

Ideas for Strengthening Use of the Elementary Religion Curriculum (2009)

Catechist Formation

One of the most important strategies for effectively handing on our faith to students is to properly form and educate our teachers.

According to Diocesan policy, all teachers of religion must be practicing Catholics and have completed the Diocesan Catechist Certification Program. Those who have completed all three levels (or their equivalent) must continue their on-going formation with 5 hours of continuing education annually.

Echoes of Faith video and DVD series (available through the diocesan library located in the Catholic Center) provide an option for improving our teachers'/catechists' knowledge of the faith as do regularly scheduled catechist workshops within vicariates.

Scripture Ideas for Children

- **Have catechists/teachers view the *Echoes of Faith* video: "Introduction to Scripture" to revitalize their knowledge of Scripture.**
- **Use videos: #97 *The Greatest Adventure A-L*, #285 *Modern Parables A-B* (Gr. K-3); #755 *What Is the Bible* (Gr.4-8).**
- **Utilize the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops website, www.usccb.org, to read the daily scripture readings or create a web-based assignment using this site.**
- **Identify the scripture passage presented in the lesson and read it directly out of a bible. A good user-friendly youth bible is the Catholic Youth Bible from St. Mary's Press especially for youth in grades 5-12.**
- **Use *Ready-to-go-Game Shows – Bible Edition*, by Michael Theisen (St. Mary's Press) to present scripture.**
- **Encourage skits often, assign characters and parts of the narration to different students.**
- **Have youth, in groups, prepare a prayer service utilizing their favorite scripture passages.**

- After hearing a Bible story, ask the students to draw a picture or make some creative project that expresses one aspect of the story's significance.

Creed Ideas for Children

- Utilize the *Echoes of Faith* video tape, "I Believe, We Believe" to assist teachers/catechists to better understand the creed.
- Use video #851 *The Apostles' Creed*. (Show the difference/similarities between the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed).
- Divide the Creed into major sections. Have students in groups. Give them time to do some research and then explain the meaning of their section to the rest of the class.
- Starting with the words: "I Believe," have the students create their own faith creed.
- Facilitate a discussion about faith and beliefs. Identify what people believe in today's culture (false gods).

Prayer Ideas for Children

- Have catechists/teachers view the *Echoes of Faith* video: "Prayer and Spirituality" to renew their own prayer life.
- Use videos #98K *Sacred Heart Kids/Prayer*, (Gr.1-3). #696 *Prayer Made Simple and Joyful*, (Gr.6-8).
- Have children write their own prayer. Encourage spontaneous prayer by starting a sentence and asking students to complete it: "Thank you, God, for _____." "Jesus, help me to _____."
- Assign different children to be responsible for the beginning class prayer each week.
- Utilize parts of the Mass in classroom prayer services.
- Create a prayer chain of current/class petitions.

- Break the students into groups of three or four. Fill a small paper bag with 5 objects. Each group works together to create one prayer using each object.

Social Justice Ideas for Children

- Have catechists/teachers view the video: "In the Footsteps of Jesus" which talks about Catholic Social Teaching at work today.
- Use videos #725 *Mother Teresa*, (Gr. 1-4), #932 *One Border One Body* DVD (Gr. 5-8)
- Sensitize students to the importance of cultural diversity. Study the history and gifts of minority groups.
- Provide students with the beatitudes, corporal works of mercy, and spiritual works of mercy. Have them find examples in newspapers or magazines of how these works are carried out or ignored.
- Collect food for the hungry at Thanksgiving. Choose a needy family at Christmas and have the class provide food and gifts.
- Use the newspaper to foster discussions on how our Catholic identity can and should influence our experiences.
- Ask someone from Catholic Charities to talk to your class about their service or use the lesson plans found at www.ccwny.org.

HarcourtReligion.com, BlestAreWe.com, FaithFirst.com, osv.com, faithguides.com are some of the websites that offer lesson plans and suggestions on various religion topics.

*All videos and DVDs mentioned are available in the diocesan library located in the Catholic Center, 716-847-8778.
Additional resources/consultations/training sessions can be arranged by contacting the Department of Lifelong Faith Formation, Elaine Dankowski, 716-847-5516. 4-20-09*