

What Every Catechist Should Know?

The following pages are intended to provide the most fundamental tools needed to be a catechist.

These pages should be given to all catechists, in addition to the diocesan policy, section II of this manual, and the curriculum for their particular grade.

Aim of Catechesis

Catechists should be encouraged to meditate on the aim of catechesis and to read the entire apostolic letter, *On Catechesis In Our Time* by Pope John Paul II.

The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch but in communion, **in intimacy**, with Jesus Christ: only He can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity (Pope John Paul II, *On Catechesis In Our Time*, n. 5).

The specific aim of catechesis is to develop, with God's help, an as yet initial faith, and to advance in fullness and to nourish day by day the Christian life of the faithful, young and old. It is in fact a matter of giving growth, at the level of knowledge and in life, to the seed of faith sown by the Holy Spirit with the initial proclamation and effectively transmitted by Baptism.
(Pope John Paul II, *On Catechesis In Our Time*, n. 20)

Catechesis aims, therefore, at developing understanding of the mystery of Christ in the light of God's Word, so that the whole of a person's humanity is impregnated by that Word. Changed by the working of grace into a new creature, the Christian thus sets himself to follow Christ and learns more and more within the Church **to think like Him**, **to judge like Him**, **to act** in conformity with His commandments, and **to hope as He** invites us to.
(Pope John Paul II, *On Catechesis In Our Time*, n. 20)

To put it more precisely: within the whole process of evangelization, the aim of catechesis is to be the teaching and maturation stage, that is to say, the period in which the Christian, having accepted by faith the person of Jesus Christ as the one Lord and Savior and having given Him complete adherence by sincere conversion of heart, endeavors to know better this Jesus to whom he has entrusted himself: to know His "mystery," the kingdom of God proclaimed by Him, the requirements and promises contained in His Gospel message, and the paths that He has laid down for anyone who wishes to follow Him. (Pope John Paul II, *On Catechesis In Our Time*, n. 20)

It is true that being a Christian means saying "yes" to Jesus Christ, but let us remember that this "yes" has two levels: It consists in surrendering to the word of God and relying on it, but it also means, at a later stage, endeavoring to know better-and better the profound meaning of this word.
(Pope John Paul II, *On Catechesis In Our Time*, n. 20)

The
Catechist

teaches by

Who They Are

What They Say

Who a catechist is...

1. has a deep personal faith in Jesus Christ, so to live as a Child of God, a member of the Trinity family (the Church), a co-heir to the Kingdom (*cf. Rm 8:15-17; Gal 4:6-7*)
2. is a witness to what you have heard, seen, looked upon and touched (*cf. 1 Jn 1:1-4*)
3. accepts and loves people as God loves them

What a catechist says...

1. be soaked in Scripture, especially the Gospels, so to know what every key chapter in it is about; knows the line of thought of every book of it, could find the way about it blindfold
2. be soaked in the Church's doctrines, that is to know them in so far as the Church has expounded upon them; and further, to live by them and have an anguished desire to share them

The Divine Pedagogy

The Divine Pedagogy is the way that God teaches us. The Divine Pedagogy is demonstrated in the way that God, who loves us perfectly and completely, sent His Son Jesus to reveal Himself and His Plan for our salvation and sanctification. In other words, we can examine how Jesus catechizes and learn how we are to be catechists. Jesus is not only the aim of catechesis, He is also the model for catechists.

How does Jesus reveal Himself and His Plan? How does the Divine Pedagogy work?

The Divine Pedagogy has several distinctive characteristics that catechists should seek to imitate.

1. God works with how we are made.
2. God works incrementally.
3. God always provides the grace needed.

God works with how we are made. God knows that we have a human nature. We cannot help but learn in human ways. God gave humans both physical ways of knowing, such as through our senses (taste, touch, smell, sight and hearing) and in spiritual ways of knowing, such as praying, thinking, deciding, emotions, etc. Human beings have both a body and a soul. In addition, God has made each person to be with Him and His Family, in heaven, forever. To be a saint is to be fully human, it is not just a nice thing for someone to do.

God works incrementally. He doesn't let us know everything all at once. God lets us know what we are capable of knowing, always awaiting for our response of faith. This response of faith is articulated in many ways, i.e. saying yes or I believe, our acceptance of the gifts that God has given, etc.

God always provides the grace needed. In other words, with every truth that is revealed or put forth, God gives us the help we need to make the response of faith. This "divine help" or "actual grace" is available at every moment.

(Note: "Sanctifying grace" or "divine life" is available in the seven sacraments.)

For further study:

Read CCC 53, 122, 684, 708, 1145, 1950 and 1964.

Read part three of the General Directory for Catechesis or GDC, entitled "The Pedagogy of God" which has also been revised to formulate the main elements of a pedagogy of the faith inspired by divine pedagogy.

“Faith” and “faith”

Faith and faith. The same word is used to designate Revelation and our human response to Revelation. For clarity, Faith, with a upper case F, may be used in reference to Revelation and faith, with a lower case f, may be used to reference our human response.

Upper case Faith is Revelation. Faith is all that God has revealed about Himself and His Plan for our salvation and sanctification. Faith is what is made known through Scripture, Tradition, and the Magisterium. Faith is that which we believe and who we believe in.

Lower case faith is our positive response to God, our yes. Faith is that by which we believe. This human capacity to make an act of faith begins with the infused theological virtue of faith at our Baptism. From this point on, faith grows with every act of faith that is made.

What does this lower case faith look like?

The characteristics of faith are

1. grace inspired human act freely chosen
2. more certain than all human knowledge
3. enables understanding
4. necessary for salvation - beginning of eternal life
5. faith allows us to taste in advance the light of the beatific vision
6. REQUIRES PERSEVERANCE

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) explains these characteristics of faith in paragraphs 153-165.

Signs of Conversion

The aim of catechesis is conversion, that is, to turn away from sin and to turn towards Jesus so to follow Him and learn more and more within the Church to think like Him, to judge like Him, to act in conformity with His commandments, and to hope as He invites us to. Jesus desires not only to be in touch with us, but to be intimate with us. (cf. CT 20, 5)

What does conversion or growth in faith look like in children?

IN GENERAL

These will not all necessarily appear in one child, any one of them can be a sign.

- Referring actions to Christ (seeing connections between scripture and life, WWJD)
- Praying on their own
- Charity for others (especially for those who are not their friends)
- Selfless acts (doing things without benefit to themselves)
- Questions about God
- Expressing doubts
- Spontaneous joy at learning about God
- The desire to know more

AT DIFFERENT AGES

The needs, obstacles, and abilities at each age level are different. Parents and catechists should learn to understand these in order to more fully assist their child in their Christian life.

PRIOR TO AGE OF REASON:

CHARACTERISTICS

- Willing to believe on parent's or teacher's authority
- Need for security met concretely

SIGNS OF CONVERSION:

- Referring actions to Christ
- Modeling actions after Scripture, Saints, witnesses
- Selfless acts
- Spontaneous joy at learning about God
- Praying for concrete intentions

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AGE OF REASON to BEGINNING OF ADOLESCENCE/ABSTRACT REASONING (approx. age 7 -10)

CHARACTERISTICS:

- Begins to make the transfer from concrete to more abstract principles
- Become more aware of spiritual side of life

SIGNS OF CONVERSION:

- Questions begin: Want to know more reasons why, more depth, more "meat"
- Prayer begins to expand beyond themselves
- Sense their need for Christ, their problem with sin
- Referring actions to Christ: (in a different way)
- Eucharist can make a big difference

BEGINNING OF ADOLESCENCE/ABSTRACT REASONING (approx. age 10-11) to LATE ADOLESCENCE (approx. age 14):

CHARACTERISTICS:

- Changes in body/emotions cause confusion, lack of stability.
- Can live with polar opposites in brain
- Need for security no longer fulfilled by parent/teacher---must come from inside
- Have realized that people can't always be relied upon
- Can change very easily at this age: can experience God deeply one week, big sin the next---seem to have little repentance (they are testing their limits, not thinking-- your reaction is crucial)
- NOTE: The catechist must address need for security issue/changes in body-emotions; be prepared for these things, have response ready; acknowledging their capacity to be tempted and fall

SIGNS OF CONVERSION:

- Questions (challenges): want you to prove it to them, reason to believe
- Want more depth
- Relying on God as their security:
- Prayer can be more in-depth: more open for/have greater need for spiritual experience

Helping Your Students Become Witnesses

DIRECTIONS: Thinking, judging, acting and hoping like Jesus Christ inquires sharing our faith with others – evangelization. Many are uncomfortable with evangelization, yet without evangelization, others will not know Jesus Christ. Echoing the message of the archangel Gabriel to Mary, Pope John Paul II has asked us also to “be not afraid.” Read Scripture passage and make your plan to witness on the backside.

