

## **THE SIX TASKS OF CATECHESIS (SIX KEY ELEMENTS OF CATHOLIC LIFE)**

To be an effective instructor in parish or school catechetical programs, the following six tasks of catechesis are essential catechetical instruction:

- **Knowledge of Faith** – *What We Believe*
- **Liturgy and Sacraments** - *How We Celebrate*
- **Morality** - *How We Live*
- **Prayer** - *How We Pray*
- **Education for Living in the Christian Community** - *How We Live in the Community the Church*
- **Evangelization and Apostolic Life** - *How We, as Individuals and Community Live in Service to the World*

These six key elements of Catholic life “constitute a unified whole by which catechesis seeks to achieve its objective: the formation of disciples of Jesus Christ.” (GDC, nos 85-86; NDC, pp. 61-63)

As Pope John Paul II stated:

...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 ... endeavors to know better this Jesus to whom he has entrusted himself: to know this “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.  
(CT # 20)

Thus the components of a holistic systematic approach to catechesis create a full plan for teaching the mysteries of the faith.. All of these elements are necessary. As the vitality of the human body depends on the proper function of all of its organs, so also the maturation of the Christian life requires that it be cultivated in all its dimensions: knowledge of the faith, liturgical life, moral formation, prayer, belonging to community, evangelization and apostolic life (missionary spirit). When catechesis omits one of these elements, the Christian faith does not attain full development. On this point it is opportune to make some observations.

Each element of Catholic Life realizes, in its own way, the object of catechesis. Morality – how we live, for example, is essentially Christological and Trinitarian. It is deeply ecclesial, while also open to social concerns. The same is true of liturgical formation. While essentially religious and ecclesial, it also strongly demands commitment to the evangelization of the world. These elements of a Catholic Life are interdependent and develop together. Each great catechetical theme—catechesis of God the Father, for example—has a cognitive dimension as well as moral implications. It is interiorized in prayer and appropriated in witness. One element echoes the other: knowledge of the faith prepares for mission; the sacramental life gives strength for moral transformation.

To fulfill its tasks of preparing disciples to live the Catholic Faith, catechesis avails of two principal means: transmission of the Gospel message and experience of the Christian life. Liturgical formation, for example, must explain what the Christian liturgy is, and what the sacraments are. It must also however, offer an experience of the different kinds of celebration and it must make symbols, gestures, etc. known and loved. Moral formation not only transmits the content of Christian morality, but also cultivates active evangelical attitudes and Christian values.

The different dimensions of faith are objects of formation, as much of being given as received. Knowledge of the faith, liturgical life, the following of Christ are each gifts of the Spirit which are received in prayer, and similarly a duty of spiritual and moral study and witness. Neither aspect may be neglected.

Every dimension of the faith, like the faith itself as a whole, must be rooted in human experience and not remain a mere adjunct to the human person. Knowledge of the faith is significant. It gives light to the whole of existence and dialogues with culture. In the liturgy, all personal life becomes a spiritual oblation. The morality of the Gospel assumes and elevates human values. Prayer is open to all personal and social problems.

As the 1971 Directory indicates, "It is very important that catechesis retain the richness of these various aspects in such a way that one aspect is not separated from the rest to the detriment of the others".

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## VOCATION OF THE CATECHIST CALLED BY CHRIST TO SERVE

“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations,  
baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.  
Teach them to carry out everything I have commanded you.  
And know that I am with you always, until the end of the world!”

The catechist helps fulfill this mandate given by Christ to his followers.

As a Catechist in the Diocese of Corpus Christi, you are one of approximately 1,500 adults who give their time and energy to bringing others into deeper understanding and love for Christ.

The catechist shares in the mission of the Bishop, who is the chief catechist of the Diocese. You are called to collaborate with priests, deacons, and parents in transmitting the one faith of the Church. Indeed, catechesis is the task not of one particular group, but is the duty of the whole Church.

For the catechist to be effective, he or she must be a living, active sign of Christ’s presence in the world. The mission of the catechist is to be the Lord's hands, heart and voice in the teaching of his truths.

