle to the Gentiles':

23% correctly chose St Paul.

The results of the Iona Institute / Evangelical Alliance Surveys reveal deficient knowledge levels of Christian Faith among Catholics in Ireland, with progressive deterioration of Faith knowledge with decreasing age, indicating failure in Catholic catechesis over the past generation or two.

A comparison of the results of this LA Survey with the results of the Iona Institute Surveys (especially the youngest age-group: 15-24 year olds) does not show general improvement in the religious knowledge of 12/13 year olds following completion of the *Alive-O programme*.

6. SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

RE Learning Assessment Survey

First Year of Secondary School

The Questionnaire consists of two types of question: *Multiple Choice & Short Answers*.

For *Multiple Choice* please circle or tick the option that most closely matches each sentence.

For *Short Answers* please give your best answer to the question in the time available.

Please:

- Complete the questionnaire, or as much as you can (especially the Multiple Choice questions) in the available time – 30 minutes.
- Work from memory, don't look anything up or copy from your neighbour.
- If you are not certain of an answer, just give it your best shot.
- If you really do not know the answer, don't waste time over it; simply go on to the next question.
- This is not a test of spelling or grammar, so don't worry about them.

This Survey is confidential, so please do not put your name on your questionnaire.

No individual results will be made known.

Only the average results of the class will be shared with your teacher.

Thank you for giving the time to complete the questionnaire.

SECTION ONE**Multiple Choice** - *Circle the word or phrase that best matches each sentence.*

1-1. He was sold by his brothers into slavery in Egypt:

- a. Joshua b. Judah c. Joseph d. Jeremiah

1-2. Knocked off his horse on the road to Damascus, he became the 'apostle to the Gentiles':

- a. Paul b. Peter c. Luke d. Matthew

1-3. Which best describes what is in the Acts of the Apostles:

- a. The life of Jesus b. The end of the world c. The spread of the early Church

1-4. For which parts of the Bible can we accept God as author, being written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit:

- a. the entire Bible b. some parts of the Bible c. none of it

1-5. Sacred Tradition is

- d. The traditions the Church developed through the ages
e. Writings of great saints of the Church
f. What Jesus taught the apostles, which has been handed on by the Church

1-6. We can best learn about what God is like by

- d. Studying nature and our own experience of life
e. Comparing what different religions believe about God
f. Listening to the teaching of the Church

Short Answers

1-7. Name the four Gospels, and four other books of the New Testament.

SECTION TWO**Multiple Choice** - *Circle the word or phrase that best matches each sentence.*

2-1. The mystery of the Blessed Trinity is

- d. Three Gods acting together as one
e. Three divine persons in one God
f. Three different ways in which God acts

2-2. The best understanding of the truth about God is

- d. There is only one true God, the Blessed Trinity
e. Each religion has some of the truth about God
f. What's true for me is my own experience of God

2-3. Angels are:

- d. Intelligent spiritual creatures without bodies
e. Great stories for children, which we don't have to believe when we grow up.
f. People who have died that God sends back to earth to help us

2-4. The best description of the Holy Spirit is

- d. A spirit of love and peace
e. A sense that God is with us
f. A divine person of the Blessed Trinity

2-5. The day the Church celebrates the descent of the Holy Spirit.

- a. Pentecost b. Trinity Sunday c. Corpus Christi d. Easter

Short Answers

2-6. Name the Blessed Trinity

2-7. Complete the sentences below from the Apostles' Creed:

I believe in God the Father Almighty, _____

I believe in Jesus Christ, _____.

He was conceived _____ and born _____.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate, _____

He descended to the dead. On the third day he _____.

He ascended into heaven and _____.

He will come again to _____.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the _____, the communion of saints,

the _____, the resurrection _____,

and _____. Amen

SECTION THREE**Multiple Choice**

Circle the word or phrase that best matches each sentence.

3-1. The Devil (Satan) is

- a. a fallen angel b. a symbol for evil c. a story to frighten kids to be good

3-2. Jesus was born in the town of:

- a. Nazareth b. Jerusalem c. Bethlehem

3-3. Which of these best describes Jesus Christ:

- a. a great son of God b. a great teacher & leader c. true God & true man

3-4. Circle the names of those who were apostles chosen by Jesus

- a. Peter b. Zacheus c. Judas d. Mark e. John f. Andrew

Short Answers

3-5. Name three miracles performed by Jesus. What do miracles tell us about Jesus?

3-6. What do you think were the two most important things that Jesus did for us?

SECTION FOUR**Multiple Choice**

Circle the word or phrase that best matches each sentence.

- 4-1. The principal mission of the Church is to:
a. spread the Gospel b. care for the poor & hungry c. give example of love
- 4-2. The name of the present Pope is
a. Bernard XVI b. John Paul II c. Paul VI d. Benedict XVI
- 4-3. Mary consented to be the mother of Jesus. The Church celebrates this event as
a. The Assumption b. The Immaculate Conception c. The Annunciation
- 4-4. He was stoned to death.
a. St Thomas More b. St Stephen c. St Augustine
- 4-5. She founded a convent in Kildare and was famed for her charity.
a. St Ita b. St Brigid c. St Clare
- 4-6. St Joseph was Jesus':
a. real father b. uncle c. foster-father
- 4-7. What happens to people after they die?
d. Everyone finds peace with God
e. People will be judged by God, and will live forever in heaven or in hell
f. A person's soul could get re-born in a different body
- 4-8. Purgatory is
d. A place of temporary purification before heaven
e. Where un-baptized babies go who have died
f. No longer part of the Church's official teaching

Short Answer

4-9. What diocese is your school in, and which Bishop / Archbishop leads the diocese?

4-10. What is the Communion of Saints?

SECTION FIVE

Multiple Choice - *Circle the word or phrase that best matches each sentence.*

5-1. A time of preparation for Christmas.

- a. Lent b. Advent c. Holy Week

5-2. The Church says that Catholics have an obligation to attend Mass on:

- a. All Sundays b. Sundays & Holy Days c. Christmas & Easter d. Most Sundays

5-3. The Sacrament of the Eucharist is:

- d. Jesus' real body & blood under the appearance of bread and wine
e. A celebration meal which helps us remember Jesus' Last Supper
f. The spirit of Jesus in the blessed bread and in our hearts

5-4. The Church does not have the power to ordain women to the priesthood:

- a. agree b. disagree c. don't know / not sure

Short Answers

5-5. What is a sacrament? Name the seven sacraments.

5-6. What do you understand the Mass to be?

5-7. What are the principal spiritual powers the priest receives through the Sacrament of Holy Orders?

5-8. Write the Our Father.

SECTION SIX

Multiple Choice

Circle the word or phrase that best matches each sentence

- 6-1. In matters of morality (what is right & wrong) Catholics should
- d. be guided by the teaching of the Catholic Church
 - e. consider all views (may include Church teaching) before making a decision
 - f. simply trust their own feelings and sense of right & wrong
- 6-2. To have sex before marriage is:
- a. always wrong
 - b. ok, if engaged
 - c. ok, if using contraception

Short Answer

6-3. Complete the sentences below of the Ten Commandments.

- XI. I am the Lord your God,
- XII. You shall not take
- XIII. Remember to keep
- XIV. Honour
- XV. You shall not
- XVI. You shall not
- XVII. You shall not
- XVIII. You shall not
- XIX. You shall not covet
- XX. You shall not covet

6-4. What is conscience?

6-5. What is a virtue?

6-6. What are the effects of Original Sin?

6-7. What are the main things you must do in order to make the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Penance, Confession) properly?