

SOME HELPFUL HINTS FOR CATECHISTS

Some Ideas for Sharing Space

- ❖ Take time to introduce yourself to the person with whom you will be sharing the space.
- ❖ Create a climate of mutual respect for one another's property.
- ❖ Discuss goals and modifications to the environment.
- ❖ Encourage the learners to leave notes for one another.

Checklist for Creating the Physical Environment

Use this checklist throughout the year to identify areas that need improvement.

- Are the chairs and desks or tables age-appropriate?
- Can the chairs and desks or tables be moved for a more inviting arrangement?
- Is the room too hot or too cold? Can you adjust the temperature?
- Can the room be darkened for projection purposes or to control the sunlight from shining in participants' eyes?
- Is the air fresh? Can you ventilate the room?
- Is the room clean? Are the chairs and desks or tables clean?
- Is there a chalkboard or a newsprint pad to write on?
- Are erasers and chalk or markers available?
- If using projection material, are there ample outlets or do you need to obtain an extension cord?
- Is the space accessible and suitable for special needs learners?
- Are you able to display participants' materials? If not, can you obtain a moveable tack board or pegboard?
- If using shared space, have you negotiated its use? Did you work out storage space?
- If using a large space, is there a way to arrange the furniture in order to bring the participants closer together?
- Do you have a Bible, a candle, a crucifix, a colorful cloth, and other items to create a prayer center?
- Are appropriate symbols that relate to the session displayed in the prayer center?
- Do you incorporate the appropriate seasonal liturgical color--green, purple, white, gold, or red--into your prayer space?
- Do you use music to create a prayerful mood?
- If you meet at home, does the room you use foster learning and create a welcoming environment?

Your Typical Supply Kit

- Bible
- Cross
- Tablecloth
- Candles
- Matches
- Name tags
- Attendance sheets
- Stapler
- Glue
- Chalk, crayons, markers
- Paper and pencils
- Construction paper
- Scissors
- Tape (transparent, masking)
- Note cards

- ❑ Notebook
- ❑ CD or cassette player
- ❑ CDs or cassettes
- ❑ Three-prong adapter for outlets
- ❑ Extension cord
- ❑ Extra textbooks
- ❑ Tissues
- ❑ Other items:

Nurturing the Social Environment

- ❖ Greet learners
- ❖ Use names
- ❖ Show your interest
- ❖ Honor diversity
- ❖ Use ritual and prayer
- ❖ Build relationships
- ❖ Focus the learners
- ❖ Work in groups
- ❖ Vary activities
- ❖ Ask questions
- ❖ Challenge learners
- ❖ Discipline with respect

Effective Management techniques for Creating a Positive Climate

- ❖ Respect each learner
- ❖ Avoid embarrassing the learner
- ❖ Correct the learner's misbehavior without using sarcasm or ridicule
- ❖ Speak to the learner privately about the learner's behavior
- ❖ Provide positive praise rather than negative praise
- ❖ Focus the learners' attention before presenting material
- ❖ Gain attention, using an appropriate voice tone and volume

Question starters

What do you know about...?
 How do you feel when...?
 Who is the person who...?
 Have you ever wondered if...?
 How did you feel when you heard that...?
 Can you think of a way to...?
 What did you experience when...?

Using Creative Activities

- ❖ Brainstorm ideas
- ❖ Work in small groups
- ❖ Role-play with props
- ❖ Use popular media
- ❖ Tell stories
- ❖ Use art and crafts
- ❖ Stories and poems
- ❖ Songs
- ❖ Dance
- ❖ Puppetry

- ❖ Finger Plays
- ❖ Plays
- ❖ Mime
- ❖ Skits
- ❖ Movement and gesture

Teaching Tips

1. Prayer cloths

Let children trace the shape of their hand, put their name in the hand, cut out and pin to prayer cloth. (Other options than hand—3" x 6" paper with name and symbols of things they like to do; class banner to place on front of prayer cloth; symbols of year's study such as drop of water for sacraments or tablets for commandments and place name and symbols about self on them.

2. Involve students in making the rules

Every classroom community needs a few basic rules. At the beginning of the year, ask your students to help you formulate a list of guidelines for classroom behavior. To start them thinking, ask questions like these:

- ❖ How do you feel about being interrupted when you are talking?
- ❖ How do you feel when there's so much talking that you can't hear what is being said?
- ❖ How do you feel about people getting up and moving whenever they feel like it?
- ❖ How do you feel about people throwing papers on the floor?
- ❖ How do you think people feel when you are always borrowing pencil and paper from them?
- ❖ How do you feel when an event you attend doesn't start on time?
- ❖ How do you think people feel when you don't contribute your fair share to a project you are doing together?
- ❖ How do you feel when people walk in late on you?

Work together on the wording of the rules that the class agrees on and make a copy for each person or hang up on a chart.

3. Getting acquainted

If available, use a Polaroid camera to take a photo of each child and arrange these on a bulletin board or poster. Invite the children to write their names under their photos. Or, invite the children to draw themselves (or a symbol of themselves) and attach these drawings to the bulletin board or poster—and again have them add their signatures. Together decide on a class motto, a class prayer, and a class patron saint and print these at the top of the board or poster.