Like the sower that scatters the seed , catechists plant the kernel of the Good News in the minds and hearts of their students, while it is God who gives the yield in due time. This vital work for the sake of the Kingdom of God does not go unnoticed. Jesus reminds us, in his discourse to the disciples after the Sermon on the Mount, that “Whoever fulfills and teaches these commands shall be great in the Kingdom of God” (Mt. 5:19)

The goal of the catechetical effort of the Church is to enable the learner to develop a personal relationship with Jesus Christ within the community of the Church based on the constant teaching of the Catholic Church. It is in developing an intimate communion with the person of Christ that we share in the life of the Trinity and realize the eternal joy of heaven—the destiny for which we were created.

The role you will play in teaching the Faith is vital.

Thank you for responding to the call of the Lord to be a catechist.

*“May the world of our time, which is searching, sometimes with anguish, sometimes with hope, be enabled to receive the Good News not from evangelizers who are dejected, discouraged, impatient, or anxious, but from ministers of the Gospel whose lives glow with fervor, who have first received the joy of Christ, and are willing to risk their lives so that the kingdom may be proclaimed and the Church established in the midst of the world.” From: Pope Paul VI, *Evangelization in the Modern World*, 80*

## QUALIFICATIONS OF A CATECHIST

A catechist is more than a volunteer and the task is more than “helping Father.” A volunteer and a helper can quit. But if ministry flows out of one’s baptism, it has to be discerned and then embraced with enthusiasm and commitment. Not everyone is called to be a church minister. Most laypersons are called to the mission to the world. But if you have determined that God has called you to work in, with and for the parish, consider the following qualifications for Christian ministry. The basic qualifications of a catechist are those of a disciple of Jesus:

1. **Person of Faith:** No amount of training can make up for a lack of living faith in a catechist. A belief that one is created by and for God and that one is only returning the love of God who first loved us in and through Christ. A trust that no matter what happens, that it will ultimately be for one’s good and the good of others.
2. **Person of Prayer:** This includes both a praying spirit that erupts spontaneously during the day in gratitude, adoration, love, repentance and petition. It also includes a set time to pray, read Scripture, meditate and above all, participate in the Sunday Eucharistic liturgy which is the source and summit of our Christian life. If one has a prayer life then one will be **Open to the Spirit**, which is another qualification, but does not usually exist apart from a spirit of prayer.
3. **Servant of the Community:** A catechist is a lay minister. The word “minister” comes from the Latin *minor* which means “less.” Originally it meant servant and “ministry” was the service given by the servant. Therefore, first of all, a lay minister must have the willingness to serve. To be a servant is to model Jesus, who washed the feet of his disciples and said: “As I have done for you.”
4. **Witness of the Gospel:** A person who seeks to teach “in the name of Christ” has to seek to live his or her life according to the gospel. “Seek” is the operative word here, because he or she is always a work in progress. However, if one’s sins and faults are so prominent that they would give scandal to the community, he or she may have to work on those sins and faults before stepping forward to speak for Christ and his community.
5. **Witness of the Church:** A person who seeks to teach “in the name of Christ” has to be faithful to the Church, has to support the Church and can’t go around tearing down the Church, its leaders and its members in the universal Church as well as the local parish. That doesn’t mean that a catechist cannot ask questions and work to renew the Church, but a catechist has to be wise, kind and use common sense to do so.
6. **Builder of the Christian Community:** The Holy Spirit gives scriptural *charisms* and practical gifts not for the aggrandizement of individuals, but for the building up of the Body of Christ, whether universal or local. We must allow the Holy Spirit to use us well by working cooperatively and even collaboratively with the leadership and the members of the local parish.

