

Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity and Catholicism:

A Backgrounder

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Introduction and Faith Context

Catholic teaching is an authentic source of support for dialogue on accessibility, inclusion, diversity, and equity (AIDE) in Catholic schools and school boards. Rooted in the story of the Catholic faith, this resource highlights Catholic theology that supports these concepts. While all school boards are required to adhere to civil laws, the [Ontario Human Rights Code](#), the [Education Act](#), and more, Catholic schools are additionally called to dialogue from a Catholic worldview.

The diversity of student and staff lived experience and identity in Catholic schools is an essential consideration related to AIDE. Developing understanding and appreciation for different interpretations within Catholicism itself, expanding to Christianity as a whole, and to the multitude of other faith traditions is increasingly important. This document is intended to discuss the relationship of AIDE concepts specifically to the Catholic tradition, recognizing that additional learning will always be needed.

This initial overview of Catholic theology related to AIDE could be expanded into multiple volumes. This backgrounder is intended to help situate a theological location to enable discussion from a Catholic perspective in different contexts that Association release officers, representatives, and members encounter. Additional AIDE-related resources from the Association are available in the [Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity section](#) at catholicteachers.ca.

The story of faith is communal; thus, conversation with different Catholic stakeholders about the best use of this document is highly recommended. This work is collaborative, and teachers should seek out and receive approval from school administration about any lesson plans, reading materials, and instructional documents used in the classroom when they differ from the assigned curriculum.

Noted 21st century Black equity thinker bell hooks¹ suggests that “Everyone needs to be in touch with the needs of their spirit. This connectedness calls us to spiritual awakening – to love.”² Considering the needs and perspectives of everyone, irrespective of race, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, disability, and more, is a call to community and to love one another.

Catholic schools have a heightened obligation here, “Whereas secular school boards make no claims to nurture or affirm students’ spiritual lives, this commitment is at the centre of, and is indeed, the *raison d’être*, of Catholic schools.”³

This document highlights Catholic teaching related to AIDE, rooted in the story of faith. To this end, we invite you to enter into prayer as a starting place:

Prayer to Celebrate Our Differences as Uniqueness

God has made all of us alike, yet different in so many ways.

People in our place of work, and in our school, come from different backgrounds.

Many of us have different customs and speak different languages.

Each and every one of us has a different way of reacting to any given situation.

We should show respect for all those who have entered our lives
and accept them for who they really are – Children of God.

- Author Unknown⁴

¹ bell hooks did not capitalize her name to emphasize focus on her work.

² hooks, bell. *All about Love: New Visions*. First William Morrow paperback edition, William Morrow, 2018, p 83.

³ Airton, Lee, et al. “Toby Goes to Catholic School: Gender Expression Human Rights, and Ontario Catholic School Board Policy.” *Canadian Journal of Education/Revue Canadienne de l’éducation*, vol. 45, no. 3, Oct. 2022, pp. 611.

⁴ xavier.edu/jesuitresource/online-resources/prayer-index/prayers-for-diversity

Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity (AIDE)

As an Association, we align this call to community and to love with our focus on AIDE, which is defined⁵ as:

ACCESSIBILITY

Refers to creating communities, workplaces, and services that enable everyone, particularly people with disabilities, to participate fully in society without barriers.

- Example: Building entrances and elevators that are wide enough for scooter and wheelchair users.

INCLUSION

Entails interconnected actions to dismantle barriers that impede participation, engagement, representation, and empowerment of members of diverse social identities, and from various backgrounds, in the activities of the Association. Inclusion empowers members of diverse social identities and lived experiences to participate. It also draws attention to social and institutional relations of power and privilege, to who gets a seat and a voice/microphone in decision-making forums, and who is empowered by institutional processes, policies, systems, and structures.

DIVERSITY

The presence of a wide range of human qualities and attributes within an individual, group, or organization. Diversity includes lived experience based on social factors, such as age, sex, race, ethnicity, physical and intellectual ability, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, educational background, and expertise. Within the Association, this definition also includes the geographic location of members, position(s) held, and the status of a member (executive, permanent or occasional teacher, and/or staff).

EQUITY

Focuses on individual needs and requirements, differences, and not sameness, while striving to identify and eliminate barriers to access, opportunities, and participation of diverse groups of people. It proactively identifies the different impacts of discriminatory ideas, attitudes, behaviors, and policies; processes; and practices on people with disabilities, women, Indigenous peoples, Black and other racialized people, 2SLGBTQIA+ people, and people living with disability. Within the Association, addressing equity requires listening to the different needs of members, staff, and students, and responding in line with ethical, legal, and human rights commitments.

