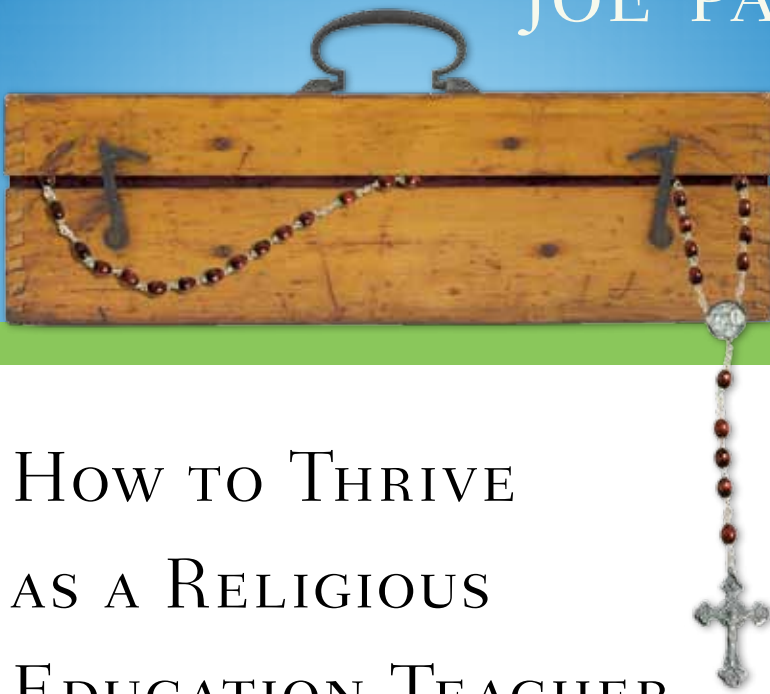


A LEADER'S GUIDE

THE CATECHIST'S TOOLBOX

JOE PAPROCKI



HOW TO THRIVE
AS A RELIGIOUS
EDUCATION TEACHER

Skills, Tips,
and Practical
Advice You Can
Use Today

THE
CATECHIST'S
TOOLBOX
A LEADER'S GUIDE

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RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TEACHER

LOYOLAPRESS.
A JESUIT MINISTRY

Chicago

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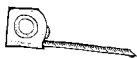
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CONTENTS

Introduction vii

An Outline of *The Catechist's Toolbox*.ix

1	Shop-talk: The Language of Catechesis	1
2	Blueprints: Planning and Preparation	3
3	Socket and Wrench Set: Finding Activities That Fit	5
4	Color Charts: Selecting Learning Activities	7
5	Different Types of Wood: Adapting to Learning Styles, Special Needs, and Diversity.	9
6	Drop Cloths: Preparing for Things That Can Go Wrong	11
7	Applying Primer: Preparing the Learning Environment.	13
8	Spotlights: Shifting the Focus onto Learners.	15
9	Extension Cords: Plugging into the Power of Prayer	17
10	Sandpaper: Smoothing Out Discipline Problems.	19
11	Furniture Polish: Polishing Your Technique	21
12	Instruction Manuals: Using Textbooks and Catechist Manuals.	23
13	Samples and Illustrations: Looking to the Bible for Vision	25
14	Power Tools: Using Technology	27
15	Scrapers: Using Questions to Get beneath the Surface.	29
16	Tape Measures: Assessing Progress	31
17	Apprenticeship: Teaching and Learning by Doing.	33



INTRODUCTION

As a catechetical leader, you can use *The Catechist's Toolbox* in a variety of ways to help your catechists learn and practice some of the basic skills needed to thrive as a religious education teacher/catechist. Here are a few ideas:

- ⊕ **Provide copies of *The Catechist's Toolbox* to your catechists and encourage them to read their books independently before the start of the catechetical year.**
- ⊕ **Provide copies of *The Catechist's Toolbox* to new and prospective catechists to support them in their preparation.**
- ⊕ **Ask your catechists to read *The Catechist's Toolbox*.** Then, during a catechist meeting, arrange them in small groups to share which topics they found most helpful.
- ⊕ **Each month, ask one or more catechists to do a brief presentation at a catechist meeting on one of the chapters in *The Catechist's Toolbox*.**
- ⊕ **Use *The Catechist's Toolbox* as a guide for your new catechist orientation and training.** Plan to spend fifteen to twenty minutes on each chapter for a total of six hours of training. Training can easily be conducted as one six-hour session, two three-hour sessions, or three two-hour sessions. Use the outline that begins on page 3 of this guide.
- ⊕ **Ask catechists to read a chapter of *The Catechist's Toolbox* each week.** Then send them a weekly e-mail that highlights what you think is the key point and ask them to reply with a brief summary of what they learned.
- ⊕ **Establish a discussion forum on your parish Web site, inviting your catechists and those from neighboring parishes to discuss the skills and techniques outlined in the seventeen chapters of *The Catechist's Toolbox*.** Establish one thread for each of the seventeen chapters and invite catechists to post comments and ask questions about these throughout the year.

- **Arrange your catechists in mentoring pairs for the upcoming catechetical year.** Ask them to read *The Catechist's Toolbox* on their own, then invite them to meet to discuss the skills and techniques outlined in each chapter. Encourage mentor catechists to share their experiences and apprentice catechists to ask questions based on the themes of each chapter.

Designate the first thirty to forty-five minutes of each catechist meeting as a mini in-service session on teaching skills. Use the seventeen outlines based on the chapters of *The Catechist's Toolbox* (see pp. ix–xiv of this guide) for your mini in-service sessions.