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## **JESUS THE TEACHER**

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus is given the title of Teacher. Some sample Scripture passages:

Mt. 5: 1-2; Mt 8: 18-19; Mt. 11:1; Mt 13: 53-54

Mk. 1: 21-22; Mk 4: 38-41; Mk 9: 38-39

Lk 5:3; 17;

Jn 7: 14-18; Jn 8:2; Jn 11: 28-29; Jn 18: 19-21

## **LESSON PLANNING TIPS**

***“If any of you lacks wisdom pray to God who will give it to you.” James 1:5***

Learning how to plan a lesson is one of the basic catechetical keys to effective catechesis. Planning a lesson gives the catechist a chance to reflect on the content of the lesson as well as the learners’ levels of development. Good lesson planning fosters in the catechist a sense of being well prepared and of being confident in the task of educating children in the faith. Here are some basic tips which can be used and adapted to the teaching styles of individual catechists, the diversity of catechetical settings and your catechist’s manual:

1. Lesson planning should begin in prayer and openness to the Holy Spirit, the Teacher within.
2. Given the topic/aim of your lesson, determine the goals of your lesson.
3. Outline the specific learning objective(s) or outcome(s) for the lesson. What particular point(s) or theme(s) do you want to communicate to this particular groups of learners? What do you want the learner to know, do, or believe as a result of this lesson?
4. Familiarize yourself with the lesson content by reading and reflecting on the relevant Scripture passage and teachings of the Church.
5. List creative ways in which you can accomplish your learning objectives.
6. In the classroom, begin with an appropriate opening prayer. Then introduce the theme/topic with a relevant story, such as the story of saint, a personal story, a look at current events, or audio-visual materials. Ensure that you clearly communicate and reinforce the lesson themes and objectives to the learner.
7. Present the content of the Christian message boldly. Provide opportunities for reflection and person assimilation.
8. Keep in mind the vital connection which exists between the Gospel message and our personal lives. What challenges do your students face in living out their faith on daily basis?
9. Conclude by summarizing the lesson. Close in prayer.

## **LEARNING STYLES**

As you plan your lessons, you will want to incorporate varied activities that speak to the different learning styles of your students. Please keep these multiple intelligences of your students in mind as you design your activities.

### **Auditory Learner**

- The auditory learner talks about what to do, about the pros and cons of a situation.
- Those with an auditory preference express their feelings by shouting for joy and indicating emotion through the tone, pitch, and volume of their voices.
- They enjoy listening but cannot wait to get a chance to talk.
- They tend toward long and repetitive descriptions.
- They like hearing themselves and others talk.
- Auditory learners benefit from oral instruction.
- They prefer to hear and recite the information and benefit from auditory repetition.
- They think in sounds.

*Students with an auditory preference respond well to lecture and discussion, as well as to tapes, records, or the radio. They benefit from museum field trips in which a lecturer describes the art, for they enjoying hearing and talking about the art pieces more than seeing them. Auditory learners also enjoy musical concerts.*

### **Visual Learner**

- The visual student is the one who looks around and examines the situation.
- Less exuberant than the tactile/kinesthetic learner, the visual learner may stare when angry, beam when happy.
- Facial expression is a good index of emotion in the visual learner.
- Visual learners think in pictures and detail.
- They have vivid imaginations.
- Visual students learn by seeing.
- They have greater immediate recall of words that are presented visually.
- Relatively unaware of sounds, the visual student can be distracted by visual disorder or movement.

*Visual learners enjoy learning from books, pictures, reading from and writing on the board or paper, viewing filmstrips, slide shows, or movies - anything they can see. They prefer the visual arts and benefit from field trips to art museums and galleries. They may not express their appreciation vocally, but they are deeply affected by visual displays.*

## **Kinesthetic Learner**

- The kinesthetic student is the one who tries things out, touches, feels, manipulates.
- Kinesthetic learners express their feelings physically - they jump for joy, push, tug, stomp, pound.
- Body tension is a good index of the kinesthetic student's emotion.
- The kinesthetic student gestures when speaking and quickly loses interest in a long verbal discourse.
- These students learn best by doing, not by what they have seen or talked about.
- They need direct involvement in what they are learning.
- They attack problems physically.

*Teaching strategies that appeal to kinesthetic learners include writing on paper and at the board, drawing, hands-on activities with real objects that can be touched, raising hands to volunteer information, using hand signals, small group discussion, activities that involve emotions and feelings or enable the students to move. They respond to music by physical movement and prefer sculpture, which is tactile, to paintings.*

## **Examples of how Jesus taught to different learning styles:**

### **Auditory Learners: Learning by Listening**

- a. Luke 4:21-Grace accompanies proclamation of Scripture
- b. Luke 15:11 ff: Parables, for ex. The Prodigal Son
- c. Matthew 5-7: The Sermon on the Mount
- d. Luke 24: 15, 27, 32: “Did not our hearts burn within us when He spoke to us?”