⁵ These definitions are taken from Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association: Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Glossary of Terms" [glossaryAIDE-Terms_v2.pdf \(catholicteachers.ca\)](#)

AIDE in Ontario Religious Education Curriculum, Grades 1 to 12

The Religious Education and Family Life curriculums for elementary and secondary students are published by the Institute for Catholic Education (ICE) for the Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario, and are developed in consultation with a variety of Catholic stakeholder groups. Both reinforce Ministry of Education mandates, which focus on accessibility, inclusion, diversity, and equity.

The following excerpts are taken directly from the Ontario Religious Education curriculum and/or the Family Life curriculum:

A school climate based on the principles of equity and inclusivity is one where all members of the school community feel safe, welcomed and accepted, regardless of ancestry, culture, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, language, physical and intellectual ability, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or socio-economic status. Students see themselves reflected in the curriculum, in a physical environment which honours diversity and respects the dignity of all individuals.
(ICE, [Religious Education Grades 1-8](#), 2012, p. 59)

In an environment based on the principles of inclusive education, all students, parents, and other members of the school community – regardless of ancestry, culture, ethnicity, sex, physical or intellectual ability, race, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, or other similar factors – are welcomed, included, treated fairly, and respected. Diversity is valued, and all members of the school community feel safe, comfortable, and accepted. Every student is supported and inspired to succeed in a culture of high expectations for learning. In an inclusive education system, all students see themselves reflected in the curriculum, their physical surroundings, and the broader environment, so that they can feel engaged in and empowered by their learning experiences.
(ICE, [Religious Education Grades 9-12](#), 2016, p.51-52 & ICE, [Family Life 1-8](#), 2023 p. 23)

The implementation of antidiscrimination principles in education influences all aspects of school life. It promotes a school climate that encourages all students to work to high levels of achievement, affirms the worth of all students, and helps students strengthen their sense of identity and develop a positive self-image. It encourages staff and students alike to value and show respect for diversity in the school and the broader society. Antidiscrimination education promotes fairness, healthy relationships, and active, responsible citizenship.

Teachers can give students a variety of opportunities to learn about diversity and diverse perspectives. By drawing attention to the contributions of women, the perspectives of various ethnocultural, religious, and racialized communities, and the beliefs and practices of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples, teachers enable students from a wide range of backgrounds to see themselves reflected in the curriculum. It is essential that learning activities and materials used to support the curriculum reflect the diversity of Ontario society. In addition, teachers should differentiate instruction and assessment strategies to take into account the background and experiences, as well as the interests, aptitudes, and learning needs, of all students.
(ICE, [Family Life 1-8](#), 2023 p. 23)

AIDE in Catholic Social Teaching

Many of the themes of Catholic social teaching relate directly to AIDE. The chart below lists these themes as articulated by the University of St. Michael's College at the Toronto School of Theology in their document, "[10 Principles of Catholic Social Teaching](#)." The connections to AIDE are intended as reflection points in various Catholic contexts. Not all questions will be responsive to all contexts. The intention is to foster dialogue between this important part of Catholic teaching and accessibility, inclusion, diversity, and equity.

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING THEME	CONNECTIONS TO AIDE
<p>Dignity of the human person: The foundation of all Catholic social teaching is the inherent dignity of the human person, as created in the image and likeness of God. The Church, therefore, calls for integral human development, which concerns the well-being of each person in every dimension: economic, political, social, ecological, and spiritual.</p>	<p>Does our society, school, and community truly reflect that every human is created in the image of God? What shows or demonstrates this?</p> <p>Connection to accessibility: Are buildings/meetings organized and constructed so that everyone can meaningfully participate? Do we equally value each person's contributions?</p>
<p>Common Good: We must all consider the good of others, and the good of the whole human family, in organizing our society – economically, politically, and legally. Human dignity can only be realized and protected through our relationship with society-at-large. We must love our neighbour, locally and globally, and prioritize the good of the human family over commercial interests.</p>	<p>How are our world, society, school, and classrooms organized? Are they based on the common good, or to the benefit of some over others?</p> <p>Connection to inclusion: How might it be easier for some people over others to attend and participate in OECTA events? For example, is childcare available for those who need it? Are there barriers to full participation for those who have disabilities, whether visible or invisible?</p>

