

*JUNIOR CERTIFICATE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION SUPPORT SERVICE*  
**SAMPLE LESSON PLAN RESOURCE MATERIALS FOR ELEMENTS OF SYLLABUS**

**SECTION D: THE QUESTION OF FAITH PART 1: THE SITUATION OF FAITH TODAY**

<b>Syllabus Aim</b>	To explore the situation of religious faith today.
<b>Syllabus Objective</b>	As a result of studying this section the students should <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be aware of the changing patterns of religious belief and practice in Ireland and elsewhere</li> <li>• be able to name and identify the factors that influence the religious beliefs of the adolescent</li> </ul>
<b>Key Concepts</b>	Religious belief and religious practice.
<b>Description of Content</b>	Exploring religious belief and practice in the locality, in Ireland and throughout Europe at present and over the last century. Identifying factors that influence religious beliefs and practices in the life of the adolescent.
<b>Methodology</b>	These Lesson Plan Resource Materials are designed using methods such as self-assessment activities, group work and interpretation of data, which gives students an opportunity to record, structure and elaborate their existing knowledge of religious belief and practice and thereby encourage self-monitoring. This could be used at the beginning of this section to initiate thoughts to be worked out more fully as the section develops. It can be used to generate information, enabling a wide range of ideas to be expressed for later development.

**Procedure**

***Exploring religious practice in the locality***

Survey the students' knowledge of religious belief and practice in their locality by using the following questionnaire. Beside each sentence circle the answer that is nearest to your own opinion. If you agree with the sentence, circle the "Yes". If you disagree with the sentence, circle the "No". If you are unsure, circle the "?" Answer as honestly as you can, remembering that no one can identify you from this questionnaire.

1. Most young people in my community/locality are very committed to their religion      Yes    No    ?
2. Fewer people in my community/locality believe in God today than in the past      Yes    No    ?
3. Most people in my community/locality spend time in prayer each day      Yes    No    ?
4. Belief in God is important to most young people in my community/locality today      Yes    No    ?
5. Most people in my community/locality attend a religious service at least once a week      Yes    No    ?
6. Attitudes to religion have changed in my community/locality      Yes    No    ?
7. In the past people in my community/locality went to religious services more often      Yes    No    ?
8. In my community/locality fewer people believe in life after death today, than in the past      Yes    No    ?

Collect all of the questionnaires, shuffle them and redistribute them, giving one to each student but in a way that no one knows whose questionnaire they have now received. Have a copy of the eight statements on an overhead / chalkboard / poster. Record responses by writing the number of people who indicate their sheet has a 'yes', 'no', '?' to each statement in turn. All contributions are accepted uncritically and recorded.

Discuss as a whole class:

1. Which of the responses surprise you / do not surprise you?
2. Are there any similarities / differences in the responses from the students in this class?

3. What do the responses tell us about religious belief and practice among young people in this community/locality?
4. Do the responses suggest that there has been a change in religious belief and practice in the community/locality over the years? Explain.
5. Would it be fair to say that the responses are representative of this locality, Ireland, the rest of Europe? Give reasons.
6. What other sources could we research to get more information on religious belief and practices in the locality, Ireland and the rest of Europe?

Using the results of the above survey, students complete the following true/false assignment:

<i>Mark <b>P</b> each of the statements listed below True or False</i>	<i>True</i>	<i>False</i>
Most people in my community/locality spend time in prayer each day.		
Most people in my community/locality attend a religious service at least once a week		
In the past people in my community/locality went to religious services more often		
Belief in God is important to most young people in my community/locality.		
Fewer people in my community/locality believe in God today than in the past		
In my community/locality fewer people believe in life after death today, than in the past		
Most young people in my community/locality are very committed to their religion.		
Attitudes to religion have changed in my community/locality.		

Or read Alice Taylor's account of how the Stations were celebrated in her home when she was a child in the 1940s in *To School Through the Fields: An Irish Country Childhood* and discuss:

1. Why was there a big clean-up in Alice's house for the Stations?
2. Who attended the Stations in Alice's home?
3. What religious practices were celebrated in Alice's home during the Stations?
4. What evidence is there in the story that the Stations were a great social occasion?
5. What were the two most important things in Alice's mother's life?
6. What evidence is there in the story that Alice's mother had a strong belief in God?
7. Do the Stations take place each year in your locality? If so, what are the differences and similarities between the Stations in Alice's home in the 1940's and the Stations in your locality today?
8. Have religious beliefs and practices changed in your locality between the 1940s and today? Explain.