The Friends of the Paralyzed Man



One day as Jesus was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and Jerusalem, and the power of the Lord was with Him for healing. Some friends brought on a stretcher a man who was paralyzed. They were trying to bring him in and set (him) in Jesus' presence, but they could not find a way inside because of the crowd. So, the friends went up on the roof and lowered the paralyzed man on the stretcher through the roof. The man came through the roof and was lowered into the middle of the room right in front of Jesus. When Jesus saw the

faith of the friends, He said, As for you, your sins are forgiven."

Then the scribes and Pharisees began to ask themselves, "Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who but God alone can forgive sins?" Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them in reply, "What are you thinking in your hearts? Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"-- he said to the man who was paralyzed, "I say to you, rise, pick up your stretcher, and go home." The paralyzed man stood up immediately before them, picked up what he had been lying on, and went home, glorifying God. (Lk 5:17ff)

Your Plan To Bring Others to Jesus

1. BE HOLY -- Constantly seek to think, judge, act and hope like Jesus in your own life.

2. LOOK AROUND YOU – Who needs to know about Jesus? Is there any one in your family? Anyone in your neighborhood? Anyone who is your friend? Anyone you go to school with? Write their names on the lines below.

3. PRAYING FOR PEOPLE – Pray for those you have listed. Pray that the Holy Spirit will help you talk about Jesus. Pray that the Holy Spirit will help the people on the list. Write your prayer.

4. BE A FRIEND – Be a friend to the people on your list. Be nice to them.

5. INVITATION – When the right time comes, ask the person if you can tell them about Jesus and how He forgives our sins so we can be children of God. Invite them to follow Jesus. Invite them to pray with you. Invite them to go to Mass with you. Invite them to help someone else. Invite them to read the Bible or other books about God. Invite them to your religion class. What other ways could you invite them to know more about Jesus.

6. KEEP BEING A FRIEND – Keep being a friend. Always pray for them.

Scripture, Catechism, and the Liturgical Year

For nearly every session for every age group the catechist needs to be familiar with relevant Scripture passages, CCC references and the liturgical year. The internet is very helpful in finding this information quickly. The next two pages provide websites with search engines for Scripture, the CCC, and the liturgical year.



Scripture

Every catechist needs a Bible for EVERY lesson or catechetical endeavor. WHY? Because Scripture is the Word of God and it has the power to change hearts. The New American Bible is the translation used at Mass and for other liturgies. Other very good versions are the Revised Standard Version, Catholic edition and the New Jerusalem. Whatever Bible is chosen, be sure that it includes 73 books.

Bible Search Engines

The Bible is online too – in many locations. Here are two sites: <http://bible.crosswalk.com/> and <http://bible.gospelcom.net/>

Concordance

A concordance is a very useful tool for studying the scriptures. It takes every single word of Bible and lists where each word can be found in the scriptures. It is useful for locating scripture verses that you know the words to, but don't know the book, chapter and verse. There are concordances for most versions of the Bible.

Here is how it works. Let's say that you know of a verse that says our hairs are numbered. You could look up the word "numbered" in a concordance and it would give you a listing of all the verses that contain the word "numbered". You would then find Matthew 10:30, where Jesus says that "the very hairs of your head are all numbered".

Catechism of the Catholic Church

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) is a wonderful gift to the mission of evangelization and catechesis. Pope John Paul II calls it the "sure norm" and encourages its use by all the faithful. The CCC is especially useful to catechists. Like Scripture, it should be consulted for EVERY lesson or catechetical endeavor. Instructions on how to use the CCC are provided in the opening 22 paragraphs.

Index of Catechism of the Catholic Church

The CCC has an extensive index that is useful for locating particular doctrines.

Search Engine - Catechism of the Catholic Church

The internet also has the CCC online at <http://www.christusrex.org/www2/kerygma/ccc/searchcat.html>. Type in any verse, word or Scripture reference and shortly after, the engine will return a list of references.

Another site to assist a catechist in tying the lesson to the liturgical year. This site allows searches by topic, name and date. url: <http://www.catholic-forum.com/saints/indexsnt.htm>

PATRON SAINTS INDEX

[SEARCHES](#)

1316 topics / 2927 saints

[list by TOPIC](#)
[list by NAME](#)
[TOPIC and NAME](#)

[Today](#) on the Calendar of Saints

Who's the patron of your state (political or spiritual)? Condition (physical or spiritual)? Vocation (monetary or spiritual)? Hobby? Maybe you can find out here.

This site has information on topics with patron saints, and profiles of those saints. Profiles have portraits, biographical information, areas of patronage, prayers, links to related sites, readings, etc. It's heavily cross-indexed, and there are several ways to access the information, none of which require frames, image maps, applets, or scripts. It's not complete - I keep finding new topics, and there's *lots* of information to add to the profiles, so the site will continue to grow and change. Thanks for stopping by.

[Calendar](#)
[Time Line](#)
[Image Galleries](#)
[Definitions](#)
[Saint News](#)

Catholic Calendar Page

<http://www.easterbrooks.com/personal/calendar/index.html>

This is a copy of the homepage from this site. As you can see – much can be gained from this page.

[Today's Page](#) [Select A Date](#) [Find A Date](#) [Contact Us](#) [Help](#)

[◀ Year](#) | [◀ Month](#) | [◀ Week](#) | [◀ Day](#) | [Day ▶](#) | [Week ▶](#) | [Month ▶](#) | [Year ▶](#)

Green Vestments



Wednesday, [October 24, 2001](#)

Liturgical [Year C, Cycle I](#)

Wednesday of the Twenty-ninth week in [Ordinary Time](#)

Readings for Mass

First Reading: [Romans 6:12-18](#)

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 124:1-3, 4-6, 7-8](#)

Gospel: [Luke 12:39-48](#)

[Saint Anthony Mary Claret, bishop](#) - **Optional Memorial**

In the Heart and Mind of the Church **Important Catechetical Documents for Every Catechist**

The Church, through the popes and bishops, has clearly and beautifully set goals for evangelization and catechesis. The following documents are suggested for all catechists and serve as a starting point. There are many more documents.

- Bible New American translation is recommended as it is used for liturgical celebrations

- CCC Catechism of the Catholic Church
Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994, 2nd edition.

- CT *On Catechesis in Our Time (Catechesi tradendae)*
Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, 1979

- NM *At the Beginning of the New Millennium (Novo millennio inuente)*
Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, January 2001

- ACCC *Adult Catechesis in the Christian Community*
International Council for Catechesis, 1990

- EN *On Evangelization In the Modern World (Evangelii Nuntiandi)*
Pope Paul VI, 1975

- GDC *General Directory for Catechesis*
Sacred Congregation of the Clergy, 1998

Diocesan Documents (by publication date)

- TF *Teaching the Faith: Evangelization*
Catholic Education & Formation Office, Diocese of Fargo, January 2000

- SFS *Send Forth Your Spirit*
Bishop Samuel J. Aquila, August 2002

- PG *A Parent's Guide to Chastity Education*
Bishop Samuel J. Aquila, December 2002

- EC *Education for Chastity Resource*
Pro-life Office, Diocese of Fargo, December 2002

*Contact the Diocesan Office for copies of diocesan documents.

Insertion Into the Mystery

God's plan for each person is not simply to know everything about Him or even to know Him, God's desire is nothing less than for each person "to become partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pt 1:4; Eph 2:18). We are to be to be His sons and daughters (cf. Gal 4:5), His Children, inserted into His Family, the Church. There are four means for insertion into the Mystery of Christ (cf. Acts 2:42).

1. Sacred Scripture
2. Liturgy/Sacraments
3. Systematic catechesis
4. Testimony of Christian living

These four means are explained on the next few pages.

Sacred Scripture and Catechesis

Scripture is the basic means for insertion into the Mystery of Christ. Scripture provides a biblical-historical catechesis, that is, it tells us our Salvation Story, as God revealed Himself and His Plan through the course of history, time and space. Scripture is the basic means for insertion because Scripture is the inspired language of God, love letters from our heavenly Father.

In order to reveal himself to men, in the condescension of his goodness God speaks to them in human words: 'Indeed the words of God, expressed in the words of men, are in every way like human language, just as the Word of the eternal Father, when he took on himself the flesh of human weakness, became like men. (CCC 101)

Thus, “the Church’s teaching, liturgy, and life spring from this source (Scripture) and lead back to it” (CT 27; parenthesis added).

Scripture is essential for catechesis.

- a. familiarize yourself with Scripture; read daily, study, and reflect, e.g. *Lectio Divina*
- b. generally speaking use Scripture for every lesson
- c. to find applicable Scriptures use CCC and the footnotes, a concordance, and/or internet SEARCH engine
- d. in the lesson, don’t give every Scripture reference
- e. adapt to age group, Toddler Bibles, Teen Bibles, etc. and when possible read directly from the Bible

Liturgy/Sacraments and Catechesis

Liturgy is the prime means for insertion into the Mystery of Christ and refers to “guidance in living sacramental life/elementary instruction on Church’s worship” (CT 23). Liturgy includes Sacraments, Liturgy of the Word, and Liturgy of the Hours. Liturgy is primary because the one sure way of being freed from sin and being reborn as a child of God is through Baptism.

Liturgy is essential for catechesis.