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING THEME	CONNECTIONS TO AIDE
<p>Solidarity: “Means much more than some acts of sporadic generosity. It is to think and to act in terms of community, of the priority of the life of all over the appropriation of goods by a few. It is also to fight against the structural causes of poverty, inequality, lack of work, land and housing, the denial of social and labor rights.”⁶</p>	<p>What does it mean to “love our neighbour” in a classroom, or in a global, interdependent world? How do we stand alongside each other? When do you need to stand up? When do you need to stand alongside? When do you need to stand behind?</p> <p>Connection to AIDE: Each of us has intersectional identities that impact power and privilege in different contexts.⁷ How and when can you show solidarity and meaningful support through appropriate allyship in different circumstances? How and when are we called explicitly and/or implicitly to solidarity with others?⁷</p>
<p>Preferential option for the poor: The moral test of any society is based on how the most vulnerable are treated. God’s love is universal, so this principle does not intend that we should focus on the poor to the exclusion of others, but rather that we are called to prioritize those who are in most need of our solidarity.⁸</p>	<p>Who are the marginalized in our society? In our schools? In your membership? Why? What does our faith call us to do? We recognize the potentially problematic nature of calling a marginalized group “poor.” We include this to indicate that the Catholic Church places a special focus on anyone we might consider vulnerable. This can include those who are made vulnerable by economic disadvantage, systemic racism, sexism, and ableism, among other issues.</p> <p>Connection to equity: How can each of us consider our power and privilege in different contexts and be effective allies, accomplices, and co-conspirators, to listen and address the needs of members, staff, and students?</p>
<p>Participation: Human beings are social, and how we live together affects the dignity of the individual and the progress of society. All persons are entitled to participate in community, and in decisions that affect their lives, and cannot be excluded for any reason.</p>	<p>Whose voices and presence do we ignore or in our society, schools, and membership? Why? What does our call as Catholics to include everyone’s voices look like, sound like, and feel like?</p> <p>Connection to diversity: How do we ensure that the presence of a wide range of human qualities and attributes is represented in the Association? How do we ensure that we do not silence anyone’s voices, whether explicitly or implicitly?</p>

⁶ Pope Francis, World Meeting of Popular Movements, 2014 as cited in ‘10 Principles of Catholic Social Teaching,’ University of St. Michael’s College, University of Toronto.

⁷ See ‘Power and Privilege’ Tan, A. (2021). Power & Privilege in Canada. As cited on <https://ddi.educ.ubc.ca/equity-diversity-inclusion/>

⁸ Pope Francis, World Meeting of Popular Movements, 2014 as cited in ‘10 Principles of Catholic Social Teaching,’ University of St. Michael’s College, University of Toronto.

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING THEME	CONNECTIONS TO AIDE
<p>Promotion of peace: Justice cannot exist in a world without peace; war and violence are a violation of human dignity, and peace requires mutual respect and collaboration.</p>	<p>What does true peace look like in the world, in our classrooms and homes? What is needed to restore, maintain, and grow peaceful relationships between peoples?</p> <p>Connection to equity: How can we contribute to peace within and among different people? How do we adequately address and work to rectify past wrongs? What is our collective responsibility? How do we address specific forms of bullying and uphold the Ontario <i>Human Rights Code</i>?</p>
<p>Role of government: Our world needs governments, but governments must promote human dignity, protect human rights, and build the common good.</p>	<p>How does our government work? How do the rules and guidelines of our school boards, unions, associations, and classrooms work? How do we make laws to promote human dignity, human rights, and the common good?</p> <p>Connection to AIDE: How do we leverage political participation to promote AIDE in our relationships with the government? How do we hold governments accountable? How do we ensure we uphold, and meaningfully address, the protected grounds of the Ontario <i>Human Rights Code</i> in our work?</p>
<p>Dignity of work and rights of workers: The economy must serve people, not the other way around.</p>	<p>Does our society, economy, or classroom value the effort and dignity of everyone equally? Who is exploited? What does justice look like in our economy?</p> <p>Connection to inclusion: How do we value each member of OECTA? How do we value each student? How might awareness of unconscious biases impact our ability to do this? For example, what do we consider “valid” work in assessment? Do we provide meaningful or “busy” work?</p>

Catholic Graduate Expectations

In addition to Catholic social teaching, in Ontario publicly funded Catholic schools, the following list of Catholic Graduate Expectations, published by the [Institute for Catholic Education](#) (ICE), details skills that educators endeavour to use in their classrooms.

CATHOLIC GRADUATE EXPECTATIONS	REFLECTIVE QUESTION RELATED TO AIDE
<p>A discerning believer formed in the Catholic faith community who celebrates the signs and sacred mystery of God's presence through work, sacrament, prayer, forgiveness, reflection, and moral living.</p>	<p>Social justice is teaching and exploring how God is present in all people; reflecting on our moral choices that affect others; celebrating the diversity of God's presence in our world.</p> <p>How can we use prayerful discernment, which considers the tensions present in our Church and our world, regarding accessibility, inclusion, diversity, and equity?</p>
<p>An effective communicator who speaks writes and listens honestly and sensitively, responding critically in light of Gospel values.</p> <p>In 2023, during the Synod process in Rome, under the direction of Pope Francis, this was described as follows: "communication includes actively making safe spaces to listen to the voices of those around us, especially those who are often silenced by social structures."</p>	<p>Social justice is helping members, students, and others critically evaluate our world through Gospel values – what is needed to create a more just and inclusive society? Are we listening honestly and sensitively to everyone's voices?</p> <p>How do we invite students and members to develop self-reflection, which includes understanding their own power and privileges? Do we invite participation from all? Or are there some voices that are heard more often than others? Are we mindful of how much space each person takes? How do we amplify voices?</p>
<p>A reflective, creative, and holistic thinker who solves problems and makes responsible decisions with an informed moral conscience for the common good.</p>	<p>Social justice is helping to identify problems, including social ones, and then discerning responsible decisions and choices in light of our conscience to build and develop the common good. How do we respond to the broken world around us with morality and justice? How do we model this for our students and colleagues?</p>