AN OUTLINE OF *THE CATECHIST'S TOOLBOX*

(with corresponding page numbers from the book)

1. Shop-talk: The Language of Catechesis (pp. 1–6)

a. The Language of Faith Formation

- (1) catechism
- (2) catechesis
- (3) catechumen
- (4) catechumenate
- (5) catechist

b. A Catechist's Role Description

- (1) Qualities of an Effective Catechist
- (2) Knowledge and Skills of a Catechist

2. Blueprints: Planning and Preparation (pp. 7–12)

a. Planning and Preparation in Catechesis

- (1) Long-Range Planning
- (2) Get to Know Your Text and Your Participants
- (3) Examine the Teacher Notes in the Catechist Manual
- (4) Visually Imagine Yourself Teaching the Lesson
- (5) Make Adjustments to Fit the Needs of Your Participants
- (6) Know Your Learning Outcomes (Objectives)
- (7) Follow a Catechetical Process
- (8) Get Your Materials Ready
- (9) Have Plan B Ready
- (10) Overplan
- (11) Pray

3. Socket and Wrench Set: Finding Activities That Fit (pp. 13–16)

a. Planning Activities That Fit

- (1) Review Your Learning Outcomes
- (2) Review the Age, Gender, and Spiritual Maturity of Your Group
- (3) Consult a List of Possible Learning Activities
- (4) Select an Appropriate Activity and See if It Fits
- (5) Select an Alternate Activity

4. Color Charts: Selecting Learning Activities (pp. 17–24)

a. Learning Activities

- (1) Memorizing or “Taking to Heart”
- (2) Speaking and Singing
- (3) Writing
- (4) Role-Playing and Dramatizing
- (5) Playing Games
- (6) Drawing and Art
- (7) Audiovisuals

5. Different Types of Wood: Adapting to Learning Styles, Special Needs, and Diversity (pp. 25–34)

a. Adjusting for Learning Styles

- (1) Multiple Intelligences
 - (a) Learning through Words
 - (b) Learning through Music
 - (c) Learning through Logic and Math
 - (d) Learning through Art and Space
 - (e) Learning through Physical Activity
 - (f) Learning through Nature
 - (g) Learning through Interaction
 - (h) Learning through Introspection
- (2) Paying Attention to Special Needs
 - (a) Orthopedic Impairment
 - (b) Visual Impairment
 - (c) Deafness or Hearing Impairment
 - (d) Speech or Language Impairment
 - (e) Social or Behavioral Problems, Attention Disorders, and Learning Disabilities
 - (f) Mental Impairment
 - (g) Giftedness
- (3) Cultural Inclusivity

6. Drop Cloths: Preparing for Things That Can Go Wrong (pp. 35–42)

a. Catechetical Drop Cloths

- (1) Your audiovisual equipment either didn’t show up or doesn’t work.
- (2) You find yourself short on the amount of handouts/materials needed.
- (3) You are emotionally and/or physically run down and can’t find the energy needed to teach this lesson.

- (4) Your participants totally misunderstand the complex directions you thought you just explained, and everything is up for grabs.
- (5) A participant stumps you with a question that you have no idea how to answer.
- (6) The lesson, video, or text turns out to be a lemon.
- (7) A minor discipline problem makes you lose your train of thought.
- (8) An interruption (someone at the door) allows the participants just the sliver of opportunity they needed to create a disruption.
- (9) Someone (a guest speaker or participant doing a presentation) doesn't show up when he or she is supposed to.
- (10) You're done with your lesson and you still have thirty-five minutes to go.

7. Applying Primer: Preparing the Learning Environment (pp. 43–50)

a. Preparing Your Teaching Environment

- (1) Make a Clean, Neat Space
- (2) Provide a Welcoming Seating Arrangement
- (3) Provide Name Tags
- (4) Create a Prayer Center
- (5) Display Posters, Pictures, and Sacred Objects
- (6) Utilize the Chalkboard, Easel, Wipe-Off Board, and Overhead Projector
- (7) Organize a Supply Station
- (8) Use Technology
- (9) Straighten Up before Leaving

8. Spotlights: Shifting the Focus onto Learners (pp. 51–56)

a. Putting the Focus on Your Participants and Away from Yourself

- (1) Look over Your Lesson Plan
- (2) Review Your Learning Outcomes
- (3) Identify Ways in Which Participants Will Be Engaged in Learning
- (4) Be Prepared with Open-Ended Questions
- (5) Develop Techniques for “Deflecting”
- (6) Resist the Temptation to Talk Too Much

9. Extension Cords: Plugging into the Power of Prayer (pp. 57–70)

a. The Power of Prayer

- (1) Preparing a Prayer Center
- (2) Enthroning the Bible

- (3) Taking Traditional Prayers to Heart: Memorization and Prayer
- (4) Lectio Divina
- (5) Leading Reflective Prayer (Meditation)
- (6) Leading Liturgical Prayer
- (7) Teaching Spontaneous Prayer

10. Sandpaper: Smoothing Out Discipline Problems (pp. 71–80)

a. Rough Edges in Catechesis: Discipline Problems

- (1) Understand the Role of Discipline
- (2) Identify the Improper Behavior
- (3) Don't Panic
- (4) Avoid Interrupting Your Lesson
- (5) Keep Participants Involved
- (6) Ride Your Eye, Use Names, and Move Around
- (7) Check Your Seating Arrangement
- (8) Reinforce Good Behavior
- (9) Make a Few Rules, Explain, and Enforce Them Consistently
- (10) Get to Know the Age Group You Work With
- (11) Working with Small Groups

b. Minor Discipline Problems

c. Moderate Discipline Problems

d. Major Discipline Problems

11. Furniture Polish: Polishing Your Technique (pp. 81–88)

a. Polishing Your Teaching Techniques

- (1) Move Around
- (2) Make Eye Contact/Ride Your Eye
- (3) Vary Your Voice
- (4) Be Aware of Facial Expression and Body Language
- (5) Vary Your Pace
- (6) Keep a Sense of Humor
- (7) Be Aware
- (8) Walk the Line between Creativity and Maintenance
- (9) Strive to Be Not Only Effective, but Also Affective

12. Instruction Manuals: Using Textbooks and Catechist Manuals (pp. 89–94)

a. Using Catechetical Texts and Manuals

- (1) Familiarize Yourself with Your Text
- (2) Be Aware of Your Participants' Level of Aptitude
- (3) Preview the Material You Plan to Cover

- (4) Give Your Participants an Overview of What They Are about to Read
- (5) Vary Your Approaches to Reading the Text
- (6) Identify Vocabulary Words and Key Phrases
- (7) Be Aware of the Pace
- (8) Carefully Look Over the Catechist Notes in the Margin
- (9) Develop Additional Questions and Activities

13. Samples and Illustrations: Looking to the Bible for Vision (pp. 95–100)

a. The Bible Provides a Vision

- (1) Familiarize Yourself with the Bible
- (2) Read and Pray the Bible
 - (a) Steps for Reading and Praying the Bible
- (3) Enthroned the Bible in Your Learning Space
- (4) Arrange for Bibles in Your Learning Space
- (5) Use the Bible Regularly in Your Sessions
- (6) Bring the Bible Stories to Life
- (7) Use the Lectionary as a Guide
- (8) Teach Bible Skills

