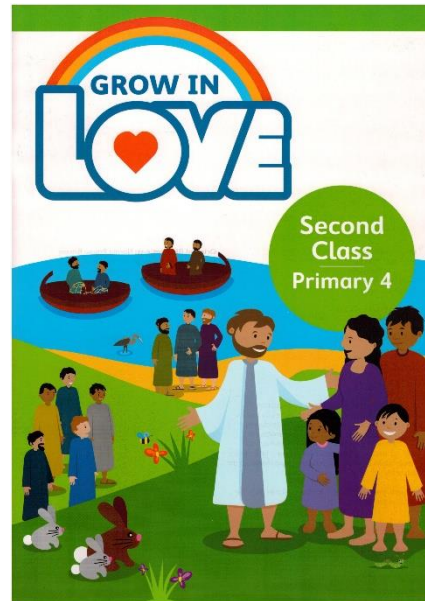
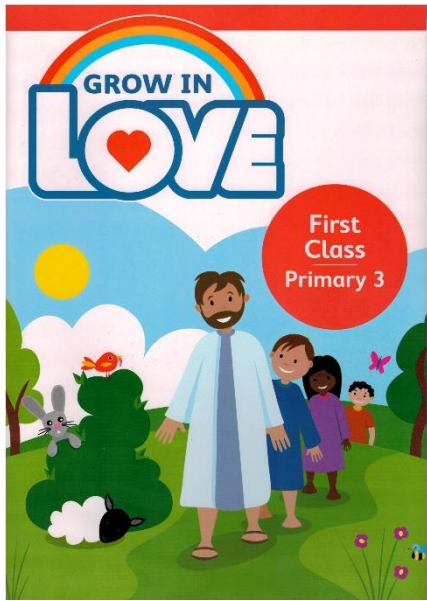


# Grow in Love

## A Review of *Grow in Love*, Primary 3 & 4 (1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Classes)

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## INTRODUCTION

This is a Review of the *Grow in Love* “Religious Education” series<sup>1</sup> for Primary 3 & 4 (First and Second Classes) which were introduced into Ireland’s Catholic primary schools in September 2016. *Grow in Love 3&4* comprises Pupil’s Books, Teacher’s Manuals, songs, posters and online resources.

*Grow in Love 1&2* for Junior and Senior Infants were introduced in September 2015. It is planned to introduce *Grow in Love* into Third and Fourth Classes in 2017, and into Fifth and Sixth Classes in 2018.

*Grow in Love* is replacing the *Alive-O Programme*<sup>2</sup>, which has proven deficient and defective<sup>3</sup>. This Review finds *Grow in Love* to be an improvement over *Alive-O* in some ways, equally unsatisfactory in key respects, while more problematic in other ways.

*Grow in Love* is an improvement over *Alive-O* insofar as it excludes nearly all the overtly unacceptable, often bizarre and ‘New Agey’, aspects of *Alive-O*<sup>4</sup>.

*Grow in Love* is found to be as poor as *Alive-O* in that it continues the same problems arising from omissions, imbalances and an unduly ‘horizontal’ (or secular) perspective.<sup>5</sup> These defects can be, because of their nature, extremely difficult to identify (e.g. some omissions are total; other times information is so minimised as to be effectively omitted). Omissions and confusions of key non-negotiable truths of Faith leave no more than a kind of theism with Catholic external appearances.

*Grow in Love* repeats the same educationally unsound structure as *Alive-O* with minimal content in the Pupil’s Books, which are the only materials that pupils are sure to see, while the programme is effectively contained in the voluminous and complex Teacher’s Manuals, seen only by the teacher. This imbalanced structure prevents a good home-school-parish partnership, because parents/guardians and parish-clergy will only get to see the content-starved Pupil’s Books and so will have little idea what *Grow in Love* is really about, what the pupils are being taught.

*Grow in Love* is worse than *Alive-O* in the following ways: *Grow in Love* does not claim to be Catholic catechesis, but is self-described as ‘Religious Education’ of a type that is aspirational and relativist, containing nothing specifically Catholic or Christian. *Grow in Love* ignores the pedagogy (teaching strategy) mandated by the Church, the ‘Pedagogy of God’, and instead chooses to use a secularised pedagogy giving first place to human experience. *Grow in Love* introduces a relativist type of ‘Inter-Religious Education’ which treats all religions of equal value, with nothing special or true in Christianity or the Catholic Church.

Taking all the above factors into account, this Review finds *Grow in Love 3&4* to be unacceptable for Catholic primary schools, in particular inadequate for preparing children to receive the Sacraments. A satisfactory alternative for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Classes is *My First Holy Communion*<sup>6</sup>. The Irish Church should be able to produce an excellent series for education in Catholic faith right through primary school, but as it isn’t happening, the Church should select an authentic Catholic catechesis series from another country – a number of such series are available.

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<sup>1</sup> Council for Catechetics, Irish Episcopal Conference. *Grow in Love Series*. Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Irish Episcopal Commission on Catechetics. *Alive-O Programme*. Dublin: Veritas Publications, 1996-2004.

<sup>3</sup> Éanna Johnson carried out a comprehensive review, theological and pedagogical, of the *Alive-O Programme* (see <http://eprints.nuim.ie/3076/>), for which he was awarded a PhD in Theology in 2011 by the Pontifical University, Maynooth. In parallel with his PhD research project he carried out a nationwide Learning Assessment study in 2007 of pupils who had completed the 8 years of the *Alive-O Programme*. <http://eannajohnson.org/wp/primary-school-catechesis/learning-assessment-alive-o/>

<sup>4</sup> e.g. Story of a wicked witch and her magic bread-oven to teach children the meaning of the Eucharist. *Alive-O 3* (First Class). Term 1, Lesson 10.