CATHOLIC GRADUATE EXPECTATIONS	REFLECTIVE QUESTION RELATED TO AIDE
A self-directed, responsible lifelong learner who develops and demonstrates their God-given potential.	Social justice is empowering our students to be self-directed and responsible, to know their potential, with a particular focus on those who may experience marginalization.
A collaborative contributor who finds meaning, dignity, and vocation in work, which respects the rights of all and contributes to the common good.	Social justice is teaching our students to think of others, not only of themselves, to work together and to work towards the common good. How do we empower and support those who are often marginalized in our society and education system?
A caring family member who attends to family, school, parish, and wider community.	Social justice is teaching our students to value family, school and parish and also the wider community – especially the parts that may be unfamiliar, different, or challenging to us.
A responsible citizen who gives witness to Catholic social teaching by promoting peace, justice, and the sacredness of human life. ¹⁰	Social justice is teaching our students about Catholic social teaching, and helping to promote peace, justice, and the sacredness of human life in all of its forms. It also includes exploring and defining what we mean by “sacred.” How do our commitments to supporting charities, fundraising, and other activities help to build a world that demonstrates that we value all life? How do we learn about the ways our society does not value peace, justice, or the sacredness of all human life – considering how to change it for the better?

¹⁰ List taken from the Institute for Catholic Education, Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations, Third Reprint, 2019. <https://iceont.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/ICE-OCSGE-Web.pdf>

Publications from the Institute for Catholic Education

The Institute for Catholic Education (ICE) brings together, works with, and assists organizations that share responsibility for English Catholic education in their efforts to promote and maintain, publicly funded Catholic schools animated by the Gospel and reflecting the tenets of Catholic faith.¹¹

ICE publishes a variety of documents intended to assist Ontario Catholic schools. Some of these are responsive to AIDE-related topics:

RESOURCES	EXPLANATION OR EXCERPT
Curriculum at the Heart of Young People	This monograph series presents a framework for thinking about Catholic curriculum and illustrates how the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations can inspire and support curriculum development. It explains each Catholic Graduate Expectation in further detail, which is helpful and responsive to AIDE concepts.
Well-Being From a Catholic Perspective: Addressing Mental Health Literacy Within Religion and Family Life Programs	“Initiatives related to mental health and well-being recognize this inherent dignity and align perfectly with the foundational respect for the human person. The Catholic church community has a long tradition of addressing human well-being, and the salvation history of the Catholic/Christian Church demonstrates a profound focus on the question of human growth and fulfillment. For Catholic schools, this has always found expression in the care for every child. Promoting the well-being and positive mental health of all students to reach their God-given potential is a gospel mandate and a moral imperative for Catholic schools which aligns with this important initiative of the Ministry of Education.” p. 2
Supporting Students Who Identify as Transgender in our Catholic Schools	<p>“For those who identify as gay, lesbian, or transgender, this – considered controversial by some – is an aspect of their daily lived experience. It is a gospel imperative that they find a safe space and hospitable welcome within society and within every Catholic school.” p. 1</p> <p>**Note: linguistic best practices have shifted since the publication of this document. Now, it would be better to say “transgender students” (i.e., remove the “those who identify as,” which some transgender people interpret as questioning the validity of transgender experience and naming).</p>

¹¹ As cited on <https://iceont.ca/about-ice/>

RESOURCES	EXPLANATION OR EXCERPT
<p>Walking Forward Together: A Call to Action for the Catholic Church and Catholic Schools</p>	<p>“Catholic schools also have an important role to play in helping to address the historic injustice that is part of our colonial history. Catholic schools contribute to this work when curriculum is comprehensive and truthful about the history and experience of Indigenous Peoples. Catholic schools have a broad mandate to help form and shape our graduates as discerning believers, caring family members, collaborative contributors, and responsible citizens. As Christians, we are called to bear witness to our faith through our commitment to love, peace, and justice and as Catholic educators, we are privileged to be in a position to support and advance the important work of Truth and Reconciliation. In this way, we can ‘Walk Forward Together’ with Indigenous People, to build ‘a more just society where their gifts and those of all people are nurtured and honoured.’” p. 3</p>
<p>Renewing the Promise: A Pastoral Letter for Catholic Education, 2018</p>	<p>“We must seek to listen with faith and humility as we ask the questions: how is the Spirit calling us to respond individually and communally to our present context? Drawing from our Catholic faith and tradition, how can we respond creatively to the challenges and opportunities we face today?” p. 4</p>
<p>On The Way: Principles, Patterns, and Processes for Adult Faith Formation in Catholic Education in Ontario, 2023</p>	<p>“...faith formation activity needs to allow the individual to engage in dialogue, share thoughts, and reflect on their own experiences. This aspect of formation leans heavily on encounter – where the individual feels seen and heard – and accompaniment – where the individual is given opportunity to see the connection between their own story, the story of others, and the story of our faith, especially in terms of Sacred Scripture.” p. 12</p>