14. Power Tools: Using Technology (pp. 101–108)

a. Using Technology: Power Tools for the Effective Catechist

- (1) Decide on the Most Effective Medium for Your Lesson
- (2) Familiarize Yourself with the Equipment
- (3) Do a Test Run on Your Presentation
- (4) Don't Trust Technology Just Because It's Technology
- (5) Preview Your Materials
- (6) "Line-up" Your Tape, CD, DVD, or Videotape
- (7) Practice Shutting Off Equipment
- (8) Technology Is a Means to an End

b. DVD/VCR

c. Projection TV

d. PowerPoint Presentation

e. A SMART Board

f. The World Wide Web

g. LCD Projector

h. Overhead Projector

i. CD/Cassette Player

j. MP3 Player

15. Scrapers: Using Questions to Get beneath the Surface (pp. 109–114)

a. Asking Questions to Get beneath the Surface

- (1) Phrase Your Questions in a Simple, Straightforward Way
- (2) Keep Your Questions Open-Ended
- (3) Don't Answer Your Own Questions
- (4) Ask a Question and Then Repeat It
- (5) As You Await an Answer, Move around the Room and Make Eye Contact
- (6) Ask a Question of the Whole Group First
- (7) Plan Your Questions ahead of Time
- (8) Give Feedback to Participants When They Respond to Questions
- (9) Leading Discussion

b. Types of Questions

- (1) Impersonal
 - (a) Informational
 - (b) Implicational
- (2) Personal
 - (a) Individual
 - (b) Ideological

16. Tape Measures: Assessing Progress (pp. 115–122)

a. Assessing (Measuring) Faith Formation

- (1) Doing Formal Assessment
- (2) Doing Informal Assessment
- (3) Authentic Assessment
- (4) Pay Attention to Various Learning Styles

17. Apprenticeship: Teaching and Learning by Doing (pp. 123–130)

a. It's All in the Doing

- (1) For Ourselves
 - (a) Try New Things
 - (b) Get a Mentor
 - (c) Accept New Challenges
 - (d) Learn from Your Mistakes
- (2) For Our Participants
 - (a) Become a Mentor
 - (b) Let Go
 - (c) Follow the Example of John the Baptist
 - (d) Think "Laboratory" and "Field Trips"
 - (e) Implement Catholic Social Teaching

Mini In-service Session One

Shop-talk: The Language of Catechesis (pp. 1–6)

Focus

The ministry of catechesis has a language of its own.

Learning Outcome

As a result of this session, catechists will be able to identify key words that are central to the catechetical ministry.

Plan

1. Ask the catechists to identify professions that have languages of their own. For example, IT professionals, doctors, lawyers, etc. Ask for examples of words that are common to people in these professions but foreign to the average person.
2. Explain that the Catholic Church has a language of its own. Ask if anyone can define the following words. For simple definitions of each, go to www.findinggod.com.

- + Ecclesiology
- + Evangelization
- + Magisterium
- + Transubstantiation
- + Episcopacy
- + Sanctification
- + Ecumenism

CATECHESIS **CATECHISM**
CATECHIST
CATECHUMENATE
CATECHUMEN



3. Point out that, within the church, the catechetical ministry also has a language of its own. Provide a handout with the following words printed on it along with spaces for taking notes:
 - + **catechism**
 - + **catechesis**
 - + **catechumen**
 - + **catechumenate**
 - + **catechist**
4. Use the notes on pages 3–4 of *The Catechist's Toolbox* to describe the above words.
5. Emphasize that to be a catechist is to have a vocation. Point out that on page 5 of *The Catechist's Toolbox* there is a Catechist's Role Description. Arrange the catechists in groups of three or four and ask them to compose their own catechist's role description (knowledge and skills) without looking at the book.
6. When they are finished, collect their thoughts and write them on the board. Compare their thoughts with the Catechist's Role Description on page 5 of *The Catechist's Toolbox*.
7. Emphasize that a role description is a list of ideals and that no one should feel intimidated by this list. Affirm your catechists by telling them that they were called to this ministry because they either possess this set of knowledge and skills or they show the potential to do so.
8. Conclude with the prayer from page 6 of *The Catechist's Toolbox*.

Encourage your catechists to visit www.catechistsjourney.com for an opportunity to companion with other catechists.



Mini In-service Session Two

Blueprints: Planning and Preparation (pp. 7–12)

Focus

Preparation and planning are the foundation of effective lessons.

Learning Outcome

As a result of this session, catechists will be able to identify key strategies for planning an effective catechetical lesson.

Plan

1. Arrange the catechists into pairs and have everyone share his or her most recent vacation experience. Ask them to describe what went according to plan and what did not.
2. After they are finished sharing, invite a few volunteers to share their experiences with the whole group.
3. Point out that preparation and planning are a very big part of the vacation experience and that, even with the best planning, sometimes things can go wrong.
4. Explain that, when it comes to teaching lessons, preparation and planning are crucial. Describe each lesson as if it were a journey—a spiritual vacation—that requires detailed planning and preparation.
5. Invite some of the more experienced catechists to share how they prepare and plan for a lesson.



6. Use the “Skills, Tips, and Practical Advice for Planning and Preparation” on pages 9–11 of *The Catechist’s Toolbox* to highlight the following details:
 - a. Long-Range Planning
 - b. Get to Know Your Text and Your Participants
 - c. Examine the Teacher Notes in the Catechist Manual
 - d. Visually Imagine Yourself Teaching the Lesson
 - e. Make Adjustments to Fit the Needs of Your Participants
 - f. Know Your Learning Outcomes (Objectives)
 - g. Follow a Catechetical Process
 - h. Get Your Materials Ready
 - i. Have Plan B Ready
 - j. Overplan
 - k. Pray
7. Go through the catechist manual of the catechetical series you are using to highlight key “ingredients” for effective lesson planning. Point out any online lesson planning provided at your publisher’s Web site.
8. Conclude with the Scripture and Prayer found on page 12 of *The Catechist’s Toolbox*.

Encourage your catechists to visit www.catechistsjourney.com for an opportunity to companion with other catechists.