<sup>5</sup> This continues the same key defects identified by St John Paul II in post-Vatican II catechesis: ‘Deliberately or unconsciously omitting elements essential to the Church’s faith, or attributing excessive importance to certain themes at the expense of others, or, chiefly, a rather horizontalist overall view out of keeping with the Church’s magisterium’. *Catechesi Tradendae – On Catechesis in Our Time*, 1979. 49.

<sup>6</sup> Deirdre Mary Ascough. *My First Holy Communion*. Falcarragh, Co Donegal: Clonmacnois Press, 2010-12. Also published in Irish, *Mo Chéad Chomaoineach Naofa*.

## KEY ISSUES

### “Religious Education” vs. Catholic Catechesis:

*Grow in Love* (GIL) is self-described, not as Catholic catechesis, but as “religious education”. The term ‘Religious Education’ is widely used with different meanings, lacking any generally accepted definition. *Grow in Love* is stated to be based <sup>7</sup> on the *Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland* <sup>8</sup>. This Curriculum’s Glossary describes “Religious Education” in terms of a wish-list of outcomes, with nothing specifically Catholic or Christian: <sup>9</sup>

‘Religious education is a process that contributes to the faith development of children, adolescents and adults. Religious education helps people to develop religious ways of thinking, feeling and doing, which give expression to the spiritual, moral and transcendent dimensions of life and can lead to personal and social transformation. Religious education can also teach people to think profoundly, allowing them to make free and consistent choices in the way they live their religious, and other, commitments’.

Any programme for education of Catholic children in faith must follow the Church’s catechetical teachings, especially as expressed in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) <sup>10</sup> and the *General Directory for Catechesis* (GDC).<sup>11</sup> The Church considers catechesis to be an integral element of evangelisation<sup>12</sup>, the primary mission of the Church<sup>13</sup>.

The type of “religious education” embraced by *Grow in Love* carries no commitment to be faithful to the Church’s teaching, and is opposed to authentic Catholic catechesis.

### Pedagogy.

The *General Directory for Catechesis* (GDC) is the Catholic Church’s principal guidance document on pedagogy (teaching strategy & methodology), how education in the Faith should be carried out. The GDC specifies the ‘Pedagogy of God’ as the source and model of the pedagogy of the faith<sup>14</sup>. The ‘Pedagogy of God’, based on transmission of Divine Revelation, is also the pedagogy of Jesus Christ, and the pedagogy of the Church. The Pedagogy of God requires that salvation history is the overall structure for all Catechesis<sup>15</sup>. *Grow in Love* sets aside the Pedagogy of God, ignores salvation history and chooses instead a different pedagogy.

The pedagogy of *Grow in Love* <sup>16</sup> is described as taking the children on a journey from life, to faith, to life – expressed as ‘Let’s Look’, ‘Let’s Learn’, and ‘Let’s Live’ – which starts with secular life experience, presents the teaching of the Church (often poorly presented by GIL), and then takes the children back to their lives. This approach makes human experience the starting point and foundation, setting a ‘horizontal’ or secularised orientation for every lesson. *Grow in Love* claims its approach is affirmed in the Church’s *General Directory for Catechesis*, using some GDC quotations<sup>17</sup>, but these quotes are taken out of context and the claim is not valid.

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<sup>7</sup> *Grow in Love* 3&4, Teacher’s Manuals p.5,6.

<sup>8</sup> Irish Episcopal Conference. *Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland*. (authoured principally by Anne Hession). Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2015.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. Glossary, p.190.

<sup>10</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1994, 1999.

<sup>11</sup> Congregation for the Clergy. *General Directory for Catechesis*. Dublin: Veritas Publications, 1997.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. 63-70.

<sup>13</sup> Pope Paul VI. *Evangelii Nuntiandi – On Evangelisation in the Modern World, 1975*, 14. ‘Evangelising is the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelise’.

<sup>14</sup> GDC 137-147

<sup>15</sup> GDC 108, 115.

<sup>16</sup> *Grow in Love* 3&4. Teacher’s Manuals p.14-15, and every Lesson.

<sup>17</sup> *Grow in Love* 3&4. Teacher’s Manuals p.14.

*Grow in Love*'s pedagogy reflects that of the deeply-flawed '*Dutch Catechism*'<sup>18</sup>, and is effectively a condensed version of '*Shared Christian Praxis*', developed by Thomas H Groome<sup>19</sup> from Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*<sup>20</sup>, which aimed to promote Marxist revolution.

The *General Directory for Catechesis* has wise guidance on many aspects of methodology, including the role of human experience<sup>21</sup>. The GDC affirms the importance of relating the truths of Faith to life, but does not make human experience the starting point and base for pedagogy, as in *Grow in Love*.

It is unsatisfactory that *Grow in Love* has no Learning Assessment, which is an essential component of any educational activity.

### Education Resources:

*Grow in Love* utilises a range of educational resources, good in principle, including Pupil's Books, Teacher's Manuals, posters, songs and online resources. The role of the teacher is of course vital, but it is also true that good resources can be very helpful to the teacher, while poor resources can be a major hindrance.