### **Visual Learners: Learning by Seeing**

- a. John 8: 3-11: Woman caught in adultery
- b. Matthew 14: 15-16: “You feed them”
- c. Matthew 21:13: Driving out the money changers
- d. Luke 24: 30-31: Their eyes were opened at the breaking of the bread

### **Kinesthetic Learners: Learning by Doing**

- a. Luke 10:1- Sends out the twelve “two by two”
- b. Matthew 14:25 ff. Peter walks on water
- c. John 9: 6-11 Healing of the man born blind by washing his own eyes at Jesus’ command
- d. Luke 24: 17-26: Jesus questions disciples to have them explain what they know

## **MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCE THEORY AND PRAYER**

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Howard Gardner, a Harvard psychologist, first introduced the subject of individual learning styles or “multiple intelligences” (MI) in his book, *Frames of Mind*. Later, scholars applied the theory to various aspects of learning.

We apply it here to teaching others to pray. The list below is meant to help you think creatively and remind you that people *do not all learn (or pray) in the same way*.

### **Verbal/linguistic**

- Lector at Mass.
- Lead a prayer service.
- Retell a bible story and then share your reactions.
- Write a prayer and read it to the class.

### **Logical/Mathematical**

- Outline the life of Jesus; create a prayer response for each decade of Jesus’ life.
- Collect facts about the size of the universe (or the sun); make a prayerful response to God as Creator .
- Take part in an “if...then” discussion using excerpts from the Gospels. For example: If Jesus cursed the fig tree, then what might he do today? Respond with intercessory prayer.

### **Visual/spatial**

- Paint or draw your impression of the reaction of Jesus to a current event.
- Listen to a guided imagery meditation.
- Set up the prayer space in the classroom or meeting room.

### **Bodily/kinesthetic**

- Carry the cross in procession.
- Bless others with oil.
- Participate in the Living Stations of the Cross.
- Honor the Gospel book with incense.

### **Musical/rhythmic**

- Play an instrument during a class prayer service.
- Sign the Sunday Readings.
- Do interpretive dance to a hymn.
- Create a melody and sing a psalm.

### **Interpersonal**

- Organize a “Living Rosary”.
- Plan a Liturgy and carry it out.
- Participate in a prayer group.

### **Intrapersonal**

- Learn to do *lectio divina* based on the Sunday readings.
- Write the reflection questions for a Bible Study group.
- Keep a journal of object mediations.
- Write your reflections or expanded understanding of a traditional prayer.

### **Naturalistic**

- Take photos of your favorite places in nature and share a prayer response for each.
- Bring a “piece of nature” to the prayer corner. Share your thoughts about how this reminded you of God. Turn this into a prayer of gratitude, petition, contrition or praise.



## **BLOOM'S TAXONOMY: AN OVERVIEW**

Asking students to think at higher levels, beyond simple recall, is an excellent way to stimulate students' thought processes. Different types of questions require us to use different kinds or levels of thinking. See a list of verbs for use in lesson plans that correlates to Bloom's levels of thinking. According to Bloom's Taxonomy, human thinking skills can be broken down into the following six categories.