Mini In-service Session Three

Socket and Wrench Set: Finding Activities That Fit

(pp. 13–16)

Focus

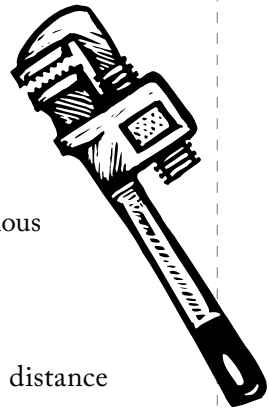
We select learning activities that are the best vehicle for achieving our learning outcomes.

Learning Outcome

As a result of this session, catechists will be able to identify various learning activities and describe how and when they are best used.

Plan

1. Select a significant tourist attraction that is a fairly long distance from the location at which you are gathered.
2. Arrange the catechists into pairs and have them identify different ways that they can get to this destination (drive, fly, take a train, sail, take a bus, etc.) and which way they would recommend.
3. Next, invite the pairs to share their ideas with the group. Ask people why they might prefer one method over another.
4. Point out that many factors can go into what method of travel is selected: cost, number of children, age of children, health issues, etc.
5. Emphasize that, when planning a lesson, there are a variety of ways to achieve the stated goals (learning outcomes) of the lesson and that there are also many factors to consider when selecting the best method for doing so.



6. Use the notes on pages 14–15 of *The Catechist's Toolbox* to expand upon the following ideas:
 - a. **Review Your Learning Outcomes**
 - b. **Review the Age, Gender, and Spiritual Maturity of Your Group**
 - c. **Consult a List of Possible Learning Activities** (such as on pp. 18–23 of *The Catechist's Toolbox*).
 - d. **Select an Appropriate Activity and See if It Fits**
 - e. **Select an Alternate Activity**
7. Invite experienced catechists to share some of the various types of learning activities that they use and for what purposes.
8. As a large group, brainstorm some of the varieties of ways in which Jesus taught: possible answers include parables, miracles, discourses, and symbolic actions—such as washing feet, discussions at meals, and so on.
9. Encourage the catechists to get to know a variety of learning activities as well as how to effectively use them and what situations they are best suited for.
10. Conclude with the Scripture and Prayer on page 16 of *The Catechist's Toolbox*.

Encourage your catechists to visit www.catechistsjourney.com for an opportunity to companion with other catechists.



Mini In-service Session Four

Color Charts: Selecting Learning Activities

(pp. 17–24)

Focus

We utilize a variety of methods in our catechetical sessions.

Learning Outcome

As a result of this session, catechists will be able to describe how to effectively use a variety of learning activities.

Plan

1. Bring in some color charts from a paint store or a large box of crayons with a number of color selections and show them to the group.
2. Tell the catechists that they have been chosen to redecorate the room in which they teach and that they can choose the colors for the walls and carpets. Invite volunteers to share what colors they would select.
3. After hearing from a few volunteers, tell the catechists that selecting learning activities is similar to selecting colors for room decorating. Using the notes on page 18 of *The Catechist's Toolbox*, emphasize the importance of the following:
 - a. Become thoroughly familiar with the various learning activities available.
 - b. View the activities in action.
 - c. Review the learning outcomes.



- d. **Keep all the materials you need organized and accessible.**
4. Next, divide the catechists into the following groups (the corresponding pages of *The Catechist's Toolbox* are shown in parentheses):
 - a. **Memorizing or "Taking to Heart"** (p. 18)
 - b. **Speaking and Singing** (p. 19)
 - c. **Writing** (p. 20)
 - d. **Role-Playing and Dramatizing** (p. 21)
 - e. **Playing Games** (p. 21)
 - f. **Drawing and Art** (p. 22)
 - g. **Audiovisuals** (p. 23)
5. Have each group go over the material on the corresponding pages of *The Catechist's Toolbox*. Prepare to summarize the rationale behind their assigned type of activity and give a few examples of how to do each type of activity.
6. Invite catechists who have used some of the activities and techniques described above to share their own experiences and strategies for effective use.
7. Conclude with the Scripture and Prayer on page 24 of *The Catechist's Toolbox*.

Encourage your catechists to visit www.catechistsjourney.com for an opportunity to companion with other catechists.



Mini In-service Session Five

Different Types of Wood: Adapting to Learning Styles, Special Needs, and Diversity

(pp. 25–34)

Focus

We adapt our methods to the specific needs of those we serve.

Learning Outcome

As a result of this session, catechists will be able to identify various learning styles and special needs, as well as strategies for incorporating approaches that address them.

Plan

1. Invite the catechists to imagine that they have been given a holiday that was not originally on their calendar. Distribute index cards and have them write a list of what they would do on this day to make it an ideal day off.
2. When they are finished, invite volunteers to share their descriptions of their ideal day off.
3. Draw attention to the differences in the ways that people want to spend their time. Some prefer to be alone, while others prefer to be with people. Some prefer to be very active, while others prefer to relax. Ask for volunteers to point out other differences.



4. Point out that we each have individual styles and preferences. Explain that this is also true for those we teach: Each individual comes with a unique learning style. Every group of learners has diversity that must be addressed with a variety of teaching strategies.
5. Use the notes on pages 26–33 of *The Catechist's Toolbox* to expand upon the following ideas:
 - a. **Multiple Intelligences**
 - b. **Special Needs**
 - c. **Cultural Inclusivity**
6. Ask the catechists to identify their own learning styles according to the Multiple Intelligences outlined on pages 26–28 of *The Catechist's Toolbox*.
7. Invite veteran catechists to share insights on how they have addressed special needs in their groups.
8. Invite any catechists who have children with special needs to share their insights and advice.
9. Describe any resources that your parish has that can assist those with special needs (e.g., interpreters for the deaf).
10. Discuss the unique cultural makeup of your community. Identify which strategies on pages 31–33 of *The Catechist's Toolbox* will be most helpful for addressing the needs of your community.
11. Conclude with the Scripture and Prayer on page 34 of *The Catechist's Toolbox*.

Encourage your catechists to visit www.catechistsjourney.com for an opportunity to companion with other catechists.



Mini In-service Session Six

Drop Cloths: Preparing for Things That Can Go Wrong

(pp. 35–42)

Focus

We need to be prepared to adjust to the variety of things that can go wrong in a catechetical session.

Learning Outcome

As a result of this session, catechists will be able to identify common challenges that they face, as well as strategies for dealing with and preventing these challenges.