Or *Group Work Research*: Divide the class into small groups of 4/5 students. Ask each group to research one of the following: Religious beliefs / practices of older people in the locality  
Religious beliefs / practices of young people in the locality

When the research has been completed each group presents its findings to the whole class. Draw together the findings of the students' research with the following questions:

1. What are the difference/similarities between the religious beliefs of young and older people?
2. What are the difference/similarities between the religious practices of young and older people?
3. From your research, has there been a change in religious beliefs and practices of people in your locality over the past few decades? Explain.

Or *Individual Research*: Distribute copies of *Student Work: INTERVIEW WITH OLDER PARISHIONER* and give students time to conduct their interview. When students have concluded their interviews ask them to complete the following written assignment:

Describe some similarities and differences, which you noticed between the older persons experience of Religion when they were growing up and your experience today.

*Exploring religious belief and practice in Ireland and throughout Europe at present and over the last century*

*Research in Ireland Option 1*

In order to get a balanced and true picture of a situation it is important to look at a number of different sources for information e.g. *Student Work: SURVEY OF PATTERNS OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF AND PRACTICE IN IRELAND BETWEEN 1981-1998*

Other sources of information on patterns of religious belief and practice today would include:

- Latest Government census
- Local surveys
- *Listening To Youth* - B. McMahon
- *Irish Values and Attitudes: The Irish Report of the European Value Systems Study* - M. Fogarty, L. Ryan, L. Lee.
- *Values and Social Change in Ireland. Edited by Christopher T. Whelan. Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1984.*
- *Religious Beliefs, Practice and Moral Attitudes* - Breslin, A. Weafer, J.
- *AGB Adelaide's Religious Research Monitor* referred to in *A Church in Recession - Three national Surveys, 1974-1992* - Weafer, J.

Distribute relevant pages / diagrams from the above sources. Ask students to read the information and discuss following questions as a whole class:

1. From this research what changes has there been in levels of religious practice in Ireland over the last 20 years? Explain.
2. What changes has there been in levels of religious belief in Ireland over the last 20 years? Explain.
3. Do the results of the research surprise / not surprise you? Why/Why not?

*Research in Ireland Option 2*

Identify the leaders of the communities of faith in your locality. Send each a copy of the following survey adapted to suit your locality and the communities of faith you are sending it to.

Please mark <b>P</b> beside the answer that is closest to your experience.	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Other
1. How often does your community of faith gather for religious services?				
	Less than 50	50-100	100-500	500-1000
2. Do many people attend these religious services?				
	Children	Teenagers	Adults	Elderly
3. What age groups are represented at these services?				
	Yes		No	
4. Are there certain times of the year when attendance varies?				
Please explain?				

Or by way of introduction to interviewing a person read the following statement from Fr. M.P. Gallagher's book *Help My Unbelief*: 'When I was a student in University College, Dublin, around 1960, an amazing scene took place everyday in the library at noon: everyone there stood and in silence said the Angelus. Even a Buddhist girl from Thailand whom I knew quite well stood in silence. I would love to know when exactly this custom died, but I know that it would now be unthinkable for anyone to make such a public gesture. I wouldn't do it myself. Then only a brave crack-pot would sit down, now only a brave crack-pot would stand up.' Interview a person who was an adult in the 1960's and ask the following questions:

1. In the 1960's did most people spend time in prayer each day?
2. How frequently did most people attend religious services?
3. In the 1960's was religious belief and practice important to most young people?
4. In the 1960's were people more committed to their religion then they are today?

*Written Assignment:* Based on the responses received write a paragraph describing the changing patterns of religious belief and practice in your locality. Make reference to the following:

1. How frequently are most people attending religious services?
2. How frequently are different age groups attending religious services?
3. What changes have there been in the pattern of religious belief and practice between the 1960's and today?

*Research throughout Europe*

In order to get a balanced and true picture of a situation it is important to look at a number of different sources for information e.g. *Student Work: SURVEY OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF AND PRACTICE IN IRELAND AND EUROPE*. Other sources of information on patterns of religious belief and practice would include:

- *Irish Values and Attitudes: The Irish Report of the European Value Systems Study* - M. Fogarty, L. Ryan, L. Lee.
- Report on *International Social Survey Programme* by Andrew M. Greeley and Conor Ward in *Doctrine and Life*, Vol. 50 No. 10 December 2000

Distribute relevant pages / diagrams from the above sources. Ask students to read the information and discuss following questions as a whole class:

1. What are the similarities / differences between Ireland and other European countries in this survey?
2. Do the results of the research surprise / not surprise you? Why/Why not?