Catholics, especially catechists, need to live a sacramental life (Sunday Mass, regular Reconciliation) otherwise catechesis becomes intellectualized. Catechesis comes to life in liturgy and the sacraments because it is at these moments that we encounter Jesus, especially at Mass. (cf. CT 23)

Liturgy may be used in most catechetical settings.

- a. catechetical meetings could begin with liturgy
- b. elements of liturgy should be tied into every lesson because we pray, what we believe
“lex orandi, lex credendi”
- c. use the missalette
- d. use the prayers and norms from other rites; which are found in Rites book, Book of Blessings, and Liturgy of the Hours

Systematic Catechesis and Testimony

The final two means for insertion into the Mystery of Christ are systematic catechesis and the testimony of Christian living. The two are often seen as contradictory rather than complimentary. Some will insist that students live the faith and then learn about what it means. Some will insist that living the Gospel is enough, there is no need for explanation, observers will intuitively understand. Pope John Paul II writes,

It is useless to play off orthopraxis (testimony of Christian living) against orthodoxy (systematic catechesis): Christianity is inseparably both. Firm and well-thought out convictions lead to courageous and upright action. (CT 22; parenthesis added)

Systematic Catechesis

Systematic catechesis is the most perfect way for insertion into the Mystery of Christ in that it works the way humans are made to work: reasonable, logical, and relational. Systematic catechesis begins with God's eternal fatherly love, that is the catechist presents first what God has done, what God still does, and what God will do until we attain our full participation in His glory, heaven. These truths are articulated in the Creed and the Sacraments by which God gives His very self to us. Next, systematic catechesis explains how we are able to respond to this Divine Love. Inspired by grace, we are able to receive the sacraments, keep the commandments and seek in prayer.

Systematic catechesis is essential. Systematic catechesis is possible because of the integrity of the content: the Mystery of Christ, although made up of many different truths is one mystery. However, there is a hierarchy of truths that is some truths are more foundational than others (cf. CT 31; CCC 90). This does not mean that some truths need not be known, but rather that some truths need to be known before others are understandable.

Testimony of Christian Living

The testimony of Christian living is the foundational means for insertion into the Mystery of Christ. The term refers to the witness of Christian living by individuals and a community living in love, especially in families, parishes and religious communities. Through their witness they image the Trinity who is a communion of persons. The testimony of Christian living is foundational because it is the ordinary way that leads the young or non-Christians to a first personal contact with Jesus Christ and His Family, the Church.

All are called to give "explicit and courageous witness to the faith of Jesus Christ" (GDC 26).

The testimony of Christian living is essential for catechesis.

- a. use every class
- b. the witness of your daily life
- c. verbally sharing faith, guest testimonies, news stories or student sharings
- d. reading of saint's lives - have share research
- e. explicit statement of change required by doctrine taught

Classroom Management

Classroom management is part of the “triad of successful teaching,” that is, classroom management, lesson planning, and effective discipline. The three are interrelated, and are most effective when used together. Classroom management is understood as creating an environment in which a catechist, the teacher, can teach and the student can learn. Discipline is part of that environment, and lesson planning is one of the most effective means of maintaining discipline in a classroom. Below are listed some elements of classroom management.

1. For those planning a catechetical program, choose the best day of the week and time of the day for instruction according to local circumstances. For most communities this will be Wednesday after school or in the evening. Consider having two sessions especially when parents have varying schedules and space is limited. For those planning catechesis in a Catholic school, it is best to give catechesis in the early morning hours of the day.
2. Prepare the place to be used for catechesis. Make sure it is large enough, well-lit, clean, comfortable, decorated, and with plenty of fresh air. The physical setting makes a big difference in the receptivity of the students.
3. Catechists should be conscious of their attitude and physical presence. Be positive, enthusiastic, expressive, and professional. The personal cleanliness and neatness of the catechist also contribute to the atmosphere of the classroom. By these factors the catechist tries to create an atmosphere of friendship, welcome and trust.
4. Rules for behavior during catechesis should be posted and verbally reinforced at the beginning of the academic year.
5. Be orderly. Establish set procedures, and follow them in each class meeting (for example, passing of books, asking questions, discussion procedure). Progress, not chaos, should reign in the classroom.
6. It is a good idea for the catechist to be in the classroom before the students arrive, greet them with their first names as they come in. The time of preparation ends when the first student arrives. Be prepared to begin as soon as the time for instruction is scheduled to begin.
7. Begin class with prayer, that is done either by listening, speaking, reading, or writing. Starting the same way every time, especially for younger students, signals that instruction time has begun and prepares students to receive instruction.
8. If the circumstances permit, the catechist should assign seats to the students (obviously not adults), separating students who might encourage each other to act up, or matching those who will be a help and good influence on others.

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9. The catechist should try to maintain good eye contact with the students. Some catechists suggest using an over-head projector instead of a blackboard to illustrate a lesson because it does not require a catechist to turn his or her back on students. However, it is also a good idea for the catechist to move around the room while teaching, rather than be locked in the front of the class. You do not sacrifice control by wandering, as the students do not know when you might be standing next to their desk.
10. The catechist should try to learn the names of the students as soon as possible, and not only their names, but their personalities, strengths and weaknesses as well. Name tags, seating charts, or pictures with the names printed underneath are helpful ways to commit names to memory.
11. Be generous with praise: for each student; for specific behavior; as an immediate response to specific behavior; and for all students in general. Give credit where credit is due. Praise for good work should not depend on the catechist's mood.
12. Be yourself - a warm, caring compassionate, loving human being who is devoted to teaching someone how to live as a disciple of Christ in the Catholic Church.
13. Practice the **Golden Rule**: "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do so to them" (Matthew 7:12).
14. Respect the work of the student. If an assignment is important enough to be given, it should be important enough to be corrected, evaluated, and returned in a timely fashion.

Avoid Boring Classroom Conditions

- A** Avoid being a boring catechist. How could the Gospel be boring?
- B** Bring a Bible and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.
- C** *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is full of wonderful prayers and saint writings.
- D** Develop a good rapport with students.
- E** Encourage participation.
- F** Find out what special interests the students have.
- G** Give praise.
- H** Handle misbehaviors without making big productions.
- I** Involve students in the praying/teaching/learning/living process.
- J** Join students in their activities.
- K** Keep in touch with the attention span of your students.
- L** Love your students like Jesus loves you.
- M** Make use of teachable moments.
- N** Never sit behind the desk during group instructions.
- O** Open students to new ways of seeing Jesus work in their lives.
- P** Pray and prepare. Pray to know God. Pray for your students. Prepare your lessons.
- Q** Quit when you and your students are saints.
- R** Reach out to every student.
- S** Surprise students with lesson-related games, puzzles, projects and play.
- T** Take time for interactive learning experiences.
- U** Understand student differences.
- V** Vary instructional methods and materials.
- W** Welcome suggestions from students.
- X** Xerox or duplicate notes; avoid making students copy copious notes from the board.
- Y** Yell not.
- Z** Zero in on current topics of interest to your students.

Lesson Planning

Lesson planning is essential to catechesis, regardless of the age level of your students. The most basic lesson plan involves deciding the purpose and desired outcome of each class meeting. In addition to giving direction to your teaching, lesson planning is one of the most effective means for classroom management and discipline. It does take time, but it is time well spent. This is something you can do by yourself or with other catechists of the same grade. Below are some suggestions for long-term and immediate lesson planning.

Long-term lesson planning:

1. After you learn which grade you will be teaching, acquire a copy of the student text, the catechist's manual, the curriculum guide for that grade, and any other education materials. Set aside a time (at least five hours) to go through these materials in order to get an overview of the whole year's work. Note the general content from the curriculum and then apply the textbook and other resources. It would be a good idea to look at the curriculum your students studied the previous year and what they will study the next year. This helps to determine what you might presume your students already know and what can be given "a lick and a promise" because they will be treated again in the future.
2. Determine how many sessions you will have to cover the subject matter (five days a week in a Catholic school, and at least 30 sessions for a parish catechetical program). Number a piece of paper with the number of sessions you will have with the students in the academic year.
3. Assign a theme for each session. The theme is derived from the curriculum guide, the textbook, special programs, liturgical seasons, and miscellaneous items like planning for Mass, test days, and general "housekeeping" details. You now have a "purpose" for each class. As far as the catechetical program is concerned, you will certainly have more material than meetings, so you will need to pick out the most important themes. If class is cancelled because of weather, you will have to decide whether to skip the theme, teach it and omit another lesson theme, or combine it with another theme. Some themes are too lengthy for one session, so you will have to develop them over two or more sessions. Remember, **the textbook is a servant of the catechist**, not the other way around.
4. Once you have a theme for each session, then outline in broad strokes the main points that you want to cover in that particular theme. For example, if you are teaching a lesson on the Rosary, you might decide to discuss what it is, where it came from, and how it is prayed, with time allotted to actually pray the Rosary. You now have the "desired outcome" for that session. The material for this outline will most often be in your student text and/or catechist's manual.
5. Identifying the themes for the year prepares you to create your **personal resource center**. Have a folder, box, or large envelope for each of the themes you have identified, where you can keep any activity, exercise, AV resource, or news item that will help attract attention, illustrate the lesson, or make the lesson relevant to the students. Build these up as the year goes on and save them for future years of teaching.