Plan

1. Arrange the catechists into groups of three or four and invite them to share stories about any nuisances, irritations, and obstacles that they have encountered in the last twenty-four to forty-eight hours (e.g., a traffic jam, a closed road, the symptoms of a cold, a stalled car, a crashed computer).
2. Allow time for the groups to share and then invite volunteers to share stories with the whole group.
3. Ask if anyone can explain the adage Murphy's Law (whatever can go wrong will go wrong).
4. Explain that, without being paranoid, catechists need to be aware of the many things that can and will go wrong when teaching.



5. Ask the group as a whole to brainstorm a list of things that they know can and do go wrong when teaching. Write the list on the board.
6. Invite veteran catechists to share stories of things that went wrong in their lessons and how they responded to the situations.
7. When you are done, invite the catechists to open their copies of *The Catechist's Toolbox* to pages 36–40 and to compare the list on the board with the book's top-ten list of "Things That Can Go Wrong."
8. Invite discussion about any of the items on this list that catechists are most concerned about or to which they wish to add their own insights.
9. As a group, brainstorm strategies for responding to examples on the board that are not addressed in the book.
10. Emphasize the need for good preparation and planning to reduce the number of things that can go wrong. Encourage catechists not to panic when things do not go as they planned.
11. Conclude with the Scripture and Prayer on page 42 of *The Catechist's Toolbox*.

Encourage your catechists to visit www.catechistsjourney.com for an opportunity to companion with other catechists.



Mini In-service Session Seven

Applying Primer: Preparing the Learning Environment

(pp. 43–50)

Focus

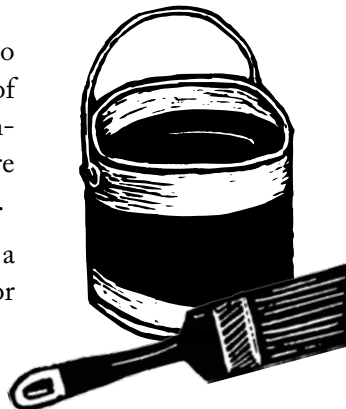
We prepare the learning environment to increase the effectiveness of our lessons.

Learning Outcome

As a result of this session, catechists will be able to identify strategies for preparing the learning environment in order to enhance the effectiveness of their lessons.

Plan

1. Invite the catechists to imagine that they have been asked to organize a banquet at the parish to celebrate a special occasion.
2. Arrange them into groups of three or four and have them brainstorm what details would need to be taken care of in order to prepare a setting in one of the parish buildings for the banquet (e.g., decorations, cleaning, table settings, floor arrangement).
3. After a few minutes, invite the groups to report their plans to the whole group. If any of the catechists have actually served on a banquet committee before, invite them to share their experiences about making preparations.
4. Point out that, whether we are hosting a banquet or just having some friends over for



dinner, we take care of many details to make sure that the setting is conducive to sharing and celebration.

5. Explain that each time we teach a catechetical session, it is as if we are hosting a small “banquet” for those we teach. As catechists, we are serving the word of God, which nourishes the minds and hearts of those we teach. Point out that, just as we make preparations for meals and banquets, we need to make preparations for each catechetical session we are hosting.
6. Use the notes on pages 44–47 of *The Catechist’s Toolbox* to outline strategies for preparing the learning environment.
 - a. **Make a Clean, Neat Space**
 - b. **Provide a Welcoming Seating Arrangement**
 - c. **Provide Name Tags**
 - d. **Create a Prayer Center**
 - e. **Display Posters, Pictures, and Sacred Objects**
 - f. **Utilize the Chalkboard, Easel, Wipe-Off Board and Overhead Projector**
 - g. **Organize a Supply Station**
 - h. **Use Technology**
 - i. **Straighten Up before Leaving**
7. Ask for volunteers to describe which of these strategies is most important to them and why. Invite veteran catechists to share their own strategies for preparing their learning space for their lessons.
8. Point out what you did ahead of time to prepare the learning space for this catechist gathering.
9. Conclude with the Scripture and Prayer on page 50 of *The Catechist’s Toolbox*.

Encourage your catechists to visit www.catechistsjourney.com for an opportunity to companion with other catechists.



Mini In-service Session Eight

Spotlights: Shifting the Focus onto Learners

(pp. 51–56)

Focus

We shift the focus away from ourselves and onto our learners.

Learning Outcome

As a result of this session, catechists will be able to identify strategies for shifting the focus away from themselves and onto their participants.

Plan

1. As a large group, brainstorm a list of common fears that people have (e.g. flying, crowded spaces, insects, heights).
2. Write the list on the board.
3. Point out that surveys often show that the greatest fear most people have is public speaking.
4. Explain that comedian Jerry Seinfeld once pointed out that fear of public speaking is often rated higher than fear of death. By this rating, he suggests that most people would rather be the person being eulogized at a funeral than the one giving the eulogy!
5. Tell the catechists that, for most people, it is a natural fear to be “in the spotlight.” Explain that, as catechists, some of the pressure we



experience is from feeling as though we are indeed in the spotlight, called to act as the “sage on the stage.”

6. Explain that the effective catechist knows that the pressure is on the learners to “perform” in any learning experience while the catechist’s role is to facilitate learning.
7. Use the notes on pages 52–55 of *The Catechist’s Toolbox* to highlight the following strategies:
 - a. **Look over Your Lesson Plan**
 - b. **Review Your Learning Outcomes**
 - c. **Identify Ways in Which Participants Will Be Engaged in Learning**
 - d. **Be Prepared with Open-Ended Questions**
 - e. **Develop Techniques for “Deflecting”**
 - f. **Resist the Temptation to Talk Too Much**
8. Invite veteran catechists to share strategies that they employ in order to effectively engage learners and shift attention away from themselves.
9. Spend extra time explaining the chart on page 53 of *The Catechist’s Toolbox* and the concept of learning outcomes. Emphasize that, when planning a lesson, outcomes help you to focus not on what you are going to do but on what the learners will do.
10. Conclude with the Scripture and Prayer on page 56 of *The Catechist’s Toolbox*.

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Mini In-service Session Nine

Extension Cords: Plugging into the Power of Prayer

(pp. 57–70)

Focus

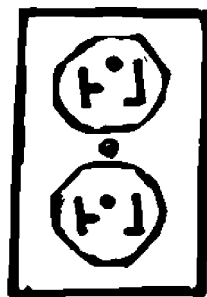
The most effective catechesis takes place within a climate of prayer.

Learning Outcome

As a result of this session, catechists will be able to identify strategies and skills for leading others in prayer.

