

Diocese of San Jose Parish Catechetical Leaders Best Practices **Sacramental Preparation**

Note: The Catechetical Advisory Board invites you to review these best practices and find something new and have a conversation with your catechists on how this best practice can enhance your ministry. You will find events, resources and creative ideas listed.

Reconciliation and First Eucharist Child Retreat

Provide a scavenger hunt in the church for 2nd-5th graders. Slips of paper in various shapes will direct the participants to find an item in the church and collect puzzle pieces to complete a picture when they have found all the items in the scavenger hunt. Participants are also given crossword puzzle, matching items and fill in the blank handouts as part of the retreat. Contact Judy Kelch for outline at jkelch@dsj.org

Church Tour:

Provide a walk through the church and explore the symbols inside. What are they? What are their church names (podium/ambo)? What are they used for and why? Adults appreciate learning the items located in the church building and how we use them.

Recommended resource for a church tour: "[Come and See](#): Celebrating God's Gifts as a Family"-(includes Spanish version Vengan y Veran) Loyola Press DVD. Written by Tom McGrath and Joe Paprocki. DVD Contents: [Ritual Matters](#); A Tour of the Church; Your Role at Mass. For our self-guided "Tour of the Church" segment of our First Eucharist workshop give the families pages 41-47 from the book: Learning Centers for First Reconciliation, First Eucharist, by Doris Murphy. These include the 'Tour Guide's Description Sheet,' 'Church Tour Items' check off list, 'Name these Church Objects' sheet and "Answer Key." The families really enjoy doing this activity.

Mass Reporter

Each child gets a chance to be the weekly Mass reporter. He or she gets a name tag, a tote bag and marker, "We go to mass" book. They fill it out and give a report of what they saw at mass on Sunday to their catechetical class. Give the children a "passport". Every time the child goes to church they find the person who has the "passport stamp" for that mass. The person could be a Lector, Greeter, Eucharistic Minister. They know ahead of time that has the "official stamp". Once their book has been stamped they show their catechist and get a little prize. If they fill up their book they will be able to participate in the "Grand Prize"

Sacramental Parent Discussions

Will our kids have faith? This should be a discussion for all parents with children, not just those who have children preparing for sacraments. What kind of foundation of faith does parents want their children to have? What do they want their young adults to know before they leave the house for college, military? Will they have a strong enough faith to get them through the difficult times of life? What kind of choices will they make? Will they be faith based choices?

Learn How to Coach Parents for Reconciliation and First Eucharist

Use [Leisa Anslinger's resources for coaching parents](#)

NCCL Parish Catechetical Leaders Best Practices

Sacramental Prep

Family Reconciliation Workshop

*Parents (at least one) must come with their children on the 1st Saturday of March. All work is done within the family group. Each family considers what each person contributes to the family. They make a poster. They watch “The Quarreling Book” and discuss how they handle conflict. They also consider their family unity and how they have broken it. Then we have a prayer service, followed by individual confession. I try to have at least 10 priests. This year we have over 120 families participate. Three years ago I started offering this for the parish on Palm Sunday afternoon before our Parish Reconciliation. This year I had over 30 families participate. Let me know if you want more specifics.

*Mary Fran Cassidy: mary_fran_cassidy@midohio.twcbc.com

Reconciliation Preparation

*Love completing Reconciliation at Epiphany! Jesus came to reconcile the world. Church is still decorated for Christmas and this is a gentle, loving look at God’s reconciling love. During extended catechetical parent and child session, we read and reflect on Epiphany readings, show film clip of Kevin in Church from “Home Alone.” We talk about the greatest commandment, think about times when we don’t show love for God, for others, and for ourselves. With each everyone puts on a band-aid. They wear band-aids the entire session. (Note: in the movie, the neighbor is wearing a band-aid). At the end of the session, we pray a simple examination of conscience based on greatest commandment and remove the band-aids. Middle of session can include: role play going to reconciliation, visit with priest, priest Q and A. A favorite craft for this session: the kids color a stained glass picture of the Good Shepherd or another reconciliation theme. After coloring, dab the picture with baby oil and then laminate the page—really looks like a stained glass window. (Another note to “Home Alone” Kevin walks in and sees the communion of saints represented in windows and statues.

Parent/Child Liturgy Session

*Held during 1 class of RE time for children and parents

Have coffee, juice, donuts, interactive schedule...show and tell of mass vestments and vessels, lectionary, sacramentary (roman missal), mass responses...children and parents match, what priest says and what the people respond. Parts of Mass...using power point and cards with mixed order of parts children and parents put cards in order for each section of the mass. Then talk about parts, if time play “bingo”, using bits and pieces from each section.