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Short-term lesson planning:

6. Try to plan a month to six weeks ahead, perhaps according to units in the textbook. Do basically the same things as in long-term lesson planning, but now focus more directly on the next major segment of the course. This stage in lesson planning provides you with an opportunity to make adjustments in your long-term lesson plan based on the needs of your students, or some circumstance that you did not figure in to the whole picture.

Immediate lesson planning and methodology:

7. You will now want to decide how you are going to get your message across following the ecclesial method (other names may be applied, but effective methods involve similar elements). In *The Mystery We Proclaim*, by Msgr. Francis D. Kelly, explains this method. This method includes five steps – preparation, proclamation, explanation, application and celebration. These are explained below and a worksheet for planning the lessons is also included.

- a. Preparation:
 - A. long-term preparation (see above)
 - B. short-term preparation (see above)
 - C. prepare the lesson (before class)

Know the people who will be listening. Know as much as you can about the people to whom you will be speaking: their interests and concerns, their needs and wants, how they think and learn.

Look up relevant Scripture passages and CCC references.

Create the proclamation statement - Know what you want to say in the lesson. For each class, have a single, clear cut, definite objective that says why you and the students are there. The truth you want to proclaim.

Decide how you will get their attention. This is commonly called “the hook,” the lure that will tempt your listeners to bite at your message to see what it has to offer them. Ask yourself, what is the most interesting, challenging, dramatic, or humorous part of this lesson? What visual image or prop might I use? A “hook” can be statement, question, anecdotes, personal experiences or stories, dramatic or humorous.

Plan your sacred space and opening prayer. This space might contain a crucifix, candle, Bible properly displayed, etc. The space should not appear “busy” but tie to the lesson. One’s task is to prepare students to hear God’s Word in the lesson. In addition to the space, an opening prayer should be planned or Scripture reading or other form or prayer to “disengage” the students from the outside world and “engage” them to the upcoming lesson.

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Gather your materials. Figure out before class what materials you and the students will need. Make sure there are enough supplies, that any machinery is in proper working order, and that you know how to use it.

Plan the explanation - define your subject. The subject answers the question you have raised with your “hook,” and explains the point you want to make. Present it as concisely and forcefully as you can. The questions who, what, where, when, why and how are all part of the subject.

After you have captured the attention of the student and exposed them to the main message, you can now present the main points. The doctrinal message should be presented clearly, concretely, using words the students will understand. You may have to spend some time going over new vocabulary words, especially since many of the words used in religion are only used in that context (e.g., transubstantiation). You may have to repeat the lesson in different words if it appears that your students do not understand. Use short, simple sentences. Speak plainly and audibly.

Because of the limited attention span of your students, learn to use different teaching methods in the same session (for example, story telling, discussion, lecture, projects, recitation). Vary the length of sustained time in any one of the methods, working in two-to-four transitions or breaks in the one hour and 15 minutes of class time. Younger children require shorter, easier lessons. Teenagers require lessons that challenge them intellectually and spiritually.

Keep up the pace in the class; and gauge the work to the age of the student: neither too easy, nor too hard. Build in checks, like a question and answer period, to see if the students understand the lesson. Always have a few back-up lessons in case something doesn't work.

Plan the application – Tie to Jesus and liturgy --What will you ask them to do?

Many believe that a message without a specific request - a call to action - is a wasted opportunity. Give your students a specific action within a specific time frame. The more concrete the action, the better. For example, ask them when they will pray and how will they remind themselves to pray (tie a sock around your bedpost). How many nights will you set the table or walk the dog without being told?

Plan the celebration -- Make an emotional appeal. Your message will be memorable if you paint a picture that your students can relate to and remember. Your appeal should incorporate as many of the five senses as possible, the more the better. Use the board, music, art, reading, writing, activities, etc. One of the best appeals is to show how the message is related to prayer, Mass, or to everyday life. You might also have this item in your sacred space.

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“Leave them laughing.” Know how you will end the class. Send them home with a “punch line,” something to remember. It is a good idea at the end of the lesson to summarize the lesson by telling the students what you taught them, asking **them** what you taught them, and reminding them of how it affects life or can be practiced in everyday life.

- D. prepare the students (the start of class) – begin implementing your plan, start with prayer, then the proclamation and then deliver your “hook”
- b. Proclamation: effectively transmitting the content of the Faith by utilizing the text or other catechetical source; announcing God’s Word; it should be true and concise.
- c. Explanation: creatively explaining the proclamation to the student utilizing active engagement, question and answer, apologetics or even memory drills.
- d. Application: facilitate a response to the call of witness and service in the students. Allow them to be convinced in the teaching so as to apply it in their lives. The catechist may want to witness to Christ acting in his/her life.
- e. Celebration: end in prayerful gratitude and praise to God. This can be done by liturgical celebration, Proclamation of the Word, (i.e., a reading from scripture, a Psalm, etc.) silent reflection, common response, or formal or spontaneous prayer. (In-services to this methodology may be obtained by contacting the Office for Evangelization and Catechesis.)

A good teaching method to prepare students to receive the doctrinal message will include: a well-prepared lesson; use of appropriate gestures; use of lively facial expressions; clear expression of enthusiasm. Also, don’t forget to appeal to the senses by use of a story, an activity, an AV resource, or the use of something like a puppet dramatization that is related to the doctrinal message you want to convey and to which the students can relate.

Remember that catechesis involves not only teaching doctrine, but also providing formation in prayer and the moral life. The catechist always tries to weave these three elements together in each lesson: catechetical, liturgical, and pastoral.

Evaluate the lesson and your performance.

It is a good idea to make notes for yourself after the lesson is over. Did it work? Were the activities, stories, images, or audio-visualeffective? Did the students seem to grasp the objective? What could make it better?

Lesson Planning Overview

I. Preparation

- A. (when you know you will be teaching)
 - pray
 - sketch out the year
- B. (days beforehand) preparation for the lesson
 - allow yourself time
 - pray
 - Who are you teaching?
 - What are the **one or two** main points you want to convey?
 - read pertinent Scriptures and CCC
 - write proclamation statement and do step II
 - think of **sacred space** and opening prayer
 - complete steps III, IV, V
 - supplies needed
- C. (immediately prior to class) preparation of self, classroom and students
 - pray
 - set up sacred space
 - set up classroom
 - greet students as they arrive
- D. (the beginning of class) preparation of class: task is to prepare student's to hear God's Word
 - pray as a class
 - some other lead so that students are able to focus, leave their troubles, etc.

II. Proclamation: This is the announcing of God's Word, a statement of the truth that is to be learned . It should be true and concise. **EXAMPLE:** God made us so that we may know, love, and serve Him in this world and be forever happy with Him and His Family in heaven.

III. Explanation: This is the explanation of the proclamation. Be creative.

- review last week's lesson here
- think of ways to explain, e.g. true life stories, Scripture, prayers, art, songs, etc.
- be sure to connect with Jesus and His Plan
- be sure to connect with the liturgical year

IV. Application: Help students to apply the proclamation, the truth, to their own lives.

- either witness OR service, i.e. some change this lesson requires in their life
- parent/family activity AND/OR homework for student

V. Celebration/Closing Prayer: Lesson should end with prayerful gratitude or praise to God and give the lesson a unity that will facilitate the kind of total response catechesis seeks - cognitive, affective, behavioral.

Lesson Plan Worksheet for One Session, page 1 of 2

Class
Time

Step in Ecclesial Method

Catechist Name _____

Grade Level _____ Date of Class _____

Textbook Title _____

Chapter/Pages used _____

I. Preparation

B. (days beforehand) preparation for lesson

- allow yourself time
- pray
- Who are you teaching? _____
- What are the one or two main points you want to convey?

- read pertinent Scriptures and CCC (fill in references)

- rite proclamation statement, key words/prayer, Jesus connection, liturgical connection (fill in step II below)
- think of sacred space and opening prayer

- complete steps III, IV, V
- supplies needed

D. (the beginning of class) preparation of class: task is to prepare students to hear God's Word

- What will be the opening prayer? (saint, memorized, spontaneous, reading, song, etc)
- _____
- Just in case, what other leads will you use so that students are able to focus, leave their troubles, etc.? _____

II. Proclamation: (concise proclamation of God's Word, the truth to be taught)

key words: _____

key prayer: _____

connection to Jesus: _____

connection to current liturgical season/saint feast day: _____

Class Step in Ecclesial Method
Time

III. Explanation: (review; employ various methods to explain proclamation)

What is the connection with Jesus and His Plan?

What is the connection to the current time in the liturgical year?