1. **Knowledge:** remembering or recalling appropriate, previously learned information to draw out factual (usually right or wrong) answers. Use words and phrases such as: how many, when, where, list, define, tell, describe, identify, etc., to draw out factual answers, testing students' recall and recognition.
2. **Comprehension:** grasping or understanding the meaning of informational materials. Use words such as: describe, explain, estimate, predict, identify, differentiate, etc., to encourage students to translate, interpret, and extrapolate.
3. **Application:** applying previously learned information (or knowledge) to new and unfamiliar situations. Use words such as: demonstrate, apply, illustrate, show, solve, examine, classify, experiment, etc., to encourage students to apply knowledge to situations that are new and unfamiliar.
4. **Analysis:** breaking down information into parts, or examining (and trying to understand the organizational structure of) information. Use words and phrases such as: what are the differences, analyze, explain, compare, separate, classify, arrange, etc., to encourage students to break information down into parts.
5. **Synthesis:** applying prior knowledge and skills to combine elements into a pattern not clearly there before. Use words and phrases such as: combine, rearrange, substitute, create, design, invent, what if, etc., to encourage students to combine elements into a pattern that's new.
6. **Evaluation:** judging or deciding according to some set of criteria, without real right or wrong answers. Use words such as: assess, decide, measure, select, explain, conclude, compare, summarize, etc., to encourage students to make judgements according to a set of criteria.

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**Bloom's Taxonomy Verbs**

Use verbs aligned to Bloom's Taxonomy to create discussion questions and lesson plans that ensure your students' thinking progresses to higher levels.

<b>Knowledge</b>		<b>Comprehend</b>	
Count	Read	Classify	Interpret
Define	Recall	Cite	Locate
Describe	Recite	Conclude	Make sense of
Draw	Record	Convert	Paraphrase
Enumerate	Reproduce	Describe	Predict
Find	Select	Discuss	Report
Identify	Sequence	Estimate	Restate
Label	State	Explain	Review
List	Tell	Generalize	Summarize
Match	View	Give examples	Trace
Name	Write	Illustrate	Understand
Quote			
<b>Apply</b>		<b>Analyze</b>	
Act	Imitate	Break down	Focus
Administer	Implement	Characterize	Illustrate
Articulate	Interview	Classify	Infer
Assess	Include	Compare	Limit
Change	Inform	Contrast	Outline
Chart	Instruct	Correlate	Point out
Choose	Paint	Debate	Prioritize
Collect	Participate	Deduce	Recognize
Compute	Predict	Diagram	Research
Construct	Prepare	Differentiate	Relate
Contribute	Produce	Discriminate	Separate
Control	Provide	Distinguish	Subdivide
Demonstrate	Relate	Examine	
Determine	Report		
Develop	Select		
Discover	Show		
Dramatize	Solve		
Draw	Transfer		
Establish	Use		
Extend	Utilize		

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Synthesize		Evaluate	
Adapt	Intervene	Appraise	Interpret
Anticipate	Invent	Argue	Judge
Categorize	Make up	Assess	Justify
Collaborate	Model	Choose	Predict
Combine	Modify	Compare & Contrast	Prioritize
Communicate	Negotiate	Conclude	Prove
Compare	Organize	Criticize	Rank
Compile	Perform	Critique	Rate
Compose	Plan	Decide	Reframe
Construct	Pretend	Defend	Select
Contrast	Produce	Evaluate	Support
Create	Progress		
Design	Propose		
Develop	Rearrange		
Devise	Reconstruct		
Express	Reinforce		
Facilitate	Reorganize		
Formulate	Revise		
Generate	Rewrite		
Incorporate	Structure		
Individualize	Substitute		
Initiate	Validate		
Integrate			

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**LESSON PLANNING SHEET: Using the Five Step Ecclesial Method  
(From *The Mystery We Proclaim* by Msgr. Francis D. Kelly)**

Topic \_\_\_\_\_

**1. PREPARATION**

What does this lesson have to do with Jesus?

\_\_\_\_\_

Sacred Space set up: How will you make this a prayerful setting? Can you put anything on your prayer table that will help reinforce this lesson?

\_\_\_\_\_

What will be the opening Scripture or Prayer for this teaching?

\_\_\_\_\_

How will you get them away from their thoughts and cares and focused on what you will have to tell them? \_\_\_\_\_

**2. PROCLAMATION**

What is most important? What do you want them to leave knowing, if nothing else? Lead up to and draw back to your proclamation. Never leave it entirely. Repeat it, write it on the board, see if your students can say it back to you. Advertisers try to get the name of their product into a commercial no less than 7 times. See if you can accomplish the same for your students:

\_\_\_\_\_

**3. EXPLANATION/EXPLORATION OF THIS TRUTH**

Consider the key terms that your students may not know yet and be sure to explain them. Don't ever let your delivery of doctrine simply be a lecture.

