

Joe Paprocki: Catechist Journey

What makes a good catechist?

- **Always arrive at least 20 minutes before your class starts.** To enhance your students learning prepare your classroom. A well organized catechist and classroom is a must. Without it, your students will not learn to their fullest potential.
- **Use a wide variety of engaging activities that enable all your students to be actively involved in the class.** Do imaginative and creative activities that add excitement to your lessons. Make sure the activity fits your students and emphasize the lesson and the objectives of what you want your students to learn.
- **Use the textbook as a resource, not as the sole source of learning.** No curriculum is perfect and teachers need to supplement with activities to help teach their students. Using various resources provides your students with a variety of activities that helps enhance the lesson and allows them to understand more and have a lot of fun in the process.
- **Engage in efforts to deepen your knowledge of the faith and grow spiritually.** No catechist can know everything and by going to workshops, retreats, classes, studying Catholic literature, etc. can help broaden your understanding and learn new ways of teaching.
- **Be prepared and know the material.** Know your subject. Read, study, and learn. A good lesson depends on how well the catechist understands the material.
- **Have prepared and well planned lesson plans.** Before you do anything you must plan and prepare. Having a well planned and prepared CCD class is essential. Without this your students cannot learn to their fullest potential. A well planned and prepared lesson plan will also help to avoid possible behavior problems that could arise in your class as well. A thorough and thought out lesson plan should include various elements to promote good learning.
- **Consistently model the behavior you expect of your students.** If you want your students to be good Catholics, you must act accordingly. By modeling and living the Catholic way of life it will reinforce proper behavior for your students.
- **Teach what you are supposed to teach.** The subjects should include the Church's liturgical and sacramental life and moral teachings. You should also cover the topics that are in your curriculum so your lessons will flow accordingly with next year's class activities.

- **Have Class Rules and keep disruptive behavior down to a minimum.** Go over your Class Rules thoroughly with your students so they will understand them. Every classroom needs rules so that the class can run smoothly and effectively. Having a well behaved classroom is critical for proper learning. For the students to learn to their fullest potential they need an environment that is quiet, without distractions, and organized. To achieve this is to keep disruptive behavior down to a minimum. And always have classroom behavior expectations and go over them with your students the first day and post them where the students can see them.

- **Be fair.** Never show favoritism. Treat each student the same.

- **Work well with others.** That includes the priest, DRE, teachers, helpers, parents, students, etc.

- **Obtain information from parents and have training for all personnel if you are having a special needs child in your classroom.** When a special needs child is assigned to your classroom, be sure to gather information from the parents about their child before they come to class to help with the transition of their child into the classroom. Seeking the advice and assistance of the child's family is the most important factor in learning how to teach a child with special needs. A training session of all personnel that comes in contact with the child should be conducted before the student starts CCD to focus on identifying supports the student needs and how to implement them.

- **Assess students regularly.** Test according to their abilities and how they work best. Use various ways to assess what they have learned.

- Get parents involved in CCD. Without parent involvement in CCD their child will not learn to their fullest potential.

- **Assign homework that reviews previously learned material and is relevant to the objectives of the lesson.** Homework should not be busy work, it should reinforce the lesson. Have assignment sheets and grade sheets to help keep students organized and parents up to date.

- **Explain what you want your students to learn in ways that they understand the material.** Take into account the unique needs of your students or how they learn best to make your lesson as effective as possible.

- **Use technology in your classroom that enhances the lesson and learning of your students.** What is effective and needed for your classroom depends upon your students and what is available for the catechist to use. Whatever equipment you are using it must achieve your learning objectives for your lesson. Always have the equipment ready before class and know how to use it.

- **Catechists keep all information confidential.** Anything you know and hear that is personal about anyone, including the students is kept confidential.

- **Catechists follow and sign the guidelines and rules set forth by the diocese and/or DRE.** If there are not any, the DRE should write up some guidelines for the catechists to sign to verify that they understood what their responsibilities are and the rules that they must follow. Be sure include in it an absenteeism policy and what they are supposed to do when they are absent.

It is a good idea to have a Catechist Handbook to acquaint volunteer catechists with the policies and procedures in the Religious Formation Program. The Catechist Handbook will clearly define what the responsibilities are for the catechist and the procedures that they are to follow.

What kind of catechist are you?