

**Ready-Set-Go Workshops**  
**Questions for Catechists for Ready-Set-Go I**

Part One: The First Day and Your Teaching Environment

1. How will you organize yourself for the first sessions?
2. If you have an aide or co-teacher, how will you organize yourselves to work together?
3. What procedures will you establish?

Part Two: Importance of Lesson Planning

1. What are you going to study this year -- What do you want your children to learn?
2. What is going on in the parish that would enhance what the children are learning this year?
3. Why is it important to plan your lessons well over a few days?

Part Three: Motivating and involving the children

1. How will you motivate and involve your class?
2. What opportunities will you plan so that parish priest, parents, households, the parish are involved in your class?
3. How will you keep the focus on the children?

Part Four: Discipline

1. What conditions are needed for a disciplined classroom?
2. Does the catechist handbook offer suggestions?
3. How will you handle discipline problems?

*Please be sure to include the following with your answers:*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Parish \_\_\_\_\_

Grade Level \_\_\_\_\_

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## **READY – SET – GO WORKSHOP**

### **Part One**

#### **TIPS FOR THE FIRST DAY OF CLASS**

1. Make stand-up name “tents” for younger students. Put their name on both sides so that the other students can see them as well as you.
2. Take individual pictures or a group shot. Make a collage of the class.
3. For students in grades 3-8 have them make their own name tag with symbols that tell things about themselves.
4. During a prayer service, bless the students’ books after they have been distributed.
5. Establish positive class rules with the students.
6. Set up a prayer area in your classroom with a Bible and other symbols.
7. Plan a “get-acquainted” activity. Examples are: Interview each other and introduce the interviewee to the class; create acrostics using the letters of their name to tell something about themselves; have them list their favorites in different categories and share in pairs.
8. Watch the clock and be sure to wrap up your lesson five minutes before the end of class. Do ask your students to verbally tell you one thing they learned in your session.

#### Things to Do to Get Off to a Good Start

- ❖ Have a seating arrangement
- ❖ Prepare Name Tags
- ❖ Establish routines
  - Greet students and have something for them to do
  - Let the students know that you are to be called Miss, Mrs. Ms or Mr.
  - Establish procedure for wanting to talk
  - Establish procedure for leaving the room
  - Establish procedure for the end of class

#### Things to Do on the First Day

- Dress Neatly
- Arrive Early
- Greet Students
- Introduce yourself
- Review class procedures
- Faithfully follow your lesson plan
- Formally dismiss the class

#### **PREPARING YOUR TEACHING ENVIRONMENT**

You need to complete some preliminary steps to prepare the environment you will be working in lest your lesson be seriously flawed or fail altogether. Preparing your classroom for a lesson is not unnecessary fluff or fussiness. It is a way of increasing the effectiveness of your lesson, thus allowing you to tap the true inner beauty of your students.

Jesus paid attention to the surrounding where he taught in order to achieve the greatest effect. If we are to teach as Jesus did, we too must take pains to think of our environment and make the necessary preparations to increase the effectiveness of our lessons.

When we have people over for dinner, we prepare the environment to heighten the enjoyment and express a mood of celebration and welcome. When we teach we are hosting a “meal” for our students. We are bringing them nourishment for the spirit and soul.