A good Pupil's Book is a vital resource. It is educational best practice for the Pupil's Books to contain what the Pupils are to be taught, in a creative and learning-friendly manner. The Pupil's Book is enduring; a good Pupil's Book can be an invaluable reference, not just in its current year, but for years to come.

A good Pupil's Book could contribute significantly to a positive home-school-parish partnership. It could offer a fruitful shared experience for parents and children to learn together. This would be particularly important for today's generation of primary school parents, who were victims of the deficient and defective 'religious education' programmes introduced to Ireland's Catholic schools from the mid-1970s. A good Pupil's Book could help parish clergy to contribute to the children's education in faith, which should be one of their most important ministries<sup>22</sup>.

The *Grow in Love* Pupil's Books have instructional material and an exercise for each Lesson. The Books have very little content, so pupils do not have a comprehensive and enduring reference to what they should be learning. It is also unsatisfactory for teachers, unduly increasing their responsibility and workload.

The lack of content is even more unsatisfactory for parents and parish clergy, who do not see the Teacher's Manuals and online resources, and so will have very little idea what the children are being taught, preventing a fruitful home-school-parish partnership.

A good Teacher's Manual could be extremely helpful to the teacher and should focus on how the teaching is to be done, and typically would include: aims, programme structure, additional background reading and other resources for the teachers, learning activities, Learning Assessment instruments, advice on presentation, glossary and index, etc.

*Grow in Love 3&4* Teacher's Manuals are voluminous (each 330 pages) and complex, in which the programme is essentially contained. At the same time, the Teacher's Manuals exclude potentially helpful aspects, e.g. Learning Assessment instruments, glossary, index.

The Online Resources are commendable in principle, and include helpful material. The resources are only available to, and used at the discretion of the teacher, so parents and parish clergy will not know the content of these resources nor the extent to which they are seen by the pupils.

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<sup>18</sup> *A New Catechism – Catholic Faith for Adults*, New York: Herder & Herder, 1967, which leads with human experience and non-Christian religions.

<sup>19</sup> Thomas H Groome. *Educating Christians in a Dissenting World*, p.249-258 in *Exploring Religious Education*, Anne Hession & Patricia Kieran – Editors. Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2008.

<sup>20</sup> Paulo Freire. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, London: Penguin Books, 1996.

<sup>21</sup> GDC 148-162.

<sup>22</sup> Code of Canon Law, 519, 528.

### Home, School and Parish Partnership:

Parents have primary responsibility from God for education of their own children in Catholic faith<sup>23</sup>. The Church's bishops, assisted by their priests, have the divine mission and duty for educating in the Catholic faith<sup>24</sup>.

Among the ways of advancing education, schools are the principal means of helping parents fulfil their divinely appointed role of educating their children. The formation and education in the Catholic religion in any school is under the authority of the Church, to be supervised by the diocesan Bishop<sup>25</sup>.

Catholic schools, therefore, derive their mission from the divinely appointed missions of parents and Church. The schools are to be at the service of parents and the Church, in a collaborative partnership between home, school and parish. As noted above, the *Grow in Love 3&4* materials are designed such that the only resource that parents and parish clergy will see are the Pupil's Books, which are content-starved. The vast majority of what pupils will be taught is contained in the Teacher's Manuals and the online resources, which only the teachers will see and use.

Therefore, *Grow in Love 3&4* are designed to put nearly all the power in the school and teachers, largely excluding parents and Church. This turns matters upside down, making the school not the servant, but rather the master, in the home-school-parish relationship. This situation is particularly detrimental in relation to preparation and celebration of the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist, which is seriously unacceptable.

### Title & Logo:

The title, *Grow in Love*, could convey a Christian meaning, but could equally be secular. It would be better to have a title that is more explicitly expressive of education in Catholic faith (examples of such titles of good Catholic programmes include: *Faith & Life*; *Image of God*; *Know, Worship and Love*).

The choice of a rainbow as logo carries risks, because the rainbow has been widely and successfully promoted to symbolise the LGBT agenda. While the rainbow is part of God's wonderful creation and was the sign of covenant between God and Noah<sup>26</sup>, *Grow in Love 3&4* do not try to 'reclaim' the rainbow as a Christian symbol.

The 'love heart' symbol in the logo is secular – a cross would be a better symbol to express God's greatest love for humanity, that Jesus Christ, God the Son, came to die on the cross as our Saviour<sup>27</sup>.

### Official Church Approval:

Responsibility for *Grow in Love* is attributed to the Council for Catechetics of the Irish Episcopal Conference. This means that pre-publication approval is essential from the Holy See<sup>28</sup>, but no such approval is expressed in *Grow in Love*, suggesting a breach of Canon Law.

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<sup>23</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Code of Canon Law*. London: Collins Liturgical Publications 1983, 226, 793.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid: 773-777, 794.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid: 796, 804-806.

<sup>26</sup> Genesis 9:12-17

<sup>27</sup> John 3:16.

<sup>28</sup> Code of Canon Law 775§2; *General Directory for Catechesis 285*

## ELEMENTS OF FAITH

*Grow in Love 3&4* are structured in Lessons, each of which is a week's work. The Lessons are grouped under ten Themes, numbered 1-10 with Lessons sequentially numbered within each Theme. There are an additional five Seasonal Themes in each year. Themes and Lessons are listed in Appendix A. To assist in analysis of *Grow in Love* this Review focuses on selected Elements of Faith, guided by the structure of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, as listed in Appendix B.