Gospel Values: Contextualism in Catholicism

Our work as Catholic teachers is rooted in the story of our faith. Scriptural interpretation can enable further understanding and dialogue on being human, calling us to unity within complex diversity. This is reflected in the First Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians: “For just as the body is one and has many members and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.” (Corinthians 12:12-13)

Christians interpret the Bible in different ways. This variety of interpretations can lead to conflict across and within religious denominations. The Catholic Church teaches that Catholics must read the Bible contextually. This means that Biblical passages must be examined within the context in which they were written. Vatican II discussed contextual interpretation at length, publishing *The Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation Dei Verbum*. The Pontifical Biblical Commission’s “*The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*” provides further detail. Such a reading considers cultures, histories, politics, languages, and more. Put succinctly, paragraph 109 of Catechism of the Catholic Church [CCC] states: “To interpret Scripture correctly, the reader must be attentive to what the human authors truly wanted to affirm, and to what God wanted to reveal to us by their words.” This is further clarified in the subsequent CCC paragraph:

“In order to discover the sacred authors’ intention, the reader must take into account the conditions of their time and culture, the literary genres in use at that time, and the modes of feeling, speaking and narrating then current. ‘For the fact is that truth is differently presented and expressed in the various types of historical writing, in prophetic and poetical texts, and in other forms of literary expression.’”¹²

In the Creation stories of the Hebrew Scriptures (also called the Old Testament), each person is made in God’s image and likeness, and imbued with dignity. Through the contextual Biblical interpretation outlined above, many theologians describe Jesus’ mission on earth as one of “radical inclusivity.” As a man living in ancient Palestine under Roman occupation, he also experienced being “other”: that is, living in poverty, in a world where the most common spoken language (Greek) was not his own (Aramaic/Hebrew). In today’s language, we would call him a racialized person.¹³ In the Gospels, we find multiple stories where Jesus amplifies the voices of those most marginalized. In addition to the resources listed above, the Institute for Catholic Education’s document “*Let the Gospels Lead the Way*” encourages a dialogue with youth. This dialogue recognizes that:

“Young people today are buffeted in every direction by loud and competing claims upon their attention and allegiance. From around the world, they hear daily messages of conflict and hostility, of greed and injustice, of poverty and despair. Amidst this social turmoil, young people are eager to find solid and enduring values which can give meaning and purpose to their lives. They are searching for a firm place – a high ground – on which to stand. They seek a sense of direction, a goal which will give meaning and purpose to their lives.”¹⁴

¹² Catholic Church. Catechism of the Catholic Church. Repr, vol. 2nd Edition, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1993, # 11 https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM.

¹³ See The Conversation, “Jesus wasn’t white: he was a brown-skinned, Middle Eastern Jew. Here’s why that matters.” March 28, 2018. <https://theconversation.com/jesus-wasnt-white-he-was-a-brown-skinned-middle-eastern-jew-heres-why-that-matters-91230>

¹⁴ Pope St. John Paul II, St. John’s Basilica, Newfoundland as cited in the Institute for Catholic Education, *Let the Gospels Lead the Way*, Fall 2018, p. 1 https://iceont.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/MG_RTP_Issue_2_Let_The_Gospels.pdf