Key Terms: \_\_\_\_\_

**CONSIDER HOW YOU CAN TEACH TO VARIOUS INTELLIGENCES/LEARNING STYLES...**

Could you use any visual aids (movies, art)? \_\_\_\_\_

Are there any audio aids (music) that could further enhance this lesson?

\_\_\_\_\_

How could you get them to move around in a constructive manner or work with their hands on a project?

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In what creative way could you get the main message across?

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#### **4. APPLICATION TO LIFE**

What does this teaching mean practically for your students?

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How can I help them make this teaching their own?

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#### **5. CELEBRATION**

How can we thank God and acclaim His wonderful truth together by ending in prayer?

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### **YOU CAN CHOOSE FROM THE OPTIONS BELOW OR CREATE YOUR OWN...**

Song? \_\_\_\_\_

Concluding Prayer? \_\_\_\_\_

Read a scripture passage together? \_\_\_\_\_

What you can employ here, now that you have given your students the opportunity for conversion in your application step, will allow them to turn again back to God. It will help make this a concrete time set apart for God.

**MY IDEAS...** \_\_\_\_\_

## THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

### TELL THE STORY OF SALVATION HISTORY

**Technique: Highlight the plan of God for us and His constant revelation to us throughout human history. Be sure to make it clear that this is your story and theirs, if they choose to accept God's invitation.**

- a. Who is God (happy and complete, describe His family, Trinitarian life)
- b. His creation of angelic beings, some chose to rebel,
- c. His creation of us out of love, to participate in His divine life,
- d. Our temptation, (Satan our enemy) and sin (and loss)
- e. God's promise and plan for our salvation and divinization
- f. His gradual revelation of Himself and gathering of His people
- g. Promise and prophecies (as much of salvation history as you have time and need for)
- h. Incarnation (be sure to give it proper emphasis), and Mary's fiat
- i. Redemption and the fruits of salvation,
- j. The Church: The family of God on earth; dispenser of the Mystery; the Kingdom of God; the Body of Christ on earth,
- k. The history of God's people and His constant care, saints in constant supply (Mother Theresa is nothing new!)
- l. Today, you and I in "The Story", living the Christian life (If you have time, show the precursors to sacramental living in the Old Testament)
- m. The sure promise and hope: Jesus will come again; Judgment; The heavenly Jerusalem; Eternal life

Be sure to tell these as truths; this is not a fictional story. Keep referring to them as you teach doctrine. Show your students how all that has been revealed by God fits in The Story, as its context.

## **CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT**

Students of any age know when a lesson is poorly planned and can tell immediately if you are simply "winging it." If you do not take control of the class, the students will. The best measure for preventive discipline is a well-planned, well-organized lesson.

- Always plan for more than what you will cover in a given lesson, so you won't come up short.
- Pray to the Holy Spirit as you prepare your lesson.
- Study the lesson and outline the chapter.
  - Develop the lesson theme.
  - Outline the chapter to teach the lesson in your own words. Students will be attracted to your teaching if you are prepared and can teach in your own words with enthusiasm.
- With an attractive format, use poster boards to display sacred art, lesson concepts, student projects and things to be memorized.
- Make a monthly calendar using the parish church calendar to mark holy days of obligation, solemn feast days of the Church, and different saint days.
- Provide them with inspirational saint stories. Tell them about the story so they can look forward to it the following week. For example: *"Next week we are going to find out about St. Catherine Laboure's surprise one night when she saw an angel at her bedside telling her something she could hardly believe."*
- Mention what they can tell their parents they learned today. For example: *"I learned that the four cardinal moral virtues are prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance."*
- Have a regular plan for review games such as Bible Password, Catholic Doctrine cards, Tic Tac Toe, Credo, Bible Baseball, Divine Pursuit, and others. Periodically reward students who try and those who excel with holy cards, small medals, and simple food.

### **MAKE IT OR BREAK IT ON THE FIRST DAY**

On the first day of class, you have one opportunity to set the tone for how your classroom will be run for the entire year. Follow a routine on the first day and continue the procedure throughout the year. You may vary your teaching techniques, but remember that children need consistency when it comes to rules and regulations.