*Written Assignment:*

Write a letter to an imaginary pen-pal in Europe describing the differences and/or similarities between levels of religious belief and practice in Ireland and Europe.

Or tick the correct box for each of the following statements:

Statements	True	False
More people in Ireland believe in God than in the Netherlands	x	
Fewer people in Slovenia attend Church regularly than in Ireland	x	
More people in Ireland pray regularly than in Poland		x

***Identifying factors that influence religious belief and practice in the life of the adolescent***

People sometimes say that personal experiences or events can strengthen or weaken the importance of religious belief and practice in their lives. From your experience what factors do you think would strengthen or weaken the importance of religious belief and practice in the lives of young people today?

Using *Student Work: FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE RELIGIOUS BELIEF AND PRACTICE*

Mark ū beside the experiences or events that you think would strengthen the importance of religious belief and practice in the lives of young people today?

Mark X beside the experiences or events that you think would weaken the importance of religious belief and practice in the lives of young people today?

Note on the chalkboard or project on an overhead *Student Work: FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE RELIGIOUS BELIEF AND PRACTICE* and discuss:

- What experiences or events do you think would strengthen the importance of religious belief and practice in the lives of people today?
- What experiences or events do you think would weaken the importance of religious belief and practice in the lives of people today?
- Are there any similarities in what you identified as strengthening / weakening the importance of religious belief and practice?
- Are there any differences in what you identified as strengthening / weakening the importance of religious belief and practice?
- What influence do the following have on the religious beliefs and practice of adolescents: parents, family, friends, school, etc.?

Take feedback from the students and note answers on the chalkboard or overhead.

*Written Assignment:*

- Describe three things that help and encourage the religious belief and practice of adolescents today.
- Describe three things that discourage the religious belief and practice of adolescents today.

*Group Work Poster Collage Assignment:*

Provided each group with a selection of photographs and ask students to produce a poster collage identifying the factors that influence the religious beliefs and practice of adolescents. In conclusion each of the groups present their collage to the whole class with an explanations of the influences they have identified.

Discuss with the whole class:

1. What factors do the collages have in common?
2. What factors differed?
3. Pick out some examples and ask how these can influence the religious belief and practices of adolescents today?
4. Are these influences on adolescents' religious belief and practice positive or negative? Give reasons?

*Written Assignment:*

Put a tick beside any of the following that influences the religious belief and practice of adolescents.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Family	<input type="checkbox"/>	Teachers	<input type="checkbox"/>	Music
<input type="checkbox"/>	Television programmes	<input type="checkbox"/>	Going to religious services	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sermons
<input type="checkbox"/>	What friends say	<input type="checkbox"/>	Magazine articles	<input type="checkbox"/>	School friends

List four things that influence religious belief and practice (two positive and two negative influences) and explain how each of them can influence an adolescent.

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*Resources that teachers have suggested include:*

All About Faith – Gill and Macmillan Chapter 1

Community of Faith Veritas, pages 86-92, and 94-104.

Cyberclass Manual Scholastech Disk 1 Section D Part 1.

Logos

Show us the way - The New Christian Way Series 2 – Veritas Unit 7 Lesson 19

Teach Me Your Ways - The Light of the World Series 3 – Gill and Macmillan Chapter 1

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### *Student Work: INTERVIEW WITH OLDER PARISHIONER*

#### RELIGIOUS PRACTICE IN MY LOCALITY IN THE PAST

##### *Home Life*

1. Did you learn prayers when you were growing up? Can you name some of them?
2. Were there religious practices in your home when you were growing up? E.g. Time for prayer
3. Were there religious symbols in your home when you were growing up? E.g. pictures
4. How old were you when you started going to Religious Services?