Additional Resources on Biblical Interpretation in Catholicism

RESOURCES	NOTES/QUOTE
Frigge, Marielle OSB, 'A Brief History of Catholic Biblical Interpretation.' St. Mary's Press, 2012	This article reviews the history of Biblical interpretation in the Catholic Church, explaining how the Church came to understand and support the position of contextualism.
Celebrating God's Word: How Catholics Read the Bible By Margaret Nutting Ralph, PhD	This concise article highlights and explains Catholicism's contextual approach to Biblical interpretation.
The Outreach Guide to the Bible and Homosexuality	Outreach is an LGBTQ Catholic resource. This article gives an overview of contextual Biblical interpretation, and lists Biblical scholars who are LGBTQ or their allies, and provides their contact information as well as articles they have written on this topic.
Martin, James, SJ, Building a Bridge: How the Catholic Church and the LGBT Community Can Enter into a Relationship of Respect, Compassion, and Sensitivity. Revised and Expanded edition, HarperOne, 2018.	<p>The chapter "Biblical Passages for Reflection and Meditation" gives numerous examples of scriptural stories which relate to AIDE. This book is written specifically about relationships between LGBT people, 2SLGBTQIA+ by extension, and the Catholic Church. Some of the suggested passages have broader relevance to a variety of different intersectional identities.</p> <p>This chapter suggests scriptural passages to prayerfully consider along with reflection questions for personal or communal dialogue.</p> <p>Some of the scriptural themes addressed include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> On names and naming Different gifts Care for those who are persecuted Jesus meets people where they are You are 'wonderfully made' God is your strength
	"This is surely relevant to LGBTQ persons who are Catholic and to those who love and support them. In a nutshell, Church teaching in their regard strongly affirms that all LGBTQ persons are created in the image of God and, as such, should be accepted with 'respect, compassion and sensitivity' (<i>Catechism of the Catholic Church</i> , 2358). Furthermore, it accords them equal human dignity with heterosexual persons, and urges they be treated with pastoral care and compassion."

Church Documents Related to AIDE

In addition to Catholic social teaching, Catholic Graduate Expectations, contextual Biblical interpretation, and the Catechism, there are numerous church documents including pastoral letters, encyclicals (teaching letters from the Pope), books, and more related to AIDE. See the list below for a few examples.

CHURCH DOCUMENT	SUMMARY/QUOTE RELATED TO AIDE
<p>Instruction of the Congregation for Catholic Education, 'The identity of the Catholic School for a culture of dialogue.' Vatican City 2022</p>	<p>The following relates to valuing each person as they are:</p> <p>"As far as Catholic schools are concerned... the school [is] not so much as an institution but as a community. The characteristic element of the Catholic school, in addition to pursuing 'cultural goals and the human formation of youth', consists in creating 'for the school community a special atmosphere animated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and charity'. To this end, the Catholic school aims 'to help youth grow according to the new creatures they were made through baptism as they develop their own personalities', as well as 'to order the whole of human culture to the news of salvation so that the knowledge the students gradually acquire of the world, life and man is illumined by faith'[15]. In this way, the Catholic school prepares pupils to exercise their freedom responsibly, forming an attitude of openness and solidarity."</p>
<p>Rerum Novarum Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII on Capital and Labour May 15th, 1891</p>	<p>This papal encyclical from Pope Leo XIII is often cited as foundational to the field of Catholic social teaching which emerged after its publication in 1891. Responsive to the industrial revolution, this document summarizes the dignity of the person, rights of workers, and a variety of difficulties people of this time face which affronted human dignity. The influence of this teaching letter is widespread in Catholic theology on social justice.</p>
<p>Catholic Church, & Pontificium Consilium de Nova Evangelizatione. (2020). Directory for Catechesis.</p>	<p>"The Church is well aware of the complexity of the personal situations that are lived out, at times, in a conflicted way. She does not judge persons, but asks that they be accompanied always and in whatever situation."</p>

CHURCH DOCUMENT	SUMMARY/QUOTE RELATED TO AIDE
<p>'Male and Female He Created Them' Towards a Path of Dialogue on the Question of Gender Theory in Education 2019</p>	<p>"The Catholic school should be an educating community in which the human person can express themselves and grow in his or her humanity, in a process of relational dialogue, interacting in a constructive way, exercising tolerance, understanding different points of view and creating trust in an atmosphere of authentic harmony. Such a school is truly an 'educating community, a place of differences living together in harmony. The school community is a place for encounter and promoting participation. It dialogues with the family, which is the primary community to which the students that attend school belong...'”(40)</p>
<p>Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Christus Vivit of the Holy Father Francis to Young People and to the Entire People of God 2019</p>	<p>"Christ is alive! He is our hope, and in a wonderful way he brings youth to our world, and everything he touches becomes young, new, full of life. The very first words, then, that I would like to say to every young Christian are these: Christ is alive and he wants you to be alive! He is in you, he is with you and he never abandons you." (1-2)</p>

Pope Francis and the Synod on Synodality: Towards a Listening Church

In 2017, Pope Francis commissioned an International Theological Commission to review synodality in the Catholic Church. This resulted in the document “[Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church](#).” Within this document, key areas related to accessibility, inclusion, diversity, and equity emerged. It outlines that, “Without conversion of the heart and mind and without disciplined training for welcoming and listening to one another the external instruments of communion would be of hardly any use; on the contrary, they could be transformed into mere heartless, faceless masks.”¹⁵ To render ourselves more than mere “heartless, faceless masks” we must listen to one another. This includes sitting with, in a spirit of encounter, those who hold diverse identities, as listed in the curriculum documents cited above.