The following abbreviations are used in reference to material in *Grow in Love 3* and 4:

- ❖ GIL: *Grow in Love 3* and 4
- ❖ T: Theme; L: Lesson; SL: Seasonal Lesson.
- ❖ TM3 & TM4: Teacher's Manuals 3 and 4.

### Revelation / Scripture

GIL has excerpts from Scripture in many of the Lessons, which is good. However, there are key omissions and/or changes in several Scripture passages and no teachings for pupils on Revelation or Scripture *per se*, which is not good. Pupils are asked to memorise some Scripture verses, which is good, but much greater use could be made of this excellent educational practice.

Lesson refs: *Grow in Love 3*: Various. *Grow in Love 4*: Various.

### Trinity & God the Father

GIL has no teaching for pupils on the Holy Trinity. God is sometimes referred to as 'Father', but there is no 'God the Father'. Jesus is treated as a godly human being, not as a divine Person of the Trinity. Jesus is never described as 'God the Son', just 'God's Son', which does not proclaim his divinity, because all Christians can be considered sons and daughters of God. The Holy Spirit is called 'God's Spirit', but never 'God the Holy Spirit' the third divine Person of the Trinity.

Pupils are taught the Sign of the Cross and the 'Glory be the Father', but are not taught the meaning of these great Trinitarian prayers. GIL does not include the Apostles' Creed, which is structured on the Trinity. A very brief reference to the Trinity in Teacher's Manual3 T10L2<sup>29</sup> will hardly convey to teachers that the Trinity is important and should be taught to the pupils

This is seriously unacceptable, because the Trinity is the central mystery of Christian faith and life<sup>30</sup>, the foundation of the 'hierarchy of truths of faith'. In the absence of the Trinity, religious teaching is some kind of theism, but not authentic Christianity.

### Creation

GIL has lessons devoted to Creation, which is good. However, it is unsatisfactory that teaching on creation in the Pupil's Books is 'horizontal', limited to material creation, excluding God's spiritual creation – angels and human souls. Angels are mentioned in the text, their existence must be in doubt for pupils because the illustrations only show beams of light or stars.

Pupil's Books do not teach of the fall of the angels and our first parents, nor of original sin. Teacher's Manual4 T9 has a good but brief teaching on the creation and fall of Adam and Eve, but will this be passed on verbally to the pupils, and if so will they remember?

Lesson refs: *Grow in Love 3*: T9L1,2. *Grow in Love 4*: T3L2; T9L1,2.

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<sup>29</sup> This emulates the approach of the highly influential but deeply flawed '*Dutch Catechism*' (*A New Catechism – Catholic Faith for Adults*, New York: Herder & Herder, 1967), where the sole brief reference to the Trinity is on p.499 of a 502 page book.

<sup>30</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 232-267.

## Jesus – Advent / Christmas

The Pupil's Books address the main events, but too briefly with key omissions, the principal one of which is the identity of Jesus as God and Saviour.

The Visitation account should include that Elizabeth's baby was John the Baptist, and that Elizabeth greeted Mary as 'mother of my Lord'<sup>31</sup>, which expresses the divinity of Jesus. It is unacceptable that the illustration shows Mary as heavily pregnant as Elizabeth, implying that Mary was already pregnant at the time of the Annunciation. Omitted is that Mary was without sin, and Jesus gave her to us as our mother too.

It is good to include the angels' proclamation of Jesus' birth to the shepherds, but it is not good to change 'Saviour, Christ the Lord'<sup>32</sup>, which clearly proclaims Jesus as God and Saviour of the human race, to 'God's own Son', which implies no more than Jesus is a good man, since all Christians are sons and daughters of God.

It is good to include the meeting with Simeon and Anna, and the image of the light to come, but unsatisfactory to exclude the prophecies of 'Christ the Lord' and 'salvation'<sup>33</sup>. It is good to include the visit of the wise men<sup>34</sup>, except for changing 'king of the Jews' to 'new king'.

Coverage of the finding of the boy Jesus in the Temple is adequately presented, except for changing 'obedience' in the Scriptural account (Lk.2:41-52), to 'respect', which is then extended to all children 'respecting' their parents, which is less than obedience, which children should be taught to give their parents.

The Teacher's Manuals and online resources add little more. The great emphasis is on Jesus as the light, which is valid, but not good to omit the divinity of Jesus and his identity as Messiah, Redeemer and Saviour (Lk.2:25-38). Mary is referred to as 'mother of Jesus', but not 'mother of God'. It is good that Joseph is mentioned, but not good to omit reference to the Holy Family – Jesus, Mary and Joseph – especially Joseph's role as Jesus' foster-father.

Lesson refs: *Grow in Love* 3: T3L1,2,3; *Grow in Love* 4: T3L2,3.

## Jesus – Mission & Public Ministry

It is good that *Grow in Love* gives significant attention to Jesus' mission and public ministry, with several good aspects presented. There are also, however, key omissions.

GIL presents Jesus as a very good man who is friend and healer. Jesus is also teacher whose message is no more than: God loves people, and we should love God and love one another as Jesus loves us.

It is good to include John the Baptist's announcement of the coming of Jesus, but not good to omit the Baptist's call to repentance and that Jesus would baptise with the Holy Spirit.

It is good for GIL to include Jesus' forty days in the desert in preparation for his public ministry, but not good that GIL departs significantly from Scripture (Mt.4:1-11; Lk.4:1-13). GIL says that Jesus decided he was going to begin his work and that he would go into the desert to prepare; Scripture says the Holy Spirit led Jesus. The Scripture passages deal mostly with Jesus' temptations by Satan, but GIL omits these temptations. GIL says that three times Jesus was tempted to break his fast and leave the desert, but this is not in Scripture.