IV. Application: (how truth will change their life, either in witness or service)

9 Parent/Family Activity: _____

9 Homework: _____

V. Celebration/Closing Prayer: (prayer of gratitude, closure to lesson)

.....
Special Notes/Evaluation of Class:

Rules for Effective Discipline

Every catechist has the right to demand the kind of classroom atmosphere that will allow him or her to teach and the students to learn. This involves the use of discipline. The word discipline means the education that dispels ignorance and the formation that casts out vice. It is related to the word disciple, that is, one who learns and receives formation. Discipline in the context of catechesis is not an end in itself, but provides education and formation that will train students in the discipleship to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Each catechist brings to the classroom a distinct personality which makes his or her teaching style unique. Every catechist creates an atmosphere where he or she finds it possible to teach. Some prefer an atmosphere that is formal and orderly, others like one that is more relaxed and spontaneous. There is no right and wrong atmosphere, but one where the catechist can function best.

Catechists should remember that they are representing Jesus and His Family, the Church, and that their words and actions may influence the student's future attitude toward God Himself, either positively or negatively. It is important, then, to try and assume the mind and heart of Jesus Christ toward the students: unconditional love and zeal for the salvation of their souls. Below are some guidelines for effective discipline.

1. Discipline is not negative, but positive and needed. People learn from discipline, and it allows for learning to take place. Recognize that students need to learn skills like listening, following directions, sharing, cooperation, communication, organizing time, service and sacrifice; they do not come by them naturally. Respect is the motive and goal for discipline. The benefits of discipline begin with you, the catechist, modeling respect for God, yourself, the students, and property.
2. It is very important to establish **discipline on the first day** of class. You will never have more control in the classroom than you have on the first day. Using your own style, explain expectations, procedures and consequences for both positive and negative behavior. Consider working with the other members of the catechetical faculty to develop rules and consequences that all grades may follow. This provides consistency, provides strength in numbers, and saves someone from being labeled as unfair. New catechists can also learn from "veterans" what does and does not work. In Junior High and High School, students might be involved in drawing up acceptable codes of conduct. This helps them "own" the discipline agreement.
3. Develop few and simple rules for classroom conduct. Use positive expressions of rules or commands, like "please walk," instead of "don't run."
4. Be consistent and fair. Students are devastated by partiality or favoritism on the part of the catechist. Be especially consistent in showing genuine love to all the students, careful not to make a student a scapegoat, and mindful to show love even to the "ugly duckling."

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5. Address problems promptly, and have clear and certain consequences for negative behavior. Discuss and explain the rules, but do not argue with students about the discipline policy. Do not make deals or compromise standards.
6. Avoid win/lose situations and “or else” statements. It is fruitless to issue threats that are impossible to carry out. For example, “If you don’t do your homework, you will stay after school every day for the rest of the year.”
7. Be rested. A tired catechist will be short on patience and understanding.
8. Be calm, confident, and poised, even if you have to act the part. Model positive behavior. Use praise and affirmative comments whenever possible. Be an adult example of the type of conduct expected from the students, like admitting mistakes and asking forgiveness.
9. Be friendly, but not a playmate. “Familiarity breeds contempt.” The students should be encouraged to address the catechist by a proper title (Miss, Mrs., Sister, Mr., Father).
10. Have a sense of humor. Sometimes the catechist can be too serious, too intent on covering all the material, too preoccupied with neatness, that it can cause discipline problems. Catechesis is about teaching the Good News that Jesus Christ has come to save us and sanctify us, and the students are, after all, just kids. “A little madness in the spring is wholesome even for the King.”
11. Avoid loud “storming” as much as possible. A loud catechist makes for a loud classroom.
12. Avoid name-calling, ridiculing, shaming, or discussing a student’s faults in front of the class. Do not make a student apologize in front of the others; rather, correct them in private. This gives the student a chance to avoid a reputation and to improve. NEVER discuss a child’s behavior with other catechists. If you are having trouble, discuss the problems with the parents and the DOC/DRE.
13. Do not punish the whole group for the misdeeds of one.
14. Reject the misbehavior of the student, but never the student himself. “Hate the sin, not the sinner.” Direct necessary reprimands or correction to improve poor behavior, not to diminish the person, nor destroy the positive relationship between catechist and student that is so necessary for learning.
15. Keep problem students busy; oftentimes they are only seeking attention, so give it to them. By fulfilling the basic human needs for attention, affirmation and affection, a catechist shows the students that they do not have to misbehave in order to have their needs met. Also, know the age characteristics and mental capacities of the class. This helps to distinguish between discipline problems and the normal energy and activity of the student, which are not bad, but can be drawn upon to teach a lesson.

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16. Try silence as a means of checking misbehavior. Stop dramatically in the middle of a sentence, and wait for the group to sense the reason for the pause. Then go on without comment.

17. Catechists should enlist the help of Almighty God by praying daily for their students, lifting them up to the Lord and asking for His blessing upon them. This also affects the catechist's view of students.

18. Try to enlist the involvement and support of parents; after all, the catechist is helping parents fulfill their responsibility to pass on the Faith to their children. In dealing with parents, try to identify with them and what they are hearing about their son or daughter. Anticipate their response and respond with empathy, not condemnation. Parenting is difficult; the catechist's support and understanding is needed.

19. Ask for a catechist's aide. An aide can help with things like handing out supplies, giving quiet reminders to students about what they are to do, working with individual students or small groups or dealing with discipline problems independently as they come up. Sometimes parents can be enlisted for this task.

20. Unacceptable measures of discipline: administering corporal punishment; using religious exercises as punishment (praying a Rosary, copying from the Bible, etc.); sending a student home; use of sarcasm, ridicule, or public embarrassment.

21. Acceptable measures of discipline: personal conference with the student; conference with the parents; referral to the Pastor; loss of privileges.

Learning Styles

There are four basic modes of learning or learning styles.

1. *Auditory*: Some people learn primarily through what is heard or spoken. These students will retain what they hear read to them or through what is presented during lectures. They will benefit from the textbook being read aloud by a catechist or other students. Music and poetry are auditory.
2. *Visual*: Some people learn through what is seen. These students will remember, for example, what is written on the board, what they read in the book, and any visual information, such as artwork, flashcards, pictures, etc. Writing things down is helpful to visual learners. Paintings, sculptures, photographs and drawings are visual.
3. *Tactile*: Some people learn by means of “hands-on” activities. These students learn through writing out what they are to learn, tracing it with their fingers, by being able to touch the things that are associated with the lessons, anything that will be communicated through the sense of touch.
4. *Kinesthetic*: Some people learn through total bodily involvement. These students may need to physically move through the lesson by walking from one place to another in order to match questions with answers, pictures with concepts. Jumping onto the correct answer or throwing bean bags onto the right answer traced on the floor will reinforce this type of learning.

Most students will be able to assimilate information through more than one, or all, of these learning styles. Some students, however, will only be able to utilize one. It is unrealistic to expect a catechist to teach every lesson by incorporating all four learning styles, but a catechist can easily use more than one. It will benefit those students with special needs, while other students will enjoy the change of pace.

Catechesis for Those With Special Needs

“Children and young people who are physically or mentally handicapped...have a right, like others of their age, to know `the mystery of faith.’ The greater difficulties that they encounter give greater merit to their efforts and to those of their teachers.” (On Catechesis in Our Time, 41)

This section is a brief outline provided to alleviate some of the fear, discomfort or misinformation that a catechist with a disabled student in his or her classroom may experience.

Learning Disability:

The most common disability a catechist will face in the classroom is the learning disability. There are many different kinds of learning disabilities, some so severe as to prevent reading skills from developing. Some forms may not be obvious or even observable. They may be manifested by other symptoms, such as a short attention span, hyperactivity, inability to retain information, or emotional immaturity.

When a catechist knows that he/she has a student with a learning disability in the class, the catechist has the obligation to find out as much about the student as possible. Through discussion with parents and other catechists involved with the student, a catechist can gain an understanding of the severity of the disability.

If, on the other hand, a catechist has not been told that one of his or her students has a learning disability, suspects that is the case, the catechist should contact the parents to see if they are aware of the problem, and if any steps are being taken to diagnose and correct it. With sincere effort, he or she may be able to alleviate or compensate for the problem. If the problem is severe enough that he or she does not think he or she can do what is best for the student while still teaching the other students, then perhaps the catechist can receive help from volunteers, such as grandparents, who could work with the student on a one-to-one basis. Often the time spent in a one-on-one environment guarantees the greatest benefit for the student. It is important to stress that while the student has special learning needs, it does not necessarily mean that he or she lacks intelligence. The secret to special education in this area is to find the means to stimulate intellectual activity.

Occasionally a catechist might have a student in class who does not seem to be on the same track as other class members. There is no real evidence of a disability, and yet there appears to be some difficulty. It is possible that this student learns in a different mode from the one being used to teach. Each of us has a different sensory path through which we attain knowledge. Some students cannot adapt to a learning mode other than their own, and so a catechist may need to take the time to present material in a different mode. There are four basic modes of learning.