## Tips for Preparing Your Classroom

- ❖ *Pay attention to seating arrangement.* Your goal should be to create an arrangement that keeps order but encourages a sense of welcome, comfort, and community while removing intimidation and rigidity.
- ❖ *Make a prayer station your central focus.* It is important that the central focus of your class be Jesus. If you truly are encouraging your children to make Jesus the center of their lives, at least make Jesus the center of your classroom.
- ❖ *Hang posters, pictures, and objects.* By the time the children reach your classroom, they have been conditioned to receive more visually than orally. If you do not have your own room to put up posters and pictures, you can easily create a portable display panel that you can carry in and out for your lesson and use as a focus.
- ❖ *Use the chalkboard, easel, and overhead projector.* One of the most effective things you can do before class is to arrive early and write key phrases, directions, or names, and definitions on the board, easel, or overhead so that when class begins you can refer to these images without turning your back on our class to write. Likewise, they give the children a definite message that you are prepared and there is work to be done.
- ❖ *Organize your supply station.* As a catechist, you will need many resources to conduct your classes, from handouts and textbooks to pencils, crayons, glue, and scissors. It is important for you to have a supply station to keep all of these well organized and at our fingertips. If you do not have your own classroom where you can store these things, be sure to arrive early to get the supplies you need and arrange them in the classroom so that they will be organized and accessible when needed.
- ❖ *Take advantage of AV equipment.* The proper use of AV equipment can enhance a lesson greatly. If you are showing a video or playing a tape or CD, be sure you've got it set to the right place and that you know how to turn on the power and adjust the volume.
- ❖ *Don't forget name tags.* Calling your students by name is a way of honoring them and letting them know that you really are interested in them. It is also a way of keeping order in your class. In baptism, we were each given a name that is inscribed in heaven. Jesus calls us each by name. We should do no less for our students.

## **READY – SET – GO WORKSHOP**

### **Part Two**

#### **THE IMPORTANCE OF LESSON PLANNING**

Lesson planning is at least 70% of the art of teaching. Solid, detailed lesson planning helps the catechist to function in the most effective manner possible, while preempting a large variety of discipline problems. A good lesson planner is one who imagines every possible scenario and prepares for it. A good lesson planner is one who examines the blueprint for the lesson, knows how it is to be built, and proceeds to build it effectively.

##### Tips for Lesson Planning

- ❖ Look ahead. First and foremost, know your calendar! The lesson you are planning is only part of a larger plan for the whole year. Get a good feel for how this lesson can build off of the previous one and lay the foundation for the next.
- ❖ Get to know your text and your class. Your text is a primary resource at your fingertips. Get to know its strengths and weaknesses ahead of time.
- ❖ Examine the teacher notes in the instructor's manual. Instructor's manuals are often a catechist's best friend. The more you know about the teacher notes, the better you will be able to implement your lesson and still leave room for spontaneity.
- ❖ Visualize yourself teaching the lesson. A highly effective teaching tool is visualization, the practice of using your imagination to experience specific situations in hope of learning behaviors that can be incorporated into your real life repertoire. Imagine every possible scenario and how you would react. Write down a list of materials that you will need to enhance certain situations. Imagine problems that might arise and visualize how you would best handle them.
- ❖ Make adjustments to fit your particular class. No lesson plan is ironclad. Once you've picked up the gist of the lesson, think of your particular class's readiness (or lack thereof) for what our lesson calls for and make the necessary adjustments.
- ❖ Know your goals and learning outcomes (objectives). It is crucial that you know what the purpose of your lesson is. Goals and learning outcomes (sometimes referred to as objectives) are statements you include in your lesson plan that state concretely and in measurable terms, what it is you hope to accomplish. Without goals and objectives, you will never know if you've accomplished what you have set out to do.
- ❖ Get your materials ready. Before you go into the classroom, be sure you have all of the materials you will need to complete the lesson properly. A competent catechist does not wait until the last moment to ask for such materials.
- ❖ Have Plan B ready. Always have an option ready in case something falls flat or just isn't working the way you had hoped.

Lesson planning is indeed the solid foundation, the rock on which our teaching ministry is built. If a catechist plans well and is well-prepared, the very core of the teaching process has been achieved. Planning just makes good sense. When we sit down to prepare, we should always spend a few minutes asking God to open our minds and hearts and to guide our planning.