In preparations for the Synod, Pope Francis instituted a consultation process, attempting to engage all Catholics throughout the world, including Catholic school boards in Ontario. In these consultations containing online questionnaires, working groups, discussions, retreats, and more, issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion arose. This led to a summary guiding document entitled XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops: “[Instrumentum Laboris For the First Session October 2023](#),”¹⁶ for reflection during the 2023 and 2024 gathering of Church leaders: lay and clerical in Rome. One of the suggestions for prayer and reflection is:

“How can we create spaces where those who feel hurt by the Church and unwelcomed by the community feel recognised, received, free to ask questions and not judged? In the light of the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation [Amoris Laetitia](#), what concrete steps are needed to welcome those who feel excluded from the Church because of their status or sexuality.”¹⁷

American Catholic Youth Minister Tracey Lamont recognizes that this dialogue is within a larger context:

“What is needed for the Church today, in a country afflicted by the sins of racial injustice perpetuated by white supremacy and laboring to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, is real transformation – not change. Ministry leaders need to develop a completely new way of being church, one... that emerges through the process of synodality. My own experiences with the National Dialogue, research on postmodern curriculum development, and the Synod on Synodality give me hope that pastoral ministers can enact the transformation needed to accompany young people in life.”¹⁸

¹⁵ International Theological Commission. #107.

¹⁶ General Secretariat of the Synod. XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops: *Instrumentum Laboris For the First Session October 2023*. June 2023, <https://www.synod.va/en/synodal-process/the-universal-phase/documents.html>.

Pope Francis reminds us continually, “Let us not sound-proof our hearts. Let us not remain barricaded in our certainties. So often our certainties can make us closed. Let us listen to one-another.”¹⁹ When the first meeting of the Synod closed in October 2023, those who attended shared that:

“We carry in our hearts the desire, sustained by hope, that the climate of mutual listening and sincere dialogue that we experienced during the days of common work in Rome will radiate in our communities and throughout the world, at the service of the growth of the good seed of the Kingdom of God.”²⁰

In addition, the summary document of the October 2023 synodal gathering in Rome further clarifies that poverty is not just of one kind:

“Poverty is not just of one kind. Among the many faces of those in poverty are those who do not have the things they need to lead a dignified life. There are also migrants and refugees; Indigenous Peoples, original and Afro-descendent peoples; those who suffer violence and abuse, in particular women; people struggling with addiction; minorities who are systematically denied a voice; abandoned elderly people; victims of racism, exploitation, and trafficking, especially minors; exploited workers; the economically excluded, and others living on the peripheries. The most vulnerable of the vulnerable, on whose behalf constant advocacy is needed, include the unborn and their mothers. The Assembly hears the cry of the ‘new poor,’ produced by wars and terrorism that plague many countries on several continents, and the Assembly condemns the corrupt political and economic systems that cause such strife.”²¹

In our work as Catholic teachers, responsive to accessibility, inclusion, diversity, and equity, we are responsive to the synodal path that “shows the need for relational renewal and structural changes.”²²

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Tracey Lamont, “From Change to Transformation: Living Synodality in Ministry with Young Adults,” *Religions* 14, no. 3 (February 27, 2023): 314, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14030314>.

¹⁹ Pope Francis. Homily of His Holiness Pope Francis on the Opening of the Synodal Path. Homily presented at the Holy Mass, St. Peter’s Basilica, October 10, 2021. para. 6. www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2021/documents/20211010-omelia-sinodo-vescovi.html.

²⁰ XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops. (2023). A Synodal Church in Mission: Synthesis Report (p. 3). <https://www.synod.va/en/news/a-synodal-church-in-mission.html>

²¹ Ibid, p. 10.

²² Ibid, p. 20.

AIDE in Catholic Institutions

OECTA joins other Catholic institutions in a commitment to accessibility, inclusion, diversity, and equity, including the following:

- » The Catholic Curriculum Corporation's [Listening with the Heart](#) series offers a variety of classroom lesson plans related to AIDE.
- » [Development and Peace: Caritas Canada](#) has a large [resource bank](#) of items related to AIDE and Catholicism.
- » St. Jerome's University College at the University of Waterloo has an advisory group on [equity, diversity, and inclusion](#) recognizing that the importance of this "as foundational to the life of a Catholic university that purports to recognize the importance of social justice and the fundamental dignity of all human persons."²³
- » Regis College at the Toronto School of Theology directly links to their work on [Truth & Reconciliation Calls to Action](#).
- » Brescia at Western University, has articulated initiatives related to [diversity and inclusion](#).
- » Assumption University, affiliated with the University of Windsor, has a [statement on equity, diversity, and inclusion](#).
- » King's College at Western University, under [Student Supports and Services](#), lists a variety of initiatives related to AIDE.
- » Notre Dame University professor Daniel Philpott penned "[A Catholic approach to diversity, equity and inclusion at Notre Dame: 10 Theses](#)."
- » The University of Detroit Mercy lists a variety of Catholic Church documents under [Catholic Documents on Diversity and Inclusion](#).
- » Catholic Charities: Twin Cities has a list of notable quotations from Catholic documents on [racism, inclusion, and diversity](#).
- » Jesuit Resource, hosted by Xavier's [Commitment to Justice Conference](#), has many presentations/writings on a variety of areas related to AIDE.