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<sup>31</sup> Luke 1:43

<sup>32</sup> Luke 2:11

<sup>33</sup> Luke 2:25-38.

<sup>34</sup> Matthew 2:1-12.

Jesus' choice of the twelve apostles is well presented. It is good that a number of Jesus' healings and miracles are presented: the draught of fishes, the paralytic, Peter's mother-in-law, Jairus' daughter, and Zacchaeus. However, it is unsatisfactory that GIL Pupil's Book describes the raising of Jairus' daughter from the dead as no more than a 'healing', and omits Jesus forgiving the paralytic's sins which demonstrated his divinity and is particularly relevant to teaching pupils an understanding of the Sacrament of Reconciliation

It is good to present Jesus' teaching on the widow's mite, and the parable of the lost sheep, but wrong to omit the Scriptural image of the lost sheep as a repentant sinner (Lk.15:4-7).

While *Grow in Love* presents many good aspects of Jesus' mission, it fall short of being authentically Christian because it omits that Jesus is both God and man, and that his principal mission was as Saviour of the human race.

Lesson refs: GIL3: T1L1,3; T2L1,2,3,4; T5L2; T10L1,2.

GIL4: T1L1,2,3; T2L1,2,3,4; T3L1; T5L1,2; T10L1,2; SL3.

### **Jesus – Lent / Easter**

It is good that GIL presents Lent as a time of preparation for Easter, with emphasis on prayer, fasting and alms-giving, recalling Jesus' forty days in the desert.

The Pupil's Books have accounts of Jesus' entry to Jerusalem, the Last Supper, the passion and death of Jesus on the cross, the Resurrection and Ascension, which is good. However, there are deficiencies: the Last Supper is not connected with Jesus' death, with the Mass or priesthood of the apostles; there is no reference to Jesus' divinity and that his sacrificial death on the cross was to save the human race from sin; the resurrection and ascension are not connected with Jesus' divinity; there are no illustrations of the Risen Jesus, only an empty tomb; there is no sense of salvation history.

The Teacher's Manuals give the reason Jesus' death was that 'some people' did not like him speaking of God's love, but Jesus would not stop, so these people decided to get rid of him, handing him over to Pilate who condemned Jesus to death. The involvement of the Jewish leaders is never mentioned, most particularly the condemnation of the Sanhedrin of Jesus to death for blasphemy, for claiming that he was divine. *Grow in Love* further claims that after the Resurrection Jesus' friends started calling him 'Christ' and 'Lord Jesus', implying that Jesus' identity as the Messiah/Redeemer and God was not expressed by himself, but only fabricated by his followers after Jesus' death – the so-called 'Jesus of faith', as opposed to the 'historical Jesus'.

GIL presents Jesus as a very good person, but no more than a human being. The identity of Jesus is confused in the online Stations of the Cross, in which the part of Jesus is played by a girl, while gender identity is further confused with 'Veronica' played by a boy.

Lesson refs: *Grow in Love* 3: SL3; T7L1,2; T8L1. *Grow in Love* 4: SL3; T6L1; T7L1,2; T8L1.

### **Holy Spirit / Pentecost**

GIL includes that the Holy Spirit descended on the disciples at Pentecost, as Jesus promised, after which they went out to preach the Good News. This much is good.

However, significant omissions mean that GIL is teaching a kind of theism, not authentic Christianity. The Holy Spirit is only described as friend and helper, not the divine third person of the Trinity. The mission of the disciples and all Christians is described as no more than to speak of God's love. Scripture makes it clear that the Holy Spirit inspired the apostles to teach the *kerygma*, salvation history, the full Christian Good News, exemplified in the inspiring preaching of Peter and Stephen (Acts2:14-41; 7:1-56).

Lesson refs: *Grow in Love* 3: T8L2,3. *Grow in Love* 4: T8L2,3.



## **Church**

*Grow in Love* treats Baptism like a secular joining ritual, stating that: 'Every organisation and community has its own way of welcoming new members. People become members of the Church through Baptism'. Subsequent teaching on the Sacrament of Baptism is deficient (see p10 below).

This is a very limited understanding of the Church. Catholic children preparing for First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion should be given a basic understanding of the Catholic Church, but GIL3&4 gives no such teaching and never even mentions the Catholic Church. This is totally unacceptable.

Lesson refs: *Grow in Love 3*: T1L2. *Grow in Love 4*: T1L3.

## **Saints**

It is good to select Mary Magdalene and her role in finding the empty tomb after the Resurrection, meeting Jesus, and carrying the good news to the Apostles. However, the opportunity is missed to teach the children about Mary's fascinating story, her conversion, her faithful presence at the cross, and her extraordinary love of Jesus.

St Therese of Lisieux and St Vincent de Paul are good choices of saints from whom the pupils can learn.

St Patrick is another good selection, but unfortunately the perspective is more theist than Christian, emphasising that Patrick told the people about God's love, but not mentioning that Patrick brought Christianity to Ireland. St Brigid is also included, which is good, but the material is again theist, focusing on God's love but omitting Jesus Christ. The legend of St Brigid's cloak is colourful, but probably fictional, so it would be better to focus on those wonderful aspects of Brigid's life that are accepted as historic.