- Begin and end your class with a prayer or prayer service. Include Scripture and a prayer, which has been previously memorized. Set up a sacred space in your classroom to ritualize your prayer. Use music and sacred art whenever possible.
- Establish the rules for discipline - post them in a visible place for all to see, and be consistent in following them throughout the year.
- Assign seats and learn the student's names as soon as possible. Use nametags for a few classes with a scripture quote for the day at the bottom of the nametag. If you do not know a student's name, your authority when it comes time to correct them is virtually diminished.
- Send a letter home to the parents on the first day, introducing yourself and what the students will be learning this year in the School of Religion. It is also a good idea to send home your expectations for classroom behavior and discipline. Above all, use a positive tone in your letter that reflects your sincerity and enthusiasm about teaching the faith to their children this year.

### **THROUGHOUT THE YEAR YOU WILL WANT TO...**

- Arrive early to set a good example and prepare beforehand. Students always have the advantage if they arrive before you do.
- Document behavioral incidents/issues with students and keep the parents and the DRE informed of the situation.
- Nurture your own prayer life. Catechesis always has Christ as its center and focus. Your own relationship with Christ will strengthen you to teach and love these children as precious souls entrusted to your care - even if for one hour a week.
- Get to know your students as individual persons and not as a collective mob. The only way to do catechesis is person to person. We must see each student as made in the image and likeness of God if we are going to be effective.
  - Frequently ask yourself, if I were in this grade, would I want to be in this class? Why or why not?



## **MORE SUGGESTIONS FOR POSITIVE STRATEGIES FOR CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT**

### **Pre-K to Fourth**

Nametags are always recommended for students in Grade 2 and under, particularly during the first 4 to 5 weeks so that catechists can learn the name of each child in a large class. Catechists and any aides should also wear nametags during this time so that students and parents become familiar with the adults in the class.

Keeping a seating chart or using “folding tent”- type desk name markers all year long are helpful for getting to know the names of older students and for separating students who behave better when sitting apart. This strategy is also of great assistance to any substitute catechist who may take a given class.

Any student who we have been told has been diagnosed with a learning disability or medical condition that could impact behavior will be made known to the catechist so that appropriate provisions can be made. Information of this kind is particularly confidential.

Rules for class behavior, courtesy, etc., must be set *on the first day of classes*, reviewed on the second and third weeks for new students, and enforced consistently throughout the year. Be sensitive to the needs and circumstances of your students. These can often give the catechist an indication of how to handle a particular student or situation.

*Maintaining discipline is like removing obstacles in the path towards our goal of good catechesis. We learn how to remove and avoid these obstacles so that our destination can be reached. – Joseph Paprocki*

### **5<sup>th</sup> Grade- 12<sup>th</sup> Grade**

Catechists in the upper division of the Religious Education program should always strive to maintain good classroom discipline with love. Being firm at the beginning of the year is usually better than trying to get more strict during the course of the year. Catechists should cover the discipline policy with your class on the very first day and then consistently follow the policy the rest of the year. Once students have been informed about the consequences of their actions there is no need to spend class time discussing their behavior.

Do not let behavior get so out of hand that it leads to your own frustration and a lack of progress during your catechetical sessions. Please notify the DRE at the first signs of concern about a child's behavior.

*"Get them to love you and they will follow you anywhere." St. John Bosco*

**Some DO's and DON'Ts:**

DO learn to scan the room as you teach.  
DO assign tasks and responsibilities.  
DO move around the room as you are speaking.  
DO use student's names when you call on them.  
DO use eye contact and non-verbal communication.  
DO reinforce good behavior.  
DO be firm, confident, and consistent.  
**DO be fair and flexible to find a solution.**

DON'T turn your back or leave the room.  
DON'T allow problems to escalate.  
DON'T use sarcasm or ridicule a student.  
DON'T use homework as punishment.  
DON'T punish the entire class because of one student.  
DON'T accuse or verbally attack.  
DON'T touch students, especially if you or they are angry or upset.