²³ See sju.ca/initiatives

Additional Resources Relating to AIDE in Catholic Spaces

RESOURCE	DESCRIPTION
<p><i>Intersectional Theology: An Introductory Guide</i></p> <p>Kim, G. J.-S. (2018). Intersectional theology: an introductory guide. Fortress Press.</p>	<p><i>Intersectional Theology: An Introductory Guide</i> offers a pathway for reflective Christians, pastors, and theologians to apply the concepts and questions of intersectionality to theology. Intersectionality is a tool for analysis, developed primarily by Black feminists, to examine the causes and consequences of converging social identities²⁴ (gender, race, class, sexual identity, age, ability, nation, and religion) within interlocking systems of power and privilege (sexism, racism, classism, heterosexism, ableism, ageism, and nativism) and to foster engaged, activist work toward social justice. Applied to theology, intersectionality demands attention to the Christian thinker's own identities and location within systems of power and the value of deep consideration of complementary, competing, and even conflicting points of view that arise from the experiences and understandings of diverse people.</p>
<p><i>A White Catholic's Guide to Racism and Privilege</i></p> <p>Horan, D. P. (2021). A white Catholic's guide to racism and privilege. Ave Maria Press.</p>	<p>Growing up, Fr. Daniel P. Horan, O.F.M., never thought much about race, racism, or racial justice – except for what he read in history books. His upbringing as a white, middle-class Catholic shielded him from seeing the persistent, pervasive racism all around him. Horan shares what he has since learned about uncovering and combatting racial inequity in Canada and in the Catholic Church, urging us to join the fight.</p> <p>As a white man, Horan shows his fellow white Catholics how to become actively anti-racist and better allies to our Black brothers and sisters, as we work against racism in our culture and in the Church. He offers us the hope and surety of the Gospel, the wisdom of Catholic tradition, and some practical ways to educate ourselves and advocate for justice.</p> <p>Each chapter includes a substantial suggested reading list.</p>
<p><i>Racial Justice and the Catholic Church</i> by Rev. Dr. Bryan N. Massingale (2010) Orbis Books.</p>	<p>In this book, Rev. Dr. Bryan Massingale, a leading Black Catholic moral theologian, addresses the issue of racial justice past and present. Massingale writes from an abiding conviction that the Catholic faith and the Black experience make essential contributions in the continuing struggle against racial injustice that is the work of all people.</p>

²⁴ Social Identity is a person's sense of who they are based on their group membership(s) (see Oxford Reference or Britannica for further explanation).

Websites

RESOURCE	DESCRIPTION
Outreach: An LGBTQ Catholic Resource	Outreach is an LGBTQ Catholic resource. They offer news, essays, resources, and community for LGBTQ Catholics and those who minister with them in the Catholic Church worldwide. Outreach also highlights welcoming parishes, schools, and other Catholic organizations.
Catholic Social Teaching and Living with Disability	“The Catholic tradition understands every human life to be equal, inherently sacred and worth of dignity and respect as the bedrock of a just society. This is not a passive teaching, however, but is instead a call to create communities and social systems that reflect the underlying love and divinity of each person. It is from the perspective that the Church criticizes systems, values and structures that exclude, discriminate, hide or otherwise diminish people living with disabilities – it offends their human dignity and so is also a symptom of an unjust society.”

Podcasts

RESOURCE	DESCRIPTION
Jesuitical: The Podcast	Each episode highlights some of the top (and maybe more obscure) Catholic news of the week, along with an interview with a guest who offers a unique perspective on world events, culture, or faith. At the end of the show, Zac and Ashley invite the listener into their faith lives by sharing their consolations and desolations from the week.
The Gloria Purvis Podcast	Too many voices are not being heard in the Catholic Church today. “The Gloria Purvis Podcast” is a new podcast from America Media, hosted by radio personality and Catholic commentator, Gloria Purvis. The podcast centres the opinions, stories, and experiences of individuals who have been marginalized in the Catholic Church and in society. A consistent ethic of life informs the conversations and honestly critiques narrow applications of Catholic teachings and ideological attitudes. It’s not liberal, it’s not conservative. It’s all about fostering a culture of charitable dialogue around the most complex and contentious issues in the Catholic Church today. It’s just Catholic. Episodes are released weekly.



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