There is introduction to the Feasts of All Saints and All Souls, which is good, but no distinction is made between the two Feasts, which is unhelpful.

The Teacher's Manuals have some good information on saints: holy people in heaven, honoured by Church with a feast day, example to follow and help in prayer. This information could and should have been included in the Pupil's Books.

Lesson refs: *Grow in Love 3*: T7L2; SL2; SL4. *Grow in Love 4*: SL2; SL4.

## **Eschatology / The Last Things**

The Pupil's Books teach that Jesus went to heaven after his resurrection, and that the saints are in heaven after their death. This much is good.

Teacher's Manual 4 includes that God's plan is that when we die we will live on with the angels and saints in heaven, which is our true and final home where we will be happy with God. This is good, but it could and should have been included in the Pupil's Books. It would have been good to include some qualification, e.g. if we want to go to heaven we all follow Jesus, love God and other people and avoid sin, because thinking that everyone goes to heaven anyway encourages the sin of presumption.

Lesson refs: *Grow in Love 3*: T8L1; SL2. *Grow in Love 4*: SL2.

## **Liturgy / Sacraments**

*Grow in Love* combines Liturgy and Prayer, contrary to the Church's way, as set out in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), which has separate parts in its four-part structure for Liturgy/Sacraments and Prayer. Combining or conflating Liturgy and Prayer undermines the full richness of each as understood by the Catholic Church.

GIL does not teach what Liturgy is nor what a Sacrament is. The information for teachers in TM3&4 p.7 calls the presence of God in all of creation the 'sacramental principle', which is unhelpful, because if everything is 'sacramental' then there is nothing special in the seven Sacraments.

GIL should, but does not, teach pupils preparing for First Reconciliation and Holy Communion what a 'Sacrament' is and also the seven Sacraments of the Church, with a brief outline of each, especially the graces particular to each Sacrament.

### **Sacrament of Baptism**

*Grow in Love's* presentation on Baptism is deficient. While including elements of the Catholic Church's teaching, GIL omits key and essential aspects.

The main emphasis in *Grow in Love* is on Baptism as a welcoming and joining ritual into a group of people, the Church. GIL omits the principal effects of Baptism which are cleansing from original sin and all sins, and new birth in Christ through the grace of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross – it is as a result of these effects that the newly baptised are incorporated into the Church.

It is good that the Pupil's Books and Teacher's Manuals mention various elements that the Church normally uses in the administration of Baptism: water, chrism, white garment, and candle – but not good to omit the profession of faith. It is not good that GIL treats these elements as of equal value, omitting to emphasise that the only essential element is pouring of water while saying the words, 'I baptise you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit'. It is good to include the Baptismal name, but not good to omit the god-parents.

The online resources are helpful in showing the administration of a Baptism, which is mostly well done, except that the Profession of Faith omits faith in God the Father, and also the three-fold renunciation of Satan.

Lesson refs: *Grow in Love 3*: T1L2. *Grow in Love 4*: T1L3.

### **Eucharist / Mass**

*Grow in Love 3 & 4* give an appropriate degree of attention to Eucharist / Mass, with five Lessons in each year. It would have been more helpful to keep the Lessons together as a module rather than separating them, which is likely to lead to loss of focus and meaning.

Content in the Pupil's Books is limited to: In the Mass, which is like the Last Supper, we pray together, thank God and ask for mercy, we listen to stories from the Bible, offer gifts, and respectfully receive Jesus in Communion.

The Teacher's Manuals have more information, including much that is good. The content-starved Pupil's Books put undue burden and responsibility on teachers, obliging them to seek out the good information to teach the pupils. The Teacher's Manuals also have limitations and deficiencies, crucially the omission of the divinity of Jesus, without which the Eucharist / Mass makes no sense at all. The spiritual power of the priest through his Sacrament of Holy Orders is omitted, without which he could not effect transubstantiation, or stand in the place of Christ, an *alter Christus*. It is good to state that the bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Christ, but not good to omit the soul and divinity of Christ. There is no clear statement that the Mass is the same sacrifice as that of the cross, through which Jesus won the salvation of the human race from sin. It would have been helpful if Lessons on Jesus' mission had included the miracle of the loaves, which pre-figures the Eucharist.

The online resources include videos from a televised Mass, which present clearly the reverent celebration of the various parts of the Mass. This is a very good resource, but it would of course require explanation and development by the teacher.

Lesson refs: GIL3: T2L5; T4L2; T6L1,2,3. GIL4: T2L5; T4L2; T6L1,2,3.

## **Sacrament of Reconciliation (Penance, Confession)**

There are several good aspects in GIL's presentation: the forgiveness of God, the need for sorrow for sin (failing in love of God and others), the need to ask forgiveness of God and others we may have offended, the steps involved in going to the Sacrament, the *Confiteor*.

There are however limitations. The Pupil's Book says the priest forgives sin; the Teacher's Manual does better in saying the priest forgives in God's name, but there is no mention of the spiritual power to forgive sins through the Sacrament of Holy Orders. GIL only asks penitents to try to do better, but this falls short of true contrition which requires a firm intention or resolution not to commit again the sin(s) confessed. GIL omits that the Sacrament gives grace for forgiveness of sins and to help in avoiding sins in the future.