*It is to just such as these that
the Kingdom of God belongs*

PRAYING WITH CHILDREN

The following suggestions were drawn from an article in the March, 1985 issue of *Religion Teachers' Journal—Ways to Pray with Children* by Sr. Marlene Halping

- 1) Create an atmosphere of silence for prayer—not just external quiet but interior silence. Use candles, images, reflective soft background music, whatever will express that prayer is a special time.
- 2) If children are excited (snowy day, big game, report card day), do a simple relaxing exercise with them first. Use up some of the natural energy on these occasions then try some breathing exercises counting aloud.
- 3) Let the children take postures that are different and comfortable without interfering with someone else's right to pray.
- 4) Anticipate their distractions. Invite them to acknowledge these and to let them go for now.
- 5) Teach children "to welcome God's presence into their hearts" by using words, feelings or just being with God.
- 6) Ask lead questions by which children can get in touch with where they are at the moment, e.g. "What means the most to you right now?" "How are things at home?"
- 7) Invite children to tell God how they feel, what they are happy, sad, or worried about, for whom or what they'd like to pray. Then ask them to quietly listen to what God wants to say to them.
- 8) Teach children to simply enjoy thinking about how much God loves them.
- 9) Take time for transition to other tasks. If children wish to share their prayer experience, allow them to. Never should they feel forced to do so.
- 10) Assure children that there is one basic rule for praying—Just do it!

PRAYING WITH CHILDREN PART 2

1) Leading Students to Pray

- a) Catechists share their faith with their students and help them grow in their communication with God.
- b) One grows in their communication with God.
- c) The following are some suggestions that catechists can try in praying with their students:
 - ❖ Have a special time for prayer.
 - ❖ Have the students memorize a few specific prayers.
 - ❖ Allow students to pray spontaneously.
 - ❖ Use fantasy to lead the students into meditation.
 - ❖ Have occasional prayer services with the students.
 - ❖ Enhance prayer with media.

2) Teaching suggestions

Grades 1 and 2

- ❖ Teach the words of a few specific prayers—Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be, Sign of the Cross.
- ❖ Use drawings and crafts to help them focus their thoughts.
- ❖ Keep meditations and periods of silence short.
- ❖ Sing children's songs and keep Scripture stories brief and simple.
- ❖ In planning prayer services, include choral reading, gestures, processions, artwork, music, and spontaneous prayers.

Grades 3 and 4

- ❖ Use short, simple, spontaneous prayers.
- ❖ Work with the entire class in planning a prayer service.
- ❖ Encourage the children to playact Scripture stories.
- ❖ Use the students' own handiwork for decorations at prayer services.

Grades 5 and 6

- ❖ Provide periods of silence during which the students think and pray by themselves.
- ❖ Read aloud poetry or Scripture stories.
- ❖ Give students opportunities to listen to and to sing songs.
- ❖ Allow time for longer prayer services and involve the students in all phases of the planning.

Grades 7 and 8

- ❖ During specified prayer periods, encourage spontaneous prayers and petitions.
- ❖ Incorporate short periods of silent reflection before or after certain parts of a lesson.
- ❖ Involve as many students as possible in planning prayer services by appointing committees to work on the readings, the prayers, the music, and the decorations.
- ❖ Be sensitive to the students' moods and need for prayer.

INVITING CHILDREN TO PRAY

Prayer Booklets

Help children to learn the meaning of a traditional prayer by inviting them to create a booklet. Spend a brief amount of time each week focusing on one of the phrases of a prayer. Have each child write the line from the prayer, write a sentence to give its meaning and draw a picture to illustrate it. Save the papers from week to week. Compile them into booklets to present to the children on the last day of class.

Prayer Corner

Arrange a section of the room as a prayer corner (or use the area around your prayer table). Use this area at least once each class to pray.

Prayer Board

Use a bulletin board or poster as a prayer board. Invite the children to place on the board pictures or names of people they would like to remember in prayer. (You may do this on the bulletin board in the prayer room so that everyone who uses the prayer room may remember those intentions.)

Rainbow Prayer

Everyone has a favorite color. Compose a Rainbow Prayer by asking the children to name their favorite color and then think of things in that color for which they are grateful. Include the lists in each color of the rainbow in a litany of thanks using a refrain such as: "Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation," or "praise and thanks to God who gifts us with the wonders of creation."

Prayer of Blessing

Offer a prayer of blessing for each child in your class. Call each child by name and have the class offer a prayer of blessing. You may wish to use the words of the Old Testament blessing: "May the Lord bless you and keep you. May his face shine upon you." While praying, hold your hands outstretched above the head of the child you are blessing.

Prayer of Thanks

Schedule a regular time for the class to offer prayers of thanks. Invite the children to mention things for which they are grateful. Follow each with a simple prayer or sung refrain to thank God for his goodness.

Psalms

Pray the psalms. Help the children to see the variety of emotions expressed in these personal prayers. Have the students write their own psalms. Have them compose prayers of trust, of sorrow, of thanks, of praise. Or you may want to have the students rewrite one of the psalms in modern

language. Choose to use the Children's Lectionary if you like. (This activity is good for Grade 6 and the use of the Bible.)

Prayer Hunt Experience

Give the children time to look through their text to find their favorite prayer. They may want to use one of the prayers that begins a lesson which is marked inside a cross on the first page of the lessons or they may want to use another prayer they find in their books. Have the children write the prayer on a piece of paper. Let them decorate the border and paste it on a piece of construction paper.