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1. *Auditory*: Some people learn primarily through what is heard or spoken. These students will retain what they hear read to them, or through what is presented during lectures. They will benefit from the textbook being read aloud by a catechist or other students.
2. *Visual*: Some people learn through what is seen. These students will remember, for example, what is written on the board, what they read in the book, and any visual information, such as artwork, flashcards, pictures, etc.
3. *Tactile*: Some people learn by means of “hands-on” activities. These students learn through writing out what they are to learn, tracing it with their fingers, by being able to touch the things that are associated with the lessons, anything that will be communicated through the sense of touch.
4. *Kinesthetic*: Some people learn through total bodily involvement. These students may need to physically move through the lesson by walking from one place to another in order to match questions with answers, pictures with concepts. Jumping onto the correct answer, or throwing bean bags onto the right answer traced on the floor will reinforce this type of learning.

Most students will be able to assimilate information through more than one, or all, of these learning styles. Some students, however, will only be able to utilize one. It is unrealistic to expect a catechist to teach every lesson by incorporating all four learning styles, but a catechist can easily use more than one. It will benefit those students with special needs, while other students will enjoy the change of pace.

A catechist may encounter other, more serious, physical or mental disabilities in the classroom. Students with these disabilities are educated through special education classes in the public school system. Therefore, they must depend on parish-based catechesis for their religious education. Their parents, pastor and catechetical faculty should meet to determine if the student’s special needs can be met by the parish program, and how they will be provided.

Some of these more serious disabilities are discussed below:

1. *Physical or Neurological Impairment*: Students with these kinds of disabilities normally do not have any special educational needs. Any special assistance that they require will come from making the learning area as accessible to them as possible, along with awareness that they may need special equipment or appliances in order to function in the classroom. Cooperation between the catechetical faculty and the parents is essential.

The emotional needs of these students should be taken into consideration when a catechist addresses their performance in the classroom. It is important to remember that some of the conditions present in these disabilities are progressive, and sometimes fatal, as in muscular dystrophy. Severe cerebral palsy may mask the student’s intelligence because of the inability to speak or control bodily movement. Address the student, not the disability.

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These disabilities are oftentimes the most obvious, and perhaps the most disturbing to the other students in the classroom because of their physical manifestations. By educating the class with a brief explanation of the disability, the catechist can help the students to see that we are all different. However, do not make the disabled student an object lesson by pointing out his or her patience, suffering, etc.

2. *Visual Impairment:* People are considered legally blind if they have 20/200 vision in their better eye with correction. This means that they can see at 20 feet what a person with perfect vision can see at two hundred feet, even if they are wearing glasses. Visual problems are not all the same, and a catechist should be aware of the nature of the specific problem in order to help the student. For example, moving the student closer to the blackboard may be of help to some, but a student with tunnel vision may have to be placed far away from the board in order to get the whole picture.

These kinds of adjustments make contact with the parents imperative, although the student can usually tell a catechist what makes him or her more comfortable.

Be aware that the student may depend on auditory cues to gain information about the environment, such as the size of the classroom and the arrangement of the furniture. Don't leave doors half open, or chairs sticking out in the aisle. Let the student know what is going on in the room, especially when other students react to some visible stimulus. Never grab the student to lead him or her to a seat; rather, lead. Have the other students introduce themselves so that they might be recognized by the sound of their voice. It isn't necessary to avoid the use of words like "see" or "look." They are a normal part of a blind persons' vocabulary.

Textbooks and other catechetical materials can be made available in Braille, large print, or cassette tape form. They can be obtained from: Xavier Society for the Blind, 154 E. 23rd Street, New York, NY 10010.

3. *Hearing Impairment:* This is perhaps the most difficult disability for catechists to deal with because it is a language and communication handicap, thus blocking the normal medium used for communication - spoken language. The student may depend on lip-reading for communication. Bear in mind that only one-fourth of what is spoken can be seen formed on the lips. Lip-reading is extremely difficult, even for an adult proficient in this skill. Your speech should be clear, but not overly exaggerated. Don't block the line of vision between the hearing impaired student and your face. The student needs to see your entire face with its expressions and lip movements in order to grasp the whole message. If any kind of group discussion is going on, the student will need to be able to look from face to face.

More than likely, the student who is deaf will be able to use sign language to communicate. In that case, the catechist should either be proficient in sign language, or request the services of a professional interpreter. Sign language is a true language, with its own grammar and syntax. It

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cannot be learned from a book, and it takes a considerable amount of time to master. Sign language cannot be mastered without intensive instruction, but it is worth it to be able to properly and clearly communicate the truths of the Faith to a hearing impaired student.

Never refer to a hearing impaired person as “deaf-and-dumb” or “deaf-mute.” The former connotes a lack of intelligence, the latter is not always true. Hearing impairment usually results in speech impairment. Person with moderate hearing loss will have some difficulty making sounds correctly when they do not hear the sounds correctly. Some people with a severe hearing loss may have no usable speech at all, or choose not to use their voices. However, most people who are deaf are not mute, but have the ability to make sounds, and use their speech to communicate.

The catechist must be aware that a student with a moderate to severe hearing loss usually suffers from a language deficiency. His or her deafness blocks the causal acquiring of language which most people take for granted. Hearing impaired students often learn new concepts and vocabulary through formal instruction, not by overhearing them as most others do. Therefore, a catechist needs to make a conscious effort to introduce, explain and clarify the ideas being presented. The ability to sign does make this task easier, but as students who are deaf may not know the signs for new vocabulary, or the frame of reference from which a catechist is speaking, a catechist can't always rely on sign language. The language deficiency of most congenitally deaf people applies to reading as well. The written word becomes as difficult as the spoken word. The average deaf person reads at a fourth to sixth grade level, while others may succeed at college level. With this in mind, a catechist may have to adapt a lesson to meet the needs of the student who is deaf.

In fairness to the catechist and the student, a catechist dealing with a student who is deaf should have expertise in either the education of the deaf or in sign language communication. More information concerning the catechesis of the deaf can be obtained from the Office for Evangelization and Catechesis, (701) 235-6429.

4. *Mental Retardation*: It is not likely that a catechist will encounter this disability in the classroom. The severity of the student's disability will be the determining factor as to whether or not the student is placed in a catechist's classroom. These students may receive the sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Eucharist if they are able to distinguish right from wrong, and if they know the difference between ordinary bread and the Eucharistic species.

Catechizing Children With Disabilities - Some Implications

This fact sheet is for:

- catechists whose pupils now include children with disabilities
- special education catechists who are experienced with one kind of disability but wish to know something about others
- administrators and supervisors who want to know more about directing the catechesis of all children, including children with disabilities

Dealing with a child who has disabilities is dealing first with a child. All children learn differently, and the catechist's challenge comes in recognizing and adjusting to the individual. Thus, the ideas that follow are simply suggestions, which catechists are to accept, reject or modify to match the needs and characteristics of individual children.

In general, when a student with a disability enters a regular class:

1. Obtain background information prior to the student's enrolling in your class, if possible. You will find pertinent information about teaching children with the same type of disability in journals, books, and magazines.
2. Elicit assistance from resource room catechists, therapists, and other professionals involved in the care of the child.
3. Ask the student and parents/guardians about adaptations that may help the student.
4. Encourage the student to be as independent as possible. It may require effort on your part to keep from helping the student with a difficult task. If it is within the student's ability, encourage but don't intrude.
5. Discuss the nature of the disability with other students when appropriate. Your attitude toward the student with a disability will largely determine how the class responds. Emphasize that all students are more alike than different.

When working with a student who has mild retardation:

1. Set realistic goals for the student, keeping environment and abilities in mind.
2. Carefully sequence learning activities, from easy ones to difficult ones.
3. Use concrete concepts and simple phrases in your explanations.
4. After a lesson, clarify any problems the student may have.

When working with a student who has a severe disability:

1. Work closely with parents to choose goals, teaching methods and evaluation strategies. Try to keep home and school programs consistent.
2. Use materials and methods that are chronologically, physically age-appropriate.
3. Emphasize repetition and provide opportunities for using the learned skill.
4. Promote skill generalization; teach the same skill in diverse settings.
5. Provide as many opportunities for interaction with typical peers as possible.
6. After a lesson, clarify any problems the student may have.

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When working with a student who has a learning disability:

1. Use highly structured methods. Tell the student exactly what is expected.
2. Understand that a learning disability may cause inconsistent performance.
3. If the child has a receptive language problem, use short sentences and simple vocabulary.
4. Allow students who have difficulty with written language to use tape recorders or the reproduced notes of fellow students.
5. Use self-correcting materials for immediate feedback without embarrassment.
6. Provide ample opportunities for drill and practice.
7. After a lesson, clarify any problems the student may have.

When working with a student who has emotional or clinical problems:

1. Provide adequate structure in the learning environment. Let the student know what is expected, but also indicate where there may be more flexibility.
2. Reinforce appropriate behavior; ignore inappropriate behavior. Model and explain what constitutes appropriate behavior.
3. Expect improvement on a long-term basis. Understand that small gains may take time to become permanent.
4. Be sensitive to individual differences. Try to create an atmosphere in which students are respected and learn to respect others.
5. After a lesson, clarify any problems that students may have.

When working with a student with a visual problem.

