
Catechist 101

— Suggestions and Tips —

Gathering Question:

What are you most looking forward to this catechetical year?

What are you most anxious about as you prepare to begin this year?

Opening Prayer

Sign of Cross

Hail Mary

Short guided meditation

Order of Topics:

*Including Prayer

*Sharing Stories

*Having Fun

*Partnering with Parents

*Changing Lives

Including Prayer: Most Important Element to Include

- ❑ Essential preparation: **Pray** before you begin!
- ❑ Remember there is value in experiences that are **unique** and use **more senses**
 - ❑ The repetition children need, especially younger children, is where prayer time comes within each lesson, and the rituals of prayer time: lighting candle, etc.
- ❑ Plan the **Environment**: lights, candles, music, etc.
- ❑ Prepare the **Prayer Space**: table, shelf, space set aside and decorated for prayer
- ❑ Importance of using ***Images**: Bible, Rosary, statues, crucifix, holy cards, saints, art, holy water font, etc. (*Bishop Cary place great value in exploring "insight into Image."*)
- ❑ Consider the **Senses**: what can they smell, hear, see, (taste), feel, and/or can movement be included?
- ❑ Find ways to **include their prayer** intentions, encourage them to contribute.
- ❑ Consider including **Meditation** appropriate to age and experience.

The Herrmann Family Prayer Space:



Share Stories: Jesus used Parables!

- ❑ **Stories** often **touch the imagination** and can help **create heart connections**.
- ❑ Combining **images and stories** can help stories feel more real, more alive, and more tangible.
- ❑ Share **YOUR stories**: stories from life, faith, etc.
- ❑ Allow space for the children, youth or adults to share **THEIR stories**
- ❑ Share **Bible stories**
- ❑ Share **story books** - especially with pictures or images.
- ❑ Share **saint stories** - especially stories that the children, youth or adults can make connections with (patron saint, parish, statue in parish, story the priest or pastor told recently, connect to celebrations.)
- ❑ Who can be **invited to share** stories?
- ❑ What **video or movie clips** can be used to tell stories?

Having Fun (Being Playful and Joyful)

- ❑ Including **fun activities**, adventures, games, etc. **helps to build community** among the children, youth or adults.
 - ❑ And having fun can create feelings of joy associated with faith formation.
- ❑ **Games:** can any parts or pieces of the content or topic be introduced as a game, or what kind of game could be used for review?
 - ❑ Passing a foam ball or beach ball can be a fun way to encourage sharing.
- ❑ **Adventures:** is there any space or place within the parish buildings or grounds or area you can take the children, youth or adults that could help illustrate or demonstrate the topic?
- ❑ **Art/Creative Expression:** is there an art project, group poster activity, play or skit, that could be employed to add interest and allow creative children, youth or adults to be more deeply engaged?

Partnering with Parents: Helping Families Pray Together

- ❑ Empowering children or youth to take experiences and prayers home to share with their family helps **build trust and build bridges** between the domestic church and the parish.
- ❑ **Think about what can go home** every time you gather?
- ❑ How can you help **bring the home into the** classroom or gathering **space**?
- ❑ **Are parents** (guardians,) friends, or spouses **welcome** and encouraged to be present, visit, help?
- ❑ **Think about images, stories and prayers** that can move between home and the parish and the parish and the home.

Changing Lives (Including Your Own)

- ❑ **Learn names**, use names
 - ❑ Use name tags to help
- ❑ **Be interested** in hearing **their stories**.
 - ❑ Allow children or youth space to share their experiences
- ❑ Many **catechists** share that they **think they learn more** than the children, youth or adults!
- ❑ **Never be afraid to say you don't know** something.
 - ❑ And tell the children or youth or adults who you plan to ask to find the answer.
 - ❑ Follow up the next session with what you found, and where you found it!
- ❑ **Textbooks are a resource!!**
 - ❑ It is okay to look for other ideas to use.
 - ❑ Yes, please have permission to think outside “the box,” or cover of the textbook.
 - ❑ The textbook is meant to be a place for you, the catechist, to start.