##### Steps in Lesson Planning

- ❖ Pray for guidance
- ❖ Picture the children in your class
- ❖ Have your textbook or other curriculum
- ❖ Determine your goal

- ❖ Establish learning outcomes referred to in your manual as “objectives,” statements that clearly articulate the specific expectations and outcomes of the lesson.
- ❖ Make sure the focus of goals and learning outcomes are on what the children are going to do.
- ❖ Look at your teacher’s manual, because it will spell out for you the possible ways you can achieve learning outcomes
- ❖ Consider three lesson-planning movement:
  - Explore Life (Tell me what happened and why)
  - Share Tradition (When I was your age or Let me tell you a story . . .)
  - Integrate Life and Tradition (What did you learn from this experience/my story . . . or So, how will you be difference next time....)
- ❖ In the third stage is where your activities come in. Estimate your time and prepare the materials you’ll need for your lesson
- ❖ Always finish your planning where it started – in prayer

Keep in Mind ...

Children remember:

20% of what they hear;

30% of what they see;

50% of what they hear and see;

70% of what they say; and

90% of what they do.

Lesson planning is the teacher’s homework. It is what a teacher has to do to come into a class prepared. You plan what the student is to learn and how you, as catechist, will facilitate the learning process.

Long Range Planning

- ❖ Answers two questions: What are we going to study this year? And When?
- ❖ You need to know where you begin and when you end but how you are going to move from start to stop.
- ❖ You need to know when, where, and how things are going to happen

Immediate Planning

- ❖ Your preparation of a particular class session
- ❖ Every good lesson has a beginning, a middle and an end
- ❖ Know how much time you have scheduled for your class session
- ❖ Break your class into time segments – this will contribute to your sense of confidence because you know where the class is going
- ❖ Ask yourself how your students will react – personalize the lesson – make it fit your group of students
- ❖ Know, but do not teach, the theological background
- ❖ Outline the lesson for yourself
- ❖ Have what you need
- ❖ Use your own words
- ❖ State how you will evaluate the effectiveness of your lesson
- ❖ Be a creative evaluator

### **CHOOSING ACTIVITIES THAT FIT**

As part of your lesson planning, you will ultimately determine an action plan, a format in which your lesson will be experienced. A few possibilities are lecture, role plays, debate, poster work, group work discussion, guest speaker, read text, quiz game, and meditation. How do you know which one to pick? Will the method of class activity you have chosen fit with your goals and

learning outcomes? You need to measure and determine if the activity you have chosen is a good fit both for your lesson and for your particular class. For each class we teach, we need to not only alter our activities for variety but also to make sure that what we have chosen is the best vehicle for achieving our goals. Likewise, we need to be sure that what we have chosen is appropriate for the particular age group we are teaching.

#### Tips for Choosing Your Activities

- ❖ Review your goals and learning outcomes
- ❖ Review the age, gender, spiritual maturity of your class
- ❖ Consult a list of possible teaching formats
- ❖ Select an appropriate activity and see if it fits
- ❖ Employ praxis
- ❖ Select an alternate activity

#### Tips for Choosing Student Activities

- ❖ Become thoroughly familiar with the various student activities available to you
- ❖ View these activities in action
- ❖ Review the goals and learning outcomes of your lesson
- ❖ Keep all of the materials you need for each particular student activity well organized and in an accessible place

#### Student Activities

- ❖ Texts
- ❖ Writing
- ❖ Video
- ❖ Prayer
- ❖ Panel discussion
- ❖ Lecture
- ❖ Games
- ❖ Posters

Drawing

Music

Questions

Guest speakers

Group work

Role plays

Field trips

Storytelling

Arts and crafts

## **READY – SET – GO WORKSHOP**

### **Part Three**

#### **WAYS TO MOTIVATE AND INVOLVE CHILDREN**

- ❖ Learn names and call children by their names. When we do this, we engage them at a personal level, calling forth their unique potential.
- ❖ Move around the room constantly and draw your students into what you are teaching through body motions and voice expressions.
- ❖ Moving your eyes around the room to engage students' attention even when you are not the one speaking, and bring them closer to the center of activity
- ❖ Consider your voice. Are you communicating interest and enthusiasm? What is your speed and is your voice too loud or soft?
- ❖ Consider your voice. Are you communicating joy and enthusiasm or do you look bored?
- ❖ One of the best ways to engage students is to get their attention the minute they enter the room. As they enter, hand them a worksheet, an assignment, a puzzle, a picture to color, or an article to read.
- ❖ Ask good questions. Use a variety of questions so that lessons don't end up being lectures, but rather engaging and involving explanations of faith.
- ❖ Always introduce the topic well so your students will know what they are being invited to discuss