1. Before the school year begins, acquaint the student with the classroom and the building.
2. Teach other students the sighted guide technique or other ways to help without sacrificing the student's independence.
3. Keep background noise to a minimum.
4. Speak in a normal tone of voice.
5. Encourage the student to use a tape recorder or other special equipment in class.
6. Note that most catechetical materials can be adapted to Braille if this is what the student uses.
7. Set an example for the other students in the class by describing the things you see and relating them to their sounds.
8. Give the student ample opportunity and assistance to structure personal space.
9. Find out how much residual vision the student has. Ensure that lighting is appropriate.
10. After a lesson, clarify any problems the student may have.

When working with a student who has a physical disability or other health impairment:

1. Ask the student about aids and adaptations he or she may use.
2. Find out from parents or therapists what limitations the child has, if any.

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3. Don't do unnecessary things for the student. If he or she appears to want help, ask first.
4. Encourage the student to participate as much as possible in the regular class routine.
5. After a lesson, clarify any problems the student may have.

When working with a student who is deaf or has hearing impairments:

1. Before the year begins, acquaint the student with the classroom and the building.
2. Seat the student where he or she can see your lips clearly.
3. Don't speak with your back to the class or with a bright light behind you. Don't inadvertently cover your mouth when you speak. Try not to pace or walk around as you speak to the class.
4. Body language and gestures help students with hearing impairments understand the message.
5. Speak in a normal tone of voice.
6. Become familiar with hearing aids or any other special equipment the student may use.
7. Write assignments and directions on the board or on handouts. Have a hearing student take notes for a student with hearing impairments.
8. If the student uses the services of an interpreter, do not talk to the interpreter. Rather, talk directly to the student. The interpreter will translate what you say; there is no need to funnel requests or questions through the interpreter.
9. After a lesson, clarify any problems the student may have.

For more specific information, please contact the Office for Evangelization and Catechesis, (701) 235-6429.

Attitudes - Catechist Attitudes and Exceptions

Your attitude towards students with disabilities will set the tone of the classroom and shape the interactions among students. One important aspect of attitude is expectation. Research findings have repeatedly emphasized the influence of catechist expectation on student performance. If catechists expect students to have behavior problems, students may very well fulfill this expectation.

Labels may affect expectations. Frequently, labels introduce a set of preconceived characteristics (stereotypes), causing a catechist who is assigned a class including a student with disability to envision a specific behavior pattern before even meeting the student. You should be aware of your own attitudes and expectations and should ascribe to labels no greater import than the information they provide about how the student learns and what the student needs.

Student Attitudes

Placing students with disabilities into the "mainstream," or regular classes, does not guarantee that they will be liked, accepted, or chosen as friends by their peers. Without careful attention by sensitive catechists, such a placement could even be a harmful experience.

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You will find that working closely in advance with the parents, the student, and the resource or special class catechist, may be instrumental in preparing the student with disabilities for regular classroom experiences.

To prepare the class for the entry of a student with disabilities, focus on student similarities rather than differences. Deal forthrightly and comfortably with students' questions, letting them know it is all right to discuss disabilities. Two other approaches can promote positive relationships among students: encourage cooperative learning tasks and establish ways for students to help each other.

Cooperative Learning

In small groups, students work together on tasks that encompass all the other students' abilities. Cooperative learning is the opposite of competition, which may not be fair to all students with disabilities. To teach cooperation, the catechist must be ready to help by:

1. Giving the student with the disability a structured role in the group.
2. Showing that each member of the group has different skills.
3. Emphasizing that the best work will need everyone's contribution.
4. Teaching typical students and students with disabilities how to cooperate.
5. Adapting tasks so that the student with a disability can succeed. This may mean giving group members different tasks, and varying the amount of work each member receives, or using improvement rather than performance as a measure of success.

Peer Tutoring

Another way to promote acceptance among students is to encourage them to help each other. They do it all the time, informally. Given a little training, students can learn how to teach and encourage their peers, and in the process they can improve their understanding of the subject and of themselves.

Students with disabilities do not always need to be on the receiving end. Their strengths can be used to help their classmates, and they can develop confidence in doing so. Students have great gifts of faith to share with their classmates.

Peer teaching will not work without some guidance from catechists. In regular sessions with the tutors, catechists can demonstrate methods of instruction and answer specific questions, especially about the tutor's feelings.

One unexpected benefit of the peer teaching approach is the effect it may have on the rest of the students. Students may begin to look out for their new friend in other situations outside the

classroom. As students see their classmates assuming the tutor role, they may become interested as well, and associating with students who have disabilities may take on greater status. Above all, some real contact is being made between students who might otherwise never have gotten to know each other.

Organizing the Environment - The Physical Structure

Catechists organize the learning environment all the time, consciously or unconsciously. There are some very simple steps a catechist can take to maintain order. For example, desks can be grouped in ways that encourage or discourage interaction among students, and learning centers can be set up to structure independent work or provide for small group instruction. Areas of rewards and punishment (time-out space) can also be designated.

Students with special needs may need special equipment. For example, young children with physical problems may need to use a prone board while doing fine motor tasks, because positioning in a certain way gives them the greatest control over their movements. Therapists will advise you about these kinds of special needs, by suggesting how to incorporate the special equipment into other classroom routines.

Seating considerations are another important aspect of physically structuring the class. Children with hearing impairments who rely on lip-reading skills will naturally need seating that gives them clear view of the catechist or other speakers with adequate lighting on the speaker's face. Children who are easily distracted may be best placed near quiet, self-directed classmates, rather than beside other children who are easily distracted. Students with visual impairments should be situated so that it is easy for them to find their seats and equipment (Braille writers, low vision aids, or other aids).

Summary

Adequate support, the catechist's own attitudes, and a willingness to learn about specific disabilities are all facets of successful inclusion. In addition to structuring the physical environment, success will also be fostered by a well defined classroom management plan. Such a plan should include carefully reasoned steps and consequences for discipline, reinforcement for positive behavior, and strategies for helping a student cope with failures. Verbalizing the mental process while using specific skills and strategies and helping students to develop learning strategies that include self-encouragement and self-monitoring can also assist students with special needs in the learning process. Being attentive to the needs of individual students does require extra planning, patience, and great energy. As a catechist comes to better know the needs of each student, he or she will become not only a better catechist of students with disabilities, but a better catechist for all students.

Questions concerning the catechesis of those who are mentally handicapped can be addressed to: Office for Evangelization and Catechesis, (701) 235-6429. To obtain more information concerning the catechesis of people with disabilities write: National Catholic Office for Persons with Disabilities, P.O. Box 29113, Washington, D.C. 20017, (202) 529-2933.

Teaching Prayer and Prayers

Prayer is understood as the lifting up of the mind and heart to God in adoration, contrition, thanksgiving, and supplication. Prayer is when we consecrate all our time and attention to God alone. Just as communication is essential to any relationship, so conversation with God is essential to a relationship with God. All must make time for prayer. We pray because Jesus prayed, for the reasons He prayed, and the way He taught us to pray. We teach prayer to others because Jesus taught His disciples to pray.

Generally speaking, parents are the ones who are responsible for teaching children to pray and to memorize prayers. Catechetical sessions, especially when only meeting once a week, are for review what the parents have taught. Here are some general principles to bear in mind when teaching prayer:

- A. Prayer is learned by praying. It is important to take time for prayer when you meet for catechesis. It is important to teach students to pray at home, alone and with their families.
- B. Explain the proper motivation for prayer: because God loves us, because we love God. God starts the conversation and waits for your response.
- C. Provide the proper atmosphere for prayer: silence, stillness, proper posture, and certain places and times of the day that are best for prayers.
- D. Encourage students to pray about what is important to them.
- E. Make religion function throughout the day by means of prayer: an offering of the whole day in the morning, short phrases that can be memorized and prayed during the day, blessings at meals, an act of thanksgiving and contrition in the evening.

Here are some suggestions on how to teach prayer:

- A. Introduce the prayer in a way that arouses interest, then explain the occasion of context of the prayer.
- B. Teach the meaning of the prayer, of individual words and phrases, by using synonyms and paraphrasing.
- C. Teach an appreciation for the prayer by the richness of its content, or by using stories, pictures or dramatization.
- D. Teach the prayer “word perfect,” that is, pronounce the words slowly and distinctly. Make sure the meaning is understood before you work on memorization. Use flashcards for memorization drills at home. Review the prayers in catechetical sessions.

What Do I Do Now? Improving the Classroom Model

After the Sign of the Cross and a short opening prayer, the catechist instructed, “Okay, everyone, take your seats and open your books to page thirty-four. We will take turns reading, one paragraph at a time. John, we will start with you and then go around the room.” An hour later, the catechist said, “Thank you everyone, see you next week.” The catechist was very proud because they had done four chapters, one more than last week. “What will I do the last few months of class?” the catechist mused.

Today’s catechetical sessions require a lot more than reading out loud in class. Without forgetting that the single most effective “method” in a classroom is a catechist who loves Jesus Christ and His Family the Church, from the oldest adults to the youngest children, including junior high students, there are so many methods or tricks available to us as catechists. I have listed several ideas below. Each can be used in various settings and with all age groups to bring about true conversion.