Changing Lives (continued)

- ❑ **Listen** to the children or youth.
 - ❑ What are you hearing?
 - ❑ Maybe the lesson plan/schedule needs to change to allow for something needed more.
- ❑ Never be afraid to **try something new** or different!
- ❑ Being open to your own continuing conversion helps the children or youth be more **open to conversion**.
- ❑ Remain aware and mindful and **open to** guidance from **the Holy Spirit**.
- ❑ An Important part of your role, as a catechist, is to help families **create opportunities** for their children to **encounter** God (the Father, Son, and/or Holy Spirit.)
- ❑ Another important part of your role, as a catechist, is helping children or youth **explore** and “break open” their **encounters**.

Questions & Comments:

What are your questions or comments you haven't been able to ask or share?

Questions & Comments from the Webinar:

“I took my class over to tour the sacristy (with permission) and had a sacristan explain several items in the room, especially where the water goes down the "special" drain (I can't remember the name!) They were so intrigued.” *(The special drain is called the sacrarium. There are some who may refer to the bowl of the sink as the piscina - a Latin word meaning reservoir for fish.)*

“How do you help encourage shy children to share in class without putting them on the spot and creating a stressful experience for the child? What has worked for you?” *(Suggestions included: patience - it may take time for them to observe and feel safe; share/discussion partners - each partner has to share for the other; finding alternative ways of communication - writing, drawing, etc; creating a safe space and valuing every child who shares; getting away from desks in to more intimate sharing circles on the floor, or standing, perhaps using a foam ball or beach ball passed along or across the circle to “pick” next share person; encourage sharing with easy, low risk questions or topics, “What’s your favorite dessert, color, pet, animal, place to visit, thing in church, etc.?”; try to build a relationship with child, youth or adult in the quieter time before or after a session, and then share something they said at the next session that can help them feel good, proud or “brilliant”!)*

“In my 2nd grade class we had a "prayer square" which was a plain table cloth that I laid out on the floor before class. In the center, I put a religious object, statue, or picture, maybe to do with the season. When we entered the classroom, we gathered on the floor around the cloth and opened with noticing the centerpiece then prayer and song before the children went to their seats.” *(Very creative way to engage a class!)*

Questions & Comments from the Webinar:

“You can tell stories using the black board or dry erase board and then the children can draw.” *(Wonderful idea!)*

“If one on one with a student, what precautions should be made?” *(Safety caution: We, catechists and adults, need to exercise extreme caution concerning “one on one” situations with children and youth under 18 and/or vulnerable adults (we are not related to and live with. The Diocesan safe environment guidelines ask us to all follow the “two person rule” - two adults per one or more children/youth. In situations where there cannot be two adults in a class or gathering, room doors are left open to create open accountability and for adults in adjoining areas to be each other’s “second adult.” If a one of one situation is warranted - like for discipline, catechists/adults need to be as public as possible and remain alert to posture, distance between adult and child, and proximity to other adult witnesses. Ideally, another adult will be present nearby and be available to observe the interaction. Remember to be prudent and exercise caution. It would be prudent to note time/date, name of child and reason for one-on-one, as well as any discipline or corrective words or actions that occur in a class, to give to the ministry leader. If a parent ever comes back with concern about their child’s interpretation of the words or actions, it is good to have that recorded “memory.”)*

“May be using zoom for a student, any suggestions?” *(If there is only one student in the Zoom, try to find a second adult, perhaps the parent, who can be present with you. Do record Zoom meetings to the local computer, and then put that recording on an external memory stick or drive to share with ministry leader as “documentation” to be saved in the parish office. It is strongly encouraged to use a waiting room in Zoom, and to not allow the child or children into the meeting until a second adult is present.)*

“Is there a video of the comparison of family meal and mass anywhere?” *(Great question! We can’t think of anything at this moment, but we will ask other catechetical leaders if they have ever encountered such a resource! Fr. Leo Patalinghug, catholicfoodie.com, “Grace Before Meals,” “Planting Grace” - the cooking priest, might possibly have something. “Grace Before Meals” is a movement to bring families back to the dinner table.)*