Plan

1. Ask the catechists how many of them have ever prayed before. No doubt, *all* will raise their hands. Explain that, in one sense, prayer is very simple—we've all prayed before. Point out that, at the same time, leading others in prayer requires some basic skills that can allow them to deepen their relationship with God.
2. Work toward a definition of prayer. Offer the following two examples of people in communication with each other:
 - a. **A teenage couple talking for hours on their cell phones**
 - b. **An elderly couple holding hands in silence while sitting on a front porch swing**
3. Explain that both couples are communicating with each other, yet in very different ways. Point out that the elderly couple is able to communicate with each other without using words. Tell the catechists that, when defining prayer, we need to get beyond "talking to God." A good definition of prayer is the time we spend in awareness of God's



presence. Sometimes in that presence, we talk to God. Other times, we listen. Still, other times, we just enjoy being in God's presence.

4. As a large group, cover the following strategies, using the notes on pages 58–59 of *The Catechist's Toolbox*:
 - a. **Preparing a Prayer Center**
 - b. **Enthroning the Bible**
 - c. **Taking Traditional Prayers to Heart**
5. Then, arrange the catechists into four groups and have each group prepare to do a brief summary of the following using the pages indicated of *The Catechist's Toolbox*:
 - a. **Lectio Divina** (pp. 59–60)
 - b. **Leading Reflective Prayer** (pp. 60–62)
 - c. **Leading Liturgical Prayer** (pp. 62–66)
 - d. **Teaching Spontaneous Prayer** (pp. 66–67)
6. Read aloud “High Praise from a Fifth-Grade Boy—A True Story” from page 69 of *The Catechist's Toolbox*. Emphasize that prayer is the key to reaching the hearts of those we teach.
7. Conclude with the Scripture and Prayer on page 70 of *The Catechist's Toolbox*.

Encourage your catechists to visit www.catechistsjourney.com for an opportunity to companion with other catechists.



Mini In-service Session Ten

Sandpaper: Smoothing Out Discipline Problems

(pp. 71–80)

Focus

We maintain discipline in the catechetical setting to allow God’s word to speak to the hearts of those we teach.

Learning Outcome

As a result of this session, catechists will be able to identify strategies for maintaining discipline and preventing or reducing discipline problems.

Plan

1. Ask the catechists if any of them can admit to having been a handful when they were in grade school. Talk about the kinds of mischief that they got into—and that kids in general get into—in learning settings.
2. Go over the three categories of discipline problems outlined on page 78 of *The Catechist’s Toolbox*: minor discipline problems, moderate discipline problems, and major discipline problems.
3. Write the word *discipline* on the board and explain that in this session, we will be looking at strategies for maintaining discipline. Point out that the word *disciple* and *discipline* share the same root word, which means “to learn.” Explain that discipline is a necessary part of learning and that maintaining discipline is one of the gifts that we offer to those we teach so that God’s word can be more fully received.



4. Using the notes on pages 73–76 of *The Catechist's Toolbox*, discuss the following strategies:
 - a. **Understand the Role of Discipline**
 - b. **Identify the Improper Behavior**
 - c. **Don't Panic**
 - d. **Avoid Interrupting Your Lesson**
 - e. **Keep Participants Involved**
 - f. **Ride Your Eye, Use Names, and Move Around**
 - g. **Check Your Seating Arrangement**
 - h. **Reinforce Good Behavior**
 - i. **Make a Few Rules, Explain, and Enforce Them Consistently**
 - j. **Get to Know the Age Group You Work With**
 - k. **Practices to Avoid**
5. Invite veteran catechists to share their own insights on the above, as well as to add their own strategies for handling discipline problems. Go over any specific policies for handling discipline problems in your program.
6. Using the notes on pages 77–78 of *The Catechist's Toolbox*, discuss strategies for working with small groups.
7. Conclude with the Scripture and Prayer on page 80 of *The Catechist's Toolbox*.

Encourage your catechists to visit www.catechistsjourney.com for an opportunity to companion with other catechists.



Mini In-service Session Eleven

Furniture Polish: Polishing Your Technique

(pp. 81–88)

Focus

We can polish the skills and techniques needed to become more effective catechists.

Learning Outcome

As a result of this session, catechists will be able to identify strategies for improving their catechetical skills and techniques.

Plan

1. Go around the room and have each catechist share a description of a person whose public-speaking ability they admire. The person may be a celebrity, a politician, an entertainer, or just someone they know personally.
2. Ask the catechists what particular skills these people have that they admire most, such as their sense of humor, facial expressions, pleasant voice, ability to think on their feet, etc.
3. Point out that some of their skills are natural while others are learned. Explain that each of us can learn skills and techniques that can improve our presence in a learning setting.
4. Ask the catechists to think of effective teachers they have had and to identify



what skills they employed to make them so effective. List these skills and techniques on the board.

5. Using the notes on pages 82–86 of *The Catechist's Toolbox*, discuss the following strategies:
 - a. **Move Around**
 - b. **Make Eye Contact/Ride Your Eye**
 - c. **Vary Your Voice**
 - d. **Be Aware of Facial Expression and Body Language**
 - e. **Vary Your Pace**
 - f. **Keep a Sense of Humor**
 - g. **Be Aware**
 - h. **Walk the Line between Creativity and Maintenance**
 - i. **Strive to Be Not Only Effective but Also Affective**
6. Arrange the catechists into pairs and invite them to share with each other which of the above strategies they feel they are good at and which they feel they would like to improve upon.
7. Invite several volunteers to share their selections with the whole group.
8. Discuss possible ways that feedback through peer observation might be arranged in your setting.
9. Conclude with the Scripture and Prayer on page 88 of *The Catechist's Toolbox*.

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Mini In-service Session Twelve

Instruction Manuals: Using Textbooks and Catechist Manuals

(pp. 89–94)

Focus

We use catechetical textbooks and catechist manuals as resources to guide our lessons.

Learning Outcome

As a result of this session, catechists will be able to identify strategies for the most effective use of catechetical textbooks and catechist manuals.

Plan

1. Ask the catechists if any of them have ever traveled to a foreign country where they did not know the language and required a tour guide for at least part of the journey. Invite a few volunteers to share their experiences.
2. Point out that tour guides do not draw attention to themselves but to the journey itself.
3. Explain that catechetical textbooks and catechist manuals can be compared to tour guides. They are not meant to draw attention to themselves but rather are meant to assist us on our faith journey.
4. Emphasize that, as catechists, we do not teach a subject or a topic. Instead, we teach a way of life and we teach about a person—Jesus



Christ. Textbooks are a valuable resource in guiding our faith-formation journey as we deepen our relationship with Jesus.