#### **SHIFTING THE FOCUS ONTO YOUR STUDENTS**

The spotlight is not supposed to be on you, it's supposed to be on your students. They are the ones who are supposed to perform, not you. In each classroom, there is a spotlight waiting to shine. If we focus it totally on us, we are putting a great deal of pressure on ourselves. The goal of a teacher is to turn that spotlight around and spread it on the entire class. On any one person, it is overwhelming. If it is poured out and diffused over a whole class, it is just the right amount of light to bring about a new focus and a new way of seeing things that otherwise go unseen. As catechists, we need to learn how to shift the focus or pressure off of ourselves and on the class where it will allow us to see our students in a whole new way. Catechists tend to put a lot of pressure on themselves to do all of the talking. This is a hard habit to break.

#### **Tips for Focusing on Students**

- ❖ *Look over your lesson plan.* How much talking are you planning on doing? Sometimes lecture is necessary, but if you are always doing all of the talking, when and how will the children learn to express their faith? Take some of your talking time and brainstorm ways of getting the students involved in bringing forth the material you wish to cover.
- ❖ *Review your goals and objectives.* Remember that your goals and objectives are not statements about what you are going to do, but descriptions of what your students are going to do. If your objectives call for students to articulate an understanding of something that means that they are to articulate it, not you! Look over your goals and objectives and then examine your lesson plan and determine how the students are going to demonstrate proficiency in the areas defined.
- ❖ *Identify ways students will demonstrate learning.* This can be done in a wide variety of ways. Don't rely solely on oral expression. Provide your students with a variety of ways in which they can demonstrate an understanding of material, either through drawing, writing, role playing, poster making, etc. Studies show that students retain ninety percent of what they do. Get your students doing!

- ❖ *Be prepared with open-ended questions.* Be sure to ask questions that cannot be answered with a yes or a no.
- ❖ *Develop techniques for deflecting.* Students, especially older ones, know how to put the pressure on catechists by asking difficult questions. Respond to a difficult question by tossing it back at them (What do you think?) or by inviting anyone else in the class to share their thoughts while you compose yourself and collect your own thoughts.
- ❖ *Resist the temptation to talk too much.* As catechists we need to resist the temptation to give the answers and instead help our students grapple with the questions of life and faith.

#### Becoming a Successful Teacher

- ❖ Think positively
- ❖ Plan ahead
- ❖ Formal planning
- ❖ Informal planning
- ❖ Visualize
- ❖ Focus on learning not teaching
- ❖ Be enthusiastic
- ❖ Learn to laugh

### **PREPARING FOR THINGS THAT MIGHT GO WRONG**

When teaching a class, a million and one things can (and sometimes do) go wrong. As a catechist, you need to become aware of all the things that can typically go wrong so that you can learn to both prevent and recover from common mishaps. Some of these problems can be pretty sticky! However, you may be surprised to know that most, if not all, of these can be avoided or at least coped with so they don't ruin your class or you!

#### Tips for Cleaning Up Classroom Problems

- ❖ Your AV equipment either doesn't show up, doesn't work, or breaks down. First of all arrive early to make sure the equipment you need is indeed present. Next, go through a trial run to make sure the video play, the volume works, the picture comes on, and the tape is the right one. If something doesn't work the way it is suppose to, you'll have time to correct the problem without an audience watching.
- ❖ You're short on the amount of handouts/materials you were supposed to have for this class. Be very careful to count through all of the supplies and handouts we will use to make sure we have enough. Make sure you have a briefcase or bag in which to organize all your materials. The key to avoiding this problem is simple – organization!!
- ❖ You are emotionally or physically run down and can't find the energy needed to teach this class. You and your coordinator need to have a contingency plan. If you cannot, under any circumstances teach the class, you need to know the proper procedure for arranging for a substitute. Likewise, you have to have personal contingency plans in case you need a baby sitter or other personal arrangement made so you can come to class. If you are able to come to class, be aware of the burden you are carrying but do not under any circumstance attempt to take it out on your students or seek solace from them. At times like this, you need to pray for the inspiration you need to acknowledge your burden but then set it aside so that the children can come first. It is not easy, but with the Lord's help, you can overcome your burdens and devote yourself to your lesson and the children.
- ❖ Your students totally misunderstood the complex directions you just explained. To avoid this problem, follow some very simple rules. First, never put students into a group until after you've explained the directions for group work. Second, always repeat your directions a second time. Third, ask for a student to repeat the directions back to you so