*Sr. Dorothy: srdorothy@stmichaelcanton.org

RCIA/Adapted for Children Family Process

*Process includes the members of household in which the children live—joint activities plus adult and peer level breakouts.

*Pat Burbage: pburbage@visitsfrancis.org

Walking Litany

*Walk through church, stopping at stained glass windows or statues. Invite different people to read a bio and introduce each saint. End each with common prayer or sung verse. It’s great to educate people about their worship space, the walking around keeps people from getting bored.

*Margaret Boufford: boufford.margaret@gmail.com

Scavenger Hunt (1st Communion Retreat)

*A fun retreat that brings families together; learn more about the church and its history. Allows parents to converse with their children during the parent interviews with their own student. Surprisingly it's a good tool to open the parent's eyes that they themselves need formation. I bring vendors and provide lunch for all participants. The day/schedule/events:

9am-check in

9-1pm-activities include:

*4 craft centers (1 center in for MS and HS)

*movie (shown every 30 minutes)

*prayer room (index cards with numbers matching the prayer sheet-child has to recite the prayer they selected)

*church tour (every 30 minutes)...very detailed; including the history of the church)

*exit (must stop there to gather their take home material and lunch ticket

*Becky Arcizo: beckyarcizo@yahoo.com

Sacramental Parent Discussions

*Instead of having the typical "Confirmation Parent Meeting," I decided to have small round table discussions with the parents (8 at a time). We begin with a discussion on "Will our kids have faith?" and discussed practical ways to demonstrate and live faith at home. The parents are able to share their struggles and talk to one another and I was able to gain insight into their individual situations.

*Noelle Collis-DeVito: nonimc@aol.com

Teaching Mass

*Start with nothing and run back and forth bringing out items for Mass based on kid's suggestions. Use humor to help families understand why we do what we do in Mass.

*Julie St. Croix: julie.stcroix@stjohn-fredrick.org

Monthly Family Mass

*As part of our program, once a month families are invited to serve in different ministries, greet, usher, read, children's choir, communion meditation. They may witness a Baptism, Rite from RCIA, and pastor does some teaching is done by pastor. Hospitality is served.

*Chris Biel: chrisdre@johnxxiii.net

The Rites for First Holy Communion

*The week after First Holy Communion invite families back and emphasizes the final blessing and closing rites of sending during the final prayer. Each child is called by name, they come forward with family to have the Baptismal candle re-lit and commissioned to continue to walk as a child of the light with the help of your family and parish community.

*Elizabeth Schlesier-Elaska: faithformation@gmail.com

Confirmation

*As one of our service projects we gather our students on a Sunday evening (6-8:30). We have a speaker from a woman's choice services to speak about their organization (helping pregnant women) and whom they help...help student's regarding choices and "Catholic choices". Then we go to the parish hall and make fleece blankets for the children of these women (who have kept their children) which the student have brought the material ahead of time. They were given a guide of what to purchase and bring to the session. ALL our students even males on the evaluation on confirmation interviews and letters to pastor's comment on how this effects them.

*Dolly Matthews: dolly2255@comcast.net

Jesus is Laughter

*Using scripture develop skit presentations using clown ministry to emphasize the gospel message to reach all ages.

*Betty Sheehan: bsheehanac@aol.com

Elementary Ideas

*I bring in a lot of handouts from the textbook website and other catholic websites.

*Teri Curtis: Teristang@gmail.com

Gospel Reflection

*Each week during sessions we come together at the beginning for about 20-25 minutes of prayer. We read Gospel for upcoming Sunday. Catechists do short reflection, we then have a symbol and scripture verse for Gospel. This is then carried over in a bulletin article written by me which includes family discussion questions, the symbol and verse...all connects.

A. Sledz: asledz@stmargaretofscotland-scs.org

Reconciliation Review

*Twenty minutes before communal celebration of Penance with individual confession (we do Advent, Lent, summer) have a review—what happens, who says what when. This is especially wonderful for those who have not received the sacrament in a long time or are new members. First time I offered this 130 showed up. I was prepared for 20! I have been providing the review for 10 years and continue to have 5-25 people show up. We have also increased our services from 2 per year to 5 per year.

*Michele Harris: mharris@visitstfrancis.org

Chapel Time

*Gather in the Church before classroom instruction starts and share a small piece of Catholic tradition, faith stories, songs, etc with all kids to build community. This should only last 15-20 minutes. Then, dismiss children and teachers to respective classes.

*Drew Haro: dlharo1@gmail.com