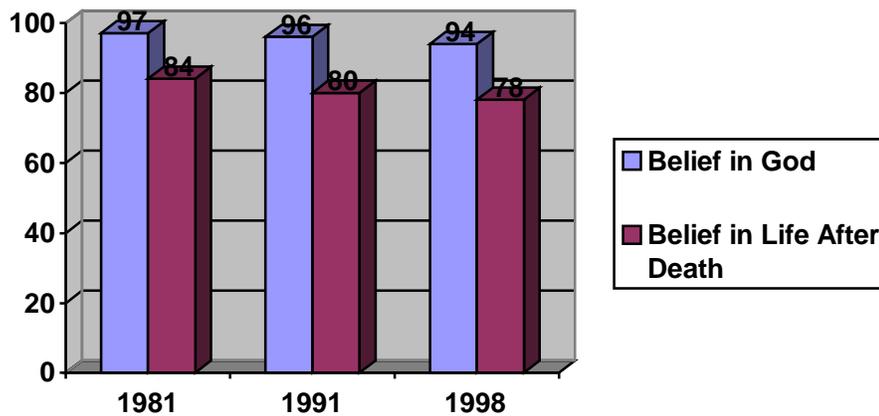
##### *Community of Faith*

1. How much time did you spend studying Religious Education in primary school?
2. Did you use books in Religion class?
3. How far was the local place of worship from your house?
4. Did you walk to the Religious Service?
5. What language was the Religious Service celebrated in? How did the people feel about this?
6. How often did you go Religious Services?
7. What ceremonies were celebrated in your place of worship?
8. Was there any special place of pilgrimage (Holy Well, Shrine or Mass Path) near where you lived?
9. How has parish life changed since you were growing up?
10. What have been the greatest changes in religious practices that you have experienced in Ireland?

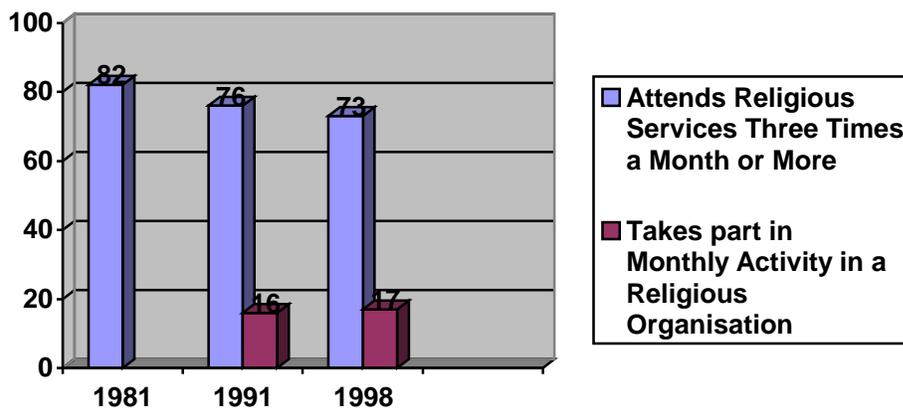
*(Adapted from St.Leo's RE Dept. Carlow)*

*Student Work:* SURVEY OF PATTERNS OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF AND PRACTICE IN IRELAND BETWEEN 1981-1998 or CHURCH STATISTICS