you can test their comprehension. Finally, continue to repeat the directions even after the group work or task has begun so that they are continually reinforced.

- ❖ A smart-mouthed student stumps you with a question you have no idea how to answer. First, if the question is clearly out of line, politely tell the student to hold on to that question until another more appropriate time. Second, if you think the question is reasonable, but you are still stumped, tell the student that they have asked a good question but you honestly don't know the answer at the moment. Promise to get the answer for the next class and be sure to begin the next class by taking care of such old business. Finally, if you're working with older students, you may invite someone else to answer the question if they think they know the answer and you think they are capable of doing so. Whatever the case, don't panic. You never signed on to be the fountain of all knowledge. By telling the student you need to research and learn the answer to the question, you model for them what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.
- ❖ The lesson, video, or text turns out to be a lemon. If you find yourself in this mess, it means you haven't done your homework! The only way you can find yourself in the middle of a lesson, video, or text passage that is poor material is if you did not preview. The bottom line is prepare.
- ❖ A student discipline problem makes you lose your train of thought and the flow of the class. Your goal as catechist is to stay on course with your lesson. That doesn't mean that you ignore the little problems that can get the best of you. The challenge is to confront the behavior without stopping the lesson. If a child's attention is wavering, call on that child to get him or her back into the mix. If a child is making noises that are disruptive while you or someone else is talking, go over and stand by that child and if necessary, place a hand on his or her shoulder to make your presence known. Don't be a stationary catechist – get up and move around the room. Your proximity to students is the strongest deterrent against disruptive behavior. Your moving around allows you to continue the lesson while relying on eye contact, proximity, or a tap on the shoulder to challenge disruptive behavior.
- ❖ An interruption (someone at the door) allows the students just the sliver of opportunity they need to go berserk. Never turn your back on the class. If you are helping an individual student, do so in a way that allows you to continue observing the rest of the class. If someone comes to the door to speak to you, speak to that person while facing your class. This goes against our natural tendency to give someone our full attention when they are speaking to us, but you are committed to devoting your full attention to your class at the moment. Finally, never leave your class unattended! Not only do you risk discipline problems, you are also in jeopardy of safety and legal concerns.
- ❖ Someone (a guest speaker or student doing a presentation) doesn't show up. Always have a plan "B" ready in case plan "A" fails. It need not be elaborate, but you should have some type of activity or lesson ready in case the people you were counting on don't show up.
- ❖ You're finished with your planned lesson and you still have thirty-five minutes of class time to go. The key to coping with this problem is to always over-plan. You need to prepare for more than you think can be accomplished in your allotted class time. The key to over-planning is to be sure you have extra material that is not necessarily crucial to your lesson. If you need to rely on it, fine. If you don't get to it, fine. But don't leave home without it.

## **READY – SET – GO WORKSHOP**

### **Part Four**

#### **SMOOTHING OUR DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS**

In teaching, we encounter many rough edges and bumps, namely discipline problems. Left unchecked these problems can be like a piece of unsanded wood – someone could get a splinter! A good catechist learns how to smooth out, smooth over, and even eliminate discipline problems. Maintaining discipline in the classroom allows the beauty of the children and the power of God’s Word to show through just as sanding down a surface brings out the true beauty of a piece of wood. Rather than giving up when faced with discipline problems, learn how to use some tools to smooth them out.