5. Lead a general discussion of how your catechists are using their current textbooks and manuals and what strategies they are finding most helpful from their own experiences.
6. Use the notes on pages 90–92 of *The Catechist's Toolbox* to focus on the following strategies:
 - a. **Familiarize Yourself with Your Text**
 - b. **Be Aware of Your Participants' Level of Aptitude**
 - c. **Preview the Material You Plan to Cover**
 - d. **Give Your Participants an Overview of What They Are about to Read**
 - e. **Vary Your Approaches to Reading the Text**
 - f. **Identify Vocabulary Words and Key Phrases**
 - g. **Be Aware of the Pace**
 - h. **Carefully Look Over the Catechist Notes in the Margin**
 - i. **Develop Additional Questions and Activities**
7. Spend some time talking about the unique characteristics of your current catechetical texts and catechist manuals as well as any strategies that particularly apply to these.
8. Conclude with the Scripture and Prayer on page 94 of *The Catechist's Toolbox*.

Encourage your catechists to visit www.catechistsjourney.com for an opportunity to companion with other catechists.



Mini In-service Session Thirteen

Samples and Illustrations: Looking to the Bible for Vision

(pp. 95–100)

Focus

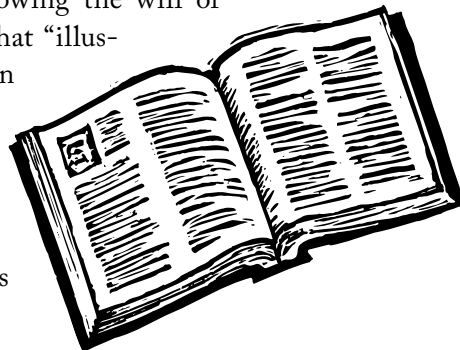
We look to the Bible for images of what it looks like when human beings respond to God's call.

Learning Outcome

As a result of this session, catechists will be able to identify strategies for using the Bible effectively in their lessons.

Plan

1. Bring in several cookbooks and/or home-improvement manuals that show illustrations of what the finished product is meant to look like.
2. Take a few minutes to discuss some examples of creating dishes or doing home improvements where the catechists used cookbooks or home-improvement manuals to guide them. Ask them to share the extent to which their finished products looked like the pictures/illustrations in the guides.
3. Explain that, when it comes to following the will of God, we have a guide—the Bible—that “illustrates” what it looks like when human beings respond to God's call.
4. Invite a brief discussion about how the catechists are using the Bible in their own lives for prayer and study. Talk about challenges that catechists



may be finding when it comes to reading and understanding the Bible. For further help in becoming more familiar with the Bible, recommend *God's Library: A Catholic Introduction to the World's Greatest Book* by Joe Paprocki (Loyola Press).

5. Use the notes on pages 96–99 of *The Catechist's Toolbox* to discuss the following strategies:
 - a. **Familiarize Yourself with the Bible**
 - b. **Read and Pray the Bible**
 - c. **Enthroned the Bible in Your Learning Space**
 - d. **Arrange for Bibles in Your Learning Space**
 - e. **Use the Bible Regularly in Your Sessions**
 - f. **Bring the Bible Stories to Life**
 - g. **Use the Lectionary as a Guide**
 - h. **Teach Bible Skills**
6. Spend some time going over the “Steps for Reading and Praying the Bible” on page 97 of *The Catechist's Toolbox*.
7. Talk about specific issues relating to the use of Bibles in your current program and setting.
8. Conclude with the Scripture and Prayer on page 100 of *The Catechist's Toolbox*.

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Mini In-service Session Fourteen

Power Tools: Using Technology

(pp. 101–108)

Focus

We use technology to more effectively engage those we teach.

Learning Outcome

As a result of this session, catechists will be able to identify strategies for using technology effectively in their lessons.



Plan

1. Arrange the catechists into groups of three or four and have them make a list of all the electronic devices that can be found in a typical home (e.g., computers, cell phones, CD players, TVs, microwaves, DVD players).
2. When they are done, invite groups to report to the whole group. Then, ask how many catechists are carrying an electronic device with them at the moment (cell phone, pager, etc.)
3. Point out that technology has placed many conveniences at our fingertips and, over the last century, has changed the way people live, work, and play.
4. Emphasize that technology has also played a significant role in all areas of education, including religious education. If your parish or diocese has a Web site, talk about how something like this was not available just a generation ago.

5. If you have a computer with Internet capability on hand to demonstrate a variety of Web sites available for faith formation (including your textbook publisher's Web site), take a few minutes to show these to your catechists. Ask them about online resources that they use as part of their own faith formation.
6. Use the notes on pages 102–104 of *The Catechist's Toolbox* to discuss the following strategies for effectively using technology in catechesis:
 - a. **Decide on the Most Effective Medium for Your Lesson**
 - b. **Familiarize Yourself with the Equipment**
 - c. **Do a Test Run of Your Presentation**
 - d. **Don't Trust Technology Just Because It's Technology**
 - e. **Preview Your Materials**
 - f. **"Line-Up" Your Tape, CD, DVD, or Videotape**
 - g. **Practice Shutting Off Equipment**
 - h. **Technology Is a Means to an End**
7. As a group, go through the glossary on pages 105–107 of *The Catechist's Toolbox*, especially highlighting the technology that is available in your program's setting.
8. Demonstrate any technology that you would encourage your catechists to take advantage of more often in their lessons.
9. Conclude with the Scripture and Prayer on page 108 of *The Catechist's Toolbox*.

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Mini In-service Session Fifteen

Scrapers: Using Questions to Get beneath the Surface

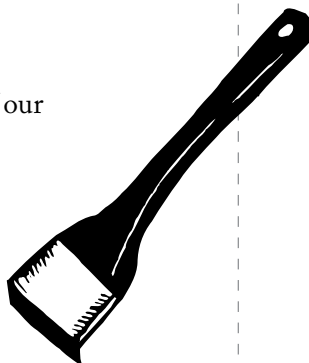
(pp. 109–114)

Focus

We utilize questions in our lessons to get beneath the surface of our participants and tap their inner potential.

Learning Outcome

As a result of this session, catechists will be able to identify strategies for asking more effective questions in their lessons.