It is good that there is examination of conscience, but not good that it is left to the children to decide for themselves what is loving of God and others. This is not the way of God, the way of the Church, which provides the explicit moral guidance that we all need. GIL does not recognise the Ten Commandments, which is the best framework for examination of conscience.<sup>35</sup>

GIL's 'Act of Sorrow' falls short of satisfactory. The Act of Contrition offered in the online resources (GIL3 T5L3) is an improvement and would be better used instead, as follows: 'My God I am sorry for my sins with all my heart in choosing to do wrong and failing to do good. I have sinned against you who I should love above all things. I firmly intend with your help to do penance, to sin no more and to avoid whatever leads me to sin.'

Lesson refs: *Grow in Love 3*: T5L3. *Grow in Love 4*: T5L3.

## **Morality / Life in Christ**

*Grow in Love* emphasises the Old Testament law of love, as expressed by Jesus: 'Love God and love your neighbour as yourself' (Mt.22:34-40; Dt.6:5; Lv.19:18). Jesus' fulfilment of the second part of this law was to 'Love one another as I have loved you' (Jn.13:34), which is rightly emphasised in GIL. However, GIL omits the New Testament fulfilment of the first part of the Old Testament law (Love God), which is to believe in Jesus as our God and Saviour (1Jn.3:23, Jn.3:16, and many other Scriptures). Loving others as Jesus loved us would be impossible if Jesus had not won for us the grace of salvation through his sacrifice on the cross and sent God the Holy Spirit to be our helper and guide in a new and powerful way.

A serious problem with *Grow in Love* is that having taught that we should love one another, it is left up to 6-8 year-olds to decide for themselves what are 'good and bad choices', effectively a kind of DIY morality. Pupils are encouraged to make up their own Class Code (TM3 T1L1), without any reference to God's laws on right and wrong. This is not God's way, not Jesus' way, not the Church's way. Both Old and New Testaments have extensive teachings on morality, in which the Decalogue and Jesus' Sermon on the Mount have a special place. All human beings are fallen and limited, so we need explicit and comprehensive guidance on morality. If mature Christian adults need all this moral guidance, then children need specific guidance even more, starting with the Church's tradition of using the Ten Commandments as a moral framework.<sup>36</sup>

Teacher's Manual<sup>3</sup> T5 recognises that at times people ignore God's love and his call to love others, which it calls 'the human condition', but would be more accurately called 'original sin'. It is unacceptable that GIL Pupil's Books omit teaching on 'original sin' and its consequences.

Lesson refs: *Grow in Love 3*: T1L1,3; T2L4; T4L1; T5L1,2. *Grow in Love 4*: T2L4; T5L1,2.

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<sup>35</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1454.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.* 2083-2557.

## Prayer

GIL has prayer in all Lessons, including great prayers of the Church – Sign of the Cross, Our Father, Hail Mary, Confiteor and Glory be to the Father – which is good in principle. However, it is unsatisfactory that the meaning of these great prayers is neither developed nor explained, especially the Our Father, which the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*<sup>37</sup> develops fully and treats as the foundation for all Christian prayer.

GIL includes the Rosary and Mass Responses, which is good. However, it would have been helpful for Class 1&2 pupils to include certain other great prayers – Acts of Faith, Hope and Love, the Angelus, and especially the Apostles' Creed, the indispensable summary of Christian Faith, which GIL inexplicably omits from the Rosary and the Mass prayers in the Pupil's Books.

Teaching on prayer for pupils preparing for First Reconciliation and Eucharist should focus on the great prayers of the Church. It is unwise that GIL instead gives overwhelming attention to its own less satisfactory prayers. The prayer sessions in each Lesson mainly involve the teacher reading out lengthy GIL-written prayers from the Teacher's Manual – hardly conducive to engaging children in prayer.

Most of GIL's prayers will be strange to parents/grandparents and parish-clergy, which will not help in building the home-school-parish relationship.

Many, if not most, pupils will lack prayer in the home because their parents suffered from the deficient and defective catechesis programmes introduced into Catholic schools from the mid-1970s. Focusing on the great prayers of the Church would help pupils participate if there is prayer in their family, to pray on their own, and even encourage their own parents in prayer.

Lesson refs: *Grow in Love 3*: SL1; & various.      *Grow in Love 4*: SL1; & various.

## Inter-Religious Education

*Grow in Love 3 & 4* Teacher's Manuals have a brief 'Inter-Religious or Ecumenical Link' with each Theme. The material is too advanced for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Class pupils, and is sometimes misleading. The perspective is not Christian because all religions are treated as of equal value (relativism). Christianity and Judaism are treated as separate religions, rather than from a Christian perspective which understands Christianity as the fulfilment of Judaism.

*Grow in Love 3 & 4* each have a Lesson on Inter-Religious Education, SL5. The Lessons cover aspects of Catholicism, Judaism and Islam through three children. The focus on understanding and friendship is very commendable, but the relativist approach is inappropriate for Catholic schools and potentially harmful to the faith of Catholic pupils.

Teacher's Manual 3 correctly quotes *Nostra Aetate*<sup>38</sup> in favour of respect for non-Christian religions. However, omitted are *Nostra Aetate*'s other statements which declare the unique truth of Christianity, including: 'The Catholic Church proclaims, and ever must proclaim Christ "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6), in whom men may find the fullness of religious life, in whom God has reconciled all things to Himself (2Cor.5:18-19)'.<sup>39</sup>

Teaching about other religions could validly be included in education for Catholic Faith, but not with a relativist approach. The only way to teach the full truth about other religions is from a Catholic perspective. Such teaching could have a place for older pupils, perhaps in 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> classes, provided they had a good grounding in the Catholic faith.