##### Tips for Maintaining Discipline

- ❖ Understand the role of discipline. Good discipline is not an end in itself. The goal of your class is effective learning. One can have good discipline but still have a poor lesson. The role of good discipline is to remove any obstacles from an effective learning experience.
- ❖ Identify what the improper behavior is. Be sure to clearly identify the discipline problems that you need to address. As the old saying goes, choose your battles wisely. Once you have clearly identified the discipline problems that are most troublesome, you can develop a plan for addressing them.
- ❖ Don’t panic. When discipline problems arise, the worst thing you can do is panic. Remain calm and in control. Communicating a sense of authority while remaining calm is not only effective, but necessary in developing a long term strategy for combating discipline problems. Losing your cool may work for the moment, but it undermines your credibility in the long run.
- ❖ Don’t interrupt your class. One of the reasons children misbehave is they know it will interrupt the flow of the class, frustrate you, and bring attention to them. A good catechist learns to deal with discipline problems without stopping the lesson. By using eye contact, placing a hand on a shoulder, or standing next to the “culprit” while you continue to talk, you can minimize the behavior without interrupting the flow of your lesson.
- ❖ Keep children involved. When children get bored, they try to create their own stimulation. When you see that a child’s attention is wavering, involve the child in the lesson by asking a question or giving a task for him or her to perform. Of course, if you can keep your children busy right from the start, you eliminate a great deal of potential trouble.
- ❖ Ride your eye, use names, and move around. If you are completely stationary, you invite students farthest away from you to engage in misbehavior. It is important for a catechist to be on the move. Physically walk around the class as you teach. Keep your eyes moving around as you speak. If you are answering one child’s question, move your eyes around the class so that it is clear you are still speaking to everyone. Most importantly, learn and use your students’ names. One of the most effective ways of getting a child’s attention is to call his or her name out loud, pause, and direct the question or task to that child.

- ❖ Check your seating arrangement. Where children sit can have a great impact on their behavior. How a classroom is arranged can have a great impact on how the whole class behaves. Your seating should be arranged in such a way that no child feels separated or remote from the hub of activity. Make sure visual lines are open. Likewise, if a child is misbehaving, it could be that he or she is sitting with children that encourage this behavior. Moving a child's seat can effectively reduce bad behavior.
- ❖ Reinforce good behavior. Don't just focus on the negative. An effective catechist learns to focus attention on good behavior and reinforce it. When a class is behaving properly, you can reward them with an activity they enjoy doing. When a child known for misbehaving shows the proper behavior, be sure to reinforce it with positive affirmation without going overboard.
- ❖ Make class rules, explain them, and enforce them consistently. When your class begins, it is a good idea to formulate some rules with the help of the class. Depending upon their age, you should be able to ask them what rules they will need to make the class go well and create a good learning environment. This is especially effective because when you enforce the rules, you can remind them that this is their rule. Be sure that students know clearly what the rules are and enforce them in a consistent manner so that children know they are to be taken seriously.
- ❖ Never send a child out of the room alone and unsupervised. You are responsible for that child's safety.
- ❖ Be careful not to use God as an "enforcer." Understand that when you put God in the role of the enforcer, you are creating a theology of God that is not consistent with our heritage.
- ❖ Being overly tough on discipline can create bigger problems. For one, you run the risk of alienating your students. They may be so intimidated by you that they will either not respond at all or will simply parrot back to you what they think you want to hear. Secondly, recall that religious education, is for most children, their most significant experience of church. If it is a negative experience, or one that they fear, they will carry that with them for years to come.