Plan

1. Play a simple game of Twenty Questions. Have one volunteer think of a famous person, place, or thing (for fun, have that person, place, or thing be from the Bible or Catholic heritage). Then have the other catechists ask up to twenty yes-or-no questions about it until they determine what it is.
2. Remind the volunteer to answer only yes or no. If anyone guesses correctly, he or she then gets a turn to think of something.
3. Do this several times before making the point that questions are a way of getting to the truth. Explain that in this game, however, the questions are very basic and can only be answered with a yes or a no.
4. Point out that, in our lessons, we rely on questions to help us get to the truth, but we can use a wide variety of types of questions.
5. Draw attention to the fact that Jesus was very skilled at asking questions. Have six volunteers read, at the top of page 110 of *The Catechist's Toolbox*, the examples of questions that Jesus asked.

6. Use the notes on pages 110–112 of *The Catechist's Toolbox* to discuss the following strategies for asking questions:
 - a. **Phrase Your Questions in a Simple, Straightforward Way**
 - b. **Keep Your Questions Open-Ended**
 - c. **Don't Answer Your Own Questions**
 - d. **Ask a Question and Then Repeat It**
 - e. **As You Await an Answer, Move around the Room and Make Eye Contact**
 - f. **Ask a Question of the Whole Group First**
 - g. **Plan Your Questions ahead of Time**
 - h. **Give Feedback to Participants When They Respond to Questions**
 - i. **Leading Discussion**
7. Briefly go over the four *Is* of asking questions, using the notes on page 113 of *The Catechist's Toolbox*.
8. Invite veteran catechists to share strategies that they employ for asking questions in their lessons.
9. Conclude with the Scripture and Prayer on page 114 of *The Catechist's Toolbox*.

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Mini In-service Session Sixteen

Tape Measures: Assessing Progress

(pp. 115–122)

Focus

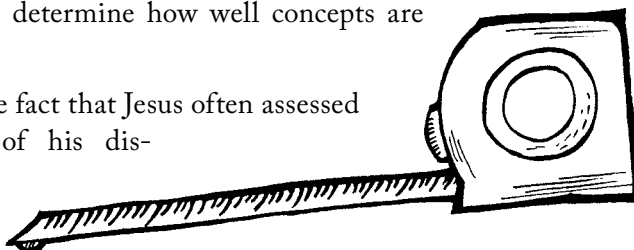
We assess whether our learners are grasping the life of discipleship.

Learning Outcome

As a result of this session, catechists will be able to identify strategies for effectively assessing the progress of their learners.

Plan

1. Ask the catechists if they or their children have auditioned or tried out for a role in a play or a space on a team. Likewise, ask if any have been in the position of holding auditions or tryouts as the one responsible for deciding who makes it and who gets cut. Discuss their experiences.
2. Ask them to try to identify what criteria they think was considered when decisions were made about who makes it and who gets cut.
3. Point out that people who are responsible for holding auditions and tryouts need to know how to assess abilities as well as potential. Explain that, in faith formation, we are called upon to assess as well—not for the purpose of deciding who makes it and who gets cut, but to determine how well concepts are being grasped.
4. Draw attention to the fact that Jesus often assessed the understanding of his dis-



principles. Have volunteers read the examples at the top of page 116 of *The Catechist's Toolbox*.

5. Arrange the catechists into three groups and assign one of the following types of assessment to each group (the corresponding pages of *The Catechist's Toolbox* are shown in parentheses):
 - a. **Formal Assessment** (p. 117)
 - b. **Informal Assessment** (p. 119)
 - c. **Authentic Assessment** (p. 119)
6. Have the groups read and discuss their assigned type of assessment and then have them prepare a brief summary for the whole group of that form of assessment.
7. Talk about what form(s) of assessment are to be used in your current program and setting.
8. Emphasize that assessment in religious education is designed to determine to what extent participants are learning to live the Catholic way of life. Assessment says as much about the catechist as it does about the learner. If concepts are not being grasped, we need to alter our methods.
9. Conclude with the Scripture and Prayer on page 122 of *The Catechist's Toolbox*.

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Mini In-service Session Seventeen

Apprenticeship: Teaching and Learning by Doing

(pp. 123–130)

Focus

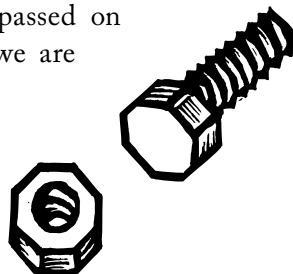
We grow as catechists and we help our learners grow as disciples of Christ through apprenticeship.

Learning Outcome

As a result of this session, catechists will be able to identify strategies for effectively apprenticing learners into the Catholic way of life.

Plan

1. Arrange the catechists into pairs and have them share with each other a description of a person who served as a mentor for them in some aspect of life.
2. After they have shared with each other, invite a few volunteers to share with the whole group. Share an example from your own life.
3. Explain that we learn many things in life through apprenticeship. Write the word *apprenticeship* on the board and point out that, traditionally, many trades, such as carpentry, required apprenticeship so that one could learn from someone with greater experience.
4. Explain that the Christian way of life is also passed on through apprenticeship and that, as catechists, we are called to apprentice our learners into this way of life.
5. Arrange the catechists into two groups and assign one of the following topics to each



group (the corresponding pages of *The Catechist's Toolbox* are shown in parentheses):

a. Step-by-Step Instructions for Apprenticing—For Ourselves

(pp. 124–125)

b. Step-by-Step Instructions for Apprenticing—For Our Participants (pp. 126–128)

6. Have each group read and discuss their assigned section. Then pair the catechists in group one with the catechists in group two and have them explain and describe their assigned sections to their partners.
7. Talk about how newer catechists in your program can benefit from being mentored by veteran catechists. Discuss the possibilities of establishing mentor/apprentice relationships among your catechists.
8. Discuss concrete examples of how catechists can help their learners put into action what they are learning. Identify opportunities for learners to put their faith into action through service projects coordinated by the parish program.
9. Conclude with the Scripture and Prayer on page 130 of *The Catechist's Toolbox*.

Encourage your catechists to visit www.catechistsjourney.com for an opportunity to companion with other catechists.



Visit www.catechistsjourney.com

In addition to the wealth of suggestions in *The Catechist's Toolbox*, leaders can get specific answers to their questions about catechesis and other faith-related