Devotions

Regrettably, many of the devotions that our parents and grandparents grew up with have nearly been forgotten. Yet, these may be quite profitable for learning the Faith. The Rosary and its meditation on the mysteries is timeless. Others would include: Divine Mercy Chaplet, First Fridays and First Saturday Devotions, Praying for the Poor Souls, Weaving Palms, Advent Wreath, St. Nicholas Day, Cristo Rey Parade, Corpus Christi Procession, Jessie Tree, Decorating Easter Eggs, May Crowning, Hot Cross Buns, St. Joseph’s Day Altar, St. Martin’s Lamp, Mary’s Garden, Angelus, Going on a Pilgrimage, Namesdays, St. Francis Blessing of Animals, etc.

Writing Ads and Making Posters

Future artists – and even those not so artistic – can be encouraged to design ads about Jesus, Mary, the saints, Scripture, sacraments, Catholic living, and the like for a group magazine or billboard. Younger students could make posters to be put in the back of the church, the parish hall, or even ask local businesses to display them.

Brainstorming

This is a way of getting people to participate in sharing ideas and coming up with good solutions. For example, a moral problem could be presented and participants may suggest their ideas. All the ideas are listed and followed by a discussion of which ideas fit in with the Gospel teaching. Younger people could be put in pairs or small groups. Give them a designated time to jot down ideas, and then have each pair or small group share. A small setting rather than a large group helps more reserved people voice their ideas.

Case Studies

This approach helps youngsters apply the content of the lesson to their own lives. You can make up case studies or find actual cases in newspapers or books. The technique involves solving problems of real or fictitious people. By applying the principles found in their lessons to other people, the children can begin to see how the lesson applies to their own lives.

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Newspapers and Magazines

News articles are good discussion starters, especially if they present a problem, conflict, or situation involving Christian (or lack of) values. Young people can be encouraged to bring in as many articles as they can find in relation to a topic under study. How does the secular press report a current religious event? How would the children add to or change the report?

Drama

Numerous types of drama are available. Drama books with pre-written scripts could be used. Students could read a Scripture passage or saint's life and then make up and perform a skit for others. A narrator could direct an enactment of a story with volunteers.

Pantomime and Charades

Children can silently act out a Bible story or modern day situation that calls for a Christian response. One child (or small group) might be asked a week ahead of time to act out the following week's Scripture story and have the other guess what it is.

Role-playing

Role-playing is one extremely effective approach. There is no written script in role-playing. Action and plot develop as actors react to one another in a given situation. Role-playing is a device for examining different options – one of the ways to help children form their conscience.

Exhibits

Hearing about something is one thing and looking at a picture is another. But actually seeing an object or an event for oneself is much better. For example, when studying the sacraments, let youngsters see and touch all the tangible signs of the sacrament: water, oil, bread, and the like. Encourage them to design exhibits that can be shared with the parish or community at large, as is done at a science fair.

Visits and Service Projects

Go where people are, where events are actually happening, rather than just reading about them. Visit senior housing, soup kitchens, hospitals, and a home for those with disabilities, shelters for the homeless, and the like. Do service projects.

Scripture Meditation (Story-Style and Lectio Divina)

This form of Scripture-based prayer is one that young people usually find very appealing and helpful. The prayer leader helps young people to enter the Scripture story and become one of the characters. Older students might also appreciate this method or the catechist could lead reflection on Scripture through Lectio Divina.

Interviews and Hosting A Talk Show

Interviewing can take many forms. Real interviews might involve youngsters interviewing their parents, people in the community, and other parishioners about a teaching or practice of the Faith. Students could also put on a talk-show pretending to be various characters from the Scriptures while one of the other students acting as a reporter interviews them.

Holiday Calendar

Have children research the holy days, feast days, and other important events of our Catholic calendar. Create calendars that list a good activity to do each day.

Literature

Children's literature is an ideal way to introduce a topic or to make real- in today's language and events – a lasting truth or value you are exploring. Visit the library often. Purchase and use frequently our many children's classics.

Music

Music builds community; it touches the affective aspects of our faith, not just the cognitive; our liturgical music reiterates the Scripture message, often helping it to take root within us more deeply. Use music to reinforce a lesson, to set a mood, to gather or dismiss the children, to move from one activity to another, to have fun.

Open-ended Questions and I Wonder Questions

Too often our questions may call for pat answers or simple recall. Such questions have a place, but our quest is to help children/youth internalize the Gospel message for their own lives. The questions we pose (as well as the questions we encourage them to ask) need to allow room for reflection and for personalization.

Examples: If Jesus had three wishes for the world, I think they would be...I wonder what Jesus and Zacchaeus said as they walked together...I wonder what it would be like if there was no Holy Spirit.....

Quizzes and Creativity

Quizzes are a good way to open a session and review the previous week's theme, but they don't need to be upsetting for students. Make the quiz fair. You might also review through a spelling-down format – everyone stands and when they get a question correct they sit down. Another idea would be to have the students divide into teams, write questions about the previous week and try to stump the other teams.

Rewrite

Rewrite Jesus' parables as Jesus might tell them today. Rewrite a current events story as if Catholic teaching had been in the minds of all the participants.

Storytelling

Watch for inspirational stories in the news and on TV. Tell a Bible story as if you are there and actively participating in the action.

These are just a few ideas. Many, many more ideas could be suggested. Idea books are abundant. Use whatever method or means or tool assists you as a catechist to teach the Gospel and help others to know, love and serve God.

SOURCES: article entitled, Hat Full of Tricks, by Janet Schaeffler, OP; material from, Big Ideas for Catechesis, by Beth Branigan McNamera; and A Continual Feast Cookbook by Evelyn Birge Vitz

SACRAMENTS (efficacious signs instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church in order to dispense grace)

Sacrament	Scripture	Matter	Form	Minister	Recipient	Effects
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Sacraments of Initiation

Baptism	Mt 28:19-20 Acts 16:30-34	Water	Pouring of or immersion into water while saying the Sign of the Cross	Priest/deacon (in emergency any person)	Anyone not yet baptized	Indelible Spiritual Mark Forgiveness of original sin & all sin & punishment Rebirth as child of God Theological virtues infused Gifts of the Holy Spirit Member of the Church
Confirmation	Acts 2; 8:14-17	Chrism	Anointing on forehead with the words, "Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit."	Bishop (in necessity priest may also)	Any baptized person	Indelible Spiritual Mark Perfects baptismal grace Become witness of Christ
Holy Eucharist	Jn 6:53-56 1 Cor 11:24-26 Lk 22:19-20	Wheat Bread Grape Wine	By invocation of Holy Spirit and consecration prayer imitating Jesus= words from the Last Supper	Priest	Any baptized Catholic free from serious sin	Presence of Jesus in Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity Union with Christ and Church Forgiveness of lesser sins Spiritual strength

Sacraments of Healing

Reconciliation	Jn 20:19-23 Mt 16:19; 18:18 James 5:16 1 Jn 1:9; Sir 4:26	Personal Sins	Prayer of absolution and penitent's repentance, confession to priest, and doing their penance	Priest	Necessary for any baptized Catholic who has committed serious sin/strongly recommended for all sins (CCC 1458)	Forgiveness of all sin and some due punishment Reconciliation with God and the entire Church Peace of conscience Spiritual strength
Anointing of the Sick <small>*(cf. note bottom page on Viaticum)</small>	James 5:14-15	Oil of Sick	Anointing of the forehead and hands with prayer of anointing	Priest	For those weak with old age, seriously ill, or near death	Union w/Passion of Jesus (cf. Col 1:24) Endurance for illness Forgiveness of sins Spiritual and sometimes physical healing Preparation for death

Sacraments of Service

Matrimony	Gn 1:27-28; 2:24 Jn 2:1-11; Mt 19:6 Eph 5:21-6:4	Consent	Marriage vows	Spouses witnessed by priest, deacon, or bishop	Baptized/confirmed man and woman	Indissoluble bond Perfection of human love Strength for daily living
Holy Orders	Mt 16:19; 28:28-20 Lk 22:19; Jn 20:21 Acts 1:20-26; 6:1-7	Laying on of hands	Laying on of hands with the prayer of consecration	Bishop (Pope approves ordinations of all bishops)	Baptized/confirmed man called by God	Indelible Spiritual Mark Acts "in persona Christi" Office of sanctifying, teaching, and ruling. Strength for daily living

Three Degrees of Holy Orders

BISHOP (episcopate) - fullness of Holy Orders, ordained to the ministerial priesthood, direct successors of the Twelve Apostles

PRIEST (presbyterate) - co-workers of the bishop, ordained to the ministerial priesthood

DEACON (diaconate) - ordained to the ministry NOT priesthood

*The Rite of Viaticum given to those who are close to death brings together the sacraments of Holy Eucharist and Reconciliation so that Jesus may be with them on the way to their heavenly home. In this rite, a priest may even give the dying person an apostolic pardon of all sins and punishment due to sin.