**Discipline problems may be catalogued into three distinct categories:**

- ❖ Minor discipline problems: These are the most typical problems that a catechist faces on a regular basis. Examples include wavering attention, distractions, and side talking. While not overly serious, they can wear down a catechist. Left unchecked, they can erode the discipline of a class and lead to more serious problems.
- ❖ Moderate discipline problems: These are problems that can seriously disrupt the flow of your lesson. Examples include children who set themselves apart from the class and refuse to participate, simple mischief such as throwing spitballs or paper airplanes, or talking out of turn. It is more difficult to deal with these problems without interrupting the flow of your class but they can still be dealt with effectively without bringing your lesson to a grinding halt.
- ❖ Major discipline problems: These are problems that can bring your lesson crashing down around you. Examples include a class activity that dissolves into total chaos due to lack of clear directions, a student sabotaging a lesson by interfering with a piece of equipment or an incident of dishonesty or disrespect such as stealing or graffiti. In all of these instances, it is important to remain calm and in control and deal with the specific behavior in a manner that will maintain your self-respect and that of your class.

## Troubleshooting

In situations that are serious, it is crucial that you consult your DRE, pastor, colleagues, or any other person of authority so that you are not dealing with it alone. On the other hand, you cannot run to these people every time some discipline problem arises. Be sure the situation warrants it. In serious situation, be fair and flexible, and always give children an opportunity to redeem themselves. One of the simplest ways of avoiding serious problems is to make sure that no activity begins until everyone is “on the same page.” This means being sure that all rules and directions (as well as consequences for violating them) are understood and clarified before you begin any activity that has potential for disruption.

DOs and DON'Ts that will enable you to be more in control of some of the minor discipline problems:

- ❖ DO learn to ride your eyes
- ❖ DO call upon students using their names.
- ❖ DO move around the room
- ❖ DO check your seating arrangement
- ❖ DO assign tasks and responsibilities
- ❖ DO use nonverbal communication
- ❖ DO reinforce good behavior
- ❖ DON'T turn your back or leave the room
- ❖ DON'T continually stop your lesson
- ❖ DON'T allow problems to escalate

Moderate problems call for the addition of class rules that should be established by teacher and children and referred to often. Here are some DOs and DON'Ts for handling discipline in the moderate category:

- ❖ DO keep a sense of humor and perspective
- ❖ DO be firm, confident, and consistent
- ❖ DO post and enforce your class rules.
- ❖ DO show respect and understanding
- ❖ DO confront and identify the behavior
- ❖ DON'T use sarcasm or criticize publicly
- ❖ DON'T use homework as a punishment and don't make God a law enforcer
- ❖ DON'T force involvement

Problems like chaos, sabotage of equipment, and dishonesty and disrespect certainly belong in the “major” category of discipline problems. Some DOs and DON'Ts for these:

- ❖ DO prepare, organize, and provide clear expectations
- ❖ DO be fair and flexible and negotiate a contract
- ❖ Do consult parents, your DRE, or colleagues
- ❖ DON'T punish the whole class for the offense of one
- ❖ DON'T accuse or verbally attack a student
- ❖ DON'T begin class until you have attention
- ❖ DON'T ever, ever leave your class unattended

Two essential ingredients are prayer and love. As catechists we need to pray for guidance when handling serious matters. And in our prayer we need to ask the Holy Spirit to help us respond to children with love, no matter how frustrated we feel. “A teacher must have the faith of Abraham, the patience of Job, the wisdom of Solomon, the courage of Daniel as he goes into the lion’s den, and the confidence of Moses that it is all worthwhile. As catechists, we are called to be prophets for those we teach. Let us pray often for the strength and determination to persevere in this very special task.

#### What Are Common Problems

- Walking into a noisy setting
- A student continually coming late to class
- Forgetting textbooks or homework
- A bad attitude
- Doing work poorly
- Lack of class participation
- Not enough class time
- Student will not listen

#### Creating the Conditions for a Disciplined Classroom

- Know your students
  - Family problems
  - Family influence
  - Well-being
  - Tired of school
  - Learning problems
- Mutual respect
- Preparation for Class
- Familiarity with program guidelines

#### Suggestions that can serve as a general rule of thumb for classroom management

- Relax before and during class
- Be fair
- Maintain perspective
- Follow through
- Avoid angry responses
- Focus on behavior, not persons
- Be understanding, but firm
- Never force an apology
- Never use ridicule
- Maintain eye contact
- Maintain a sense of humor
- Be consistent and clear