Lesson refs: *Grow in Love 3*: SL5; each Theme.      *Grow in Love 4*: SL5; each Theme.

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<sup>37</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church, Part Four* 2759-2865.

<sup>38</sup> Second Vatican Council. *Nostra Aetate – Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions*, 1965. 2.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* 2.

## APPENDIX A: *Grow in Love 3&4* – Themes & Lessons

A Lesson is a week's work, 33 in each year. The Lessons are grouped under Themes, numbered 1-10, while Lessons are sequentially numbered within each Theme. There are also five Seasonal Lessons each year. (Note: Theme 10 'Grow in Love', appears only in the Teacher's Manuals, not Pupil's Books).

### *Grow in Love 3* (1<sup>st</sup> Class) – Themes & Lessons

THEME	LESSON
1. Belonging	1. We belong together
	2. We belong to the Church
	3. God loves us
2. Jesus	1. Jesus
	2. Jesus had many friends
	3. Jesus healed people
	4. Jesus taught his friends how to live
	5. At Mass, Jesus' friends gather together
3. Advent & Christmas	1. Waiting for the light
	2. Jesus is the light
	3. The waiting is over
4. We hear the Gospel at Mass	1. All who heard him were amazed
	2. We listen to the Gospel at Mass
5. Reconciliation	1. We can lose our way
	2. The lost sheep
	3. We celebrate God's forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation
6. Celebrating Mass	1. We offer gifts
	2. 'Do this in memory of me'
	3. We are nourished by receiving Holy Communion
7. Holy Week & Easter	1. Jesus in Jerusalem
	2. Jesus is risen!
8. Jesus is still with us	1. 'I am with you always'
	2. 'I will send a helper'
	3. 'Go and share the Good News'
9. Creation	1. God made the world
	2. God made us ... we are special
10. Grow in Love	1. Living in love
	2. Growing in love
Seasonal Lessons	1. The Rosary (October)
	2. Celebrating the Saints (1 November)
	3. Lent (Ash Wednesday)
	4. St Patrick (17 March)
	5. Inter-Religious Education Lesson (Term 3)

### Grow in Love 4 (2<sup>nd</sup> Class) – Themes & Lessons

THEME	LESSON
1. Called & Chosen	1. Our class – a circle of friends
	2. Jesus chose followers
	3. We are Jesus' followers
2. Jesus	1. Jesus: healer, helper, friend
	2. Jesus heals Peters' mother-in-law
	3. Jesus heals Jairus' daughter
	4. Jesus gives followers Law of Love
	5. At Mass, Jesus' followers gather together
3. Advent & Christmas	1. Prepare the way of the Lord
	2. Messengers of God
	3. The birth of Jesus
4. We hear the Word of God at Mass	1. Nothing is impossible with God
	2. At Mass we listen.
5. Reconciliation	1. Choices
	2. Zacchaeus made bad choices
	3. We can be forgiven
6. At Mass we give thanks & receive Holy Communion	1. 'Do this in memory of me'
	2. At Mass, we thank God
	3. At Mass, we receive Holy Communion
7. Holy Week & Easter	1. The death of Jesus
	2. The Resurrection
8. We can live as Jesus asked	1. 'I am with you always'
	2. 'I will send a helper'
	3. 'Go and share the Good News'
9. Creation	1. God created us
	2. God wants us to be happy
10. Grow in Love	1. 'As I have loved you'
	2. Growing in love
Seasonal Lessons	1. The Rosary (October)
	2. Celebrating the Saints (1 November)
	3. Lent (Ash Wednesday)
	4. St Brigid (1 February)
	5. Inter-Religious Education (Term 3)

## APPENDIX B: *Grow in Love 3&4* – Elements of Faith

This Review has selected Elements of Faith, guided by the structure of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, to assist in analysis of *Grow in Love*.

T=Theme; L=Lesson; SL=Seasonal Lesson

<b>ELEMENTS OF FAITH</b>	<b><i>Grow in Love 3: Lessons</i></b>	<b><i>Grow in Love 4: Lessons</i></b>
Revelation / Scripture	Various	Various
Trinity & God the Father	T10L2.	
Creation	T9L1,2.	T3L2; T9L1,2.
Jesus - Advent / Christmas	T3L1,2,3. T4L1;	T3L2,3.
Jesus - Mission	T1L1,3; T2L1,2,3,4; T5L2; T10L1,2.	T1L1,2,3; T2L1,2,3,4; T3L1; T5L1,2; T10L1,2; SL3.
Jesus - Lent / Easter	SL3; T7L1,2; T8L1.	SL3; T6L1; T7L1,2; T8L1;
Holy Spirit / Pentecost	T8L2,3.	T8L2,3.
Church	T1L2; T8L3.	T1L2,3; T8L3.
Saints	T7L2; SL2; SL4.	SL2; SL4.
Eschatology / The Last Things	T8L1; SL2.	SL2.
Liturgy / Sacraments		
Sacrament of Baptism	T1L2.	T1L3.
Eucharist / Mass	T2L5; T4L2; T6L1,2,3.	T2L5; T4L2; T6L1,2,3.
Sacrament of Reconciliation	T5L3.	T5L3.
Morality / Life in Christ	T1L3; T2L4; T4L1; T5L1,2.	T2L4; T5L1,2.
Prayer / Our Father	SL1; & various	SL1; & various
Inter-Religious Education	SL5; each Theme.	SL5; each Theme.