**Religious Belief**

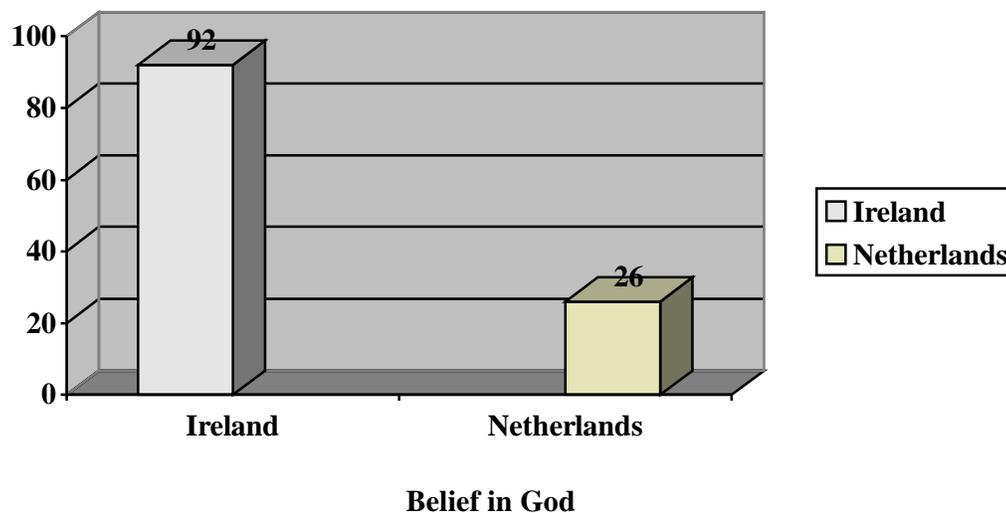


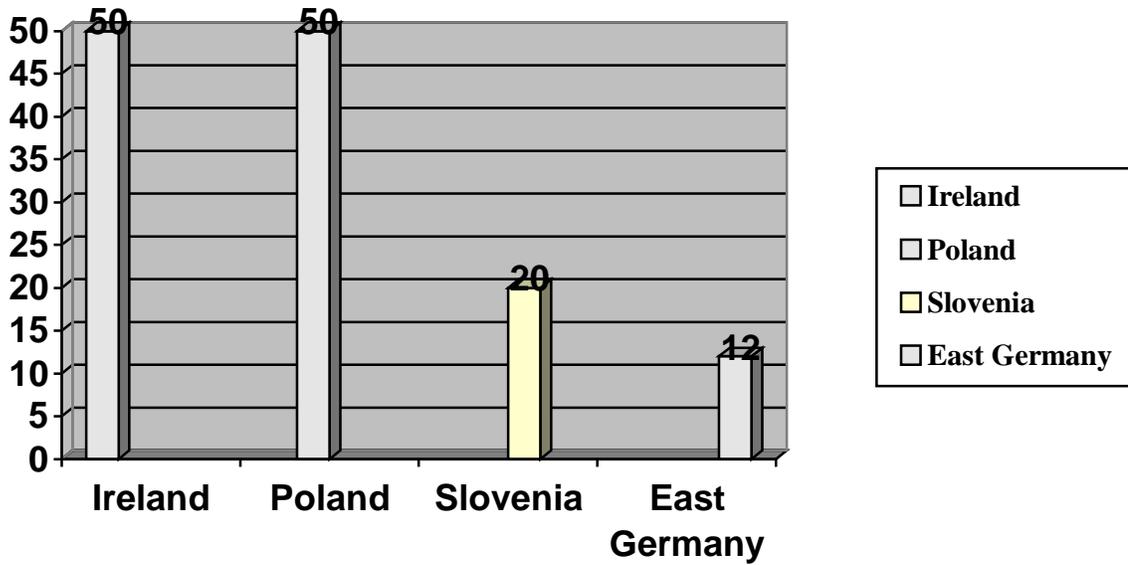
**Religious Practice**



The above diagrams are adapted from the findings of European Values and Attitudes Survey (1981) and the International Social Survey Programme (1991 and 1998) as reported by Andrew M. Greeley and Conor Ward in *Doctrine and Life* December 2000.

*Student Work:* SURVEY OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF AND PRACTICE IN IRELAND AND EUROPE.





**Attend Church Regularly & Pray Daily**

The above diagrams are adapted from the findings of the International Social Survey Programme 1992 study of Religion. This was based on random surveys of 19,000 people in 1991 with a minimum of 1,000 in each of the following countries: USA, Britain, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, New Zealand, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Slovenia, former East & West Germanys.

*Student Work:* FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE RELIGIOUS BELIEF AND PRACTICE

People sometime say that personal experiences or events can strengthen or weaken the importance of religious belief and practice in their lives. From your experience what factors do you think would strengthen or weaken the importance of religious belief and practice in the lives of young people today?

Mark **U** beside the experiences or events listed below that you think would strengthen the importance of religious belief and practice in the lives of young people today?

Mark **X** beside the experiences or events that you think would weaken the importance of religious belief and practice in the lives of young people today?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Being alone in a place of worship	<input type="checkbox"/>	The beauty of nature	<input type="checkbox"/>	A birth
<input type="checkbox"/>	Taking part in a religious service	<input type="checkbox"/>	Prayer	<input type="checkbox"/>	A death
<input type="checkbox"/>	Talking about religion with your family	<input type="checkbox"/>	Times of great sadness	<input type="checkbox"/>	Suffering
<input type="checkbox"/>	Talking about religion with your friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	Listening to music	<input type="checkbox"/>	Kindness in people
<input type="checkbox"/>	Times of silence	<input type="checkbox"/>	Worry	<input type="checkbox"/>	Holiness in people
<input type="checkbox"/>	Listening to a religious talk	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fear	<input type="checkbox"/>	Always being busy
<input type="checkbox"/>	Reading a religious book	<input type="checkbox"/>	Times of great joy	<input type="checkbox"/>	Times of stillness
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (Please state).....	<input type="checkbox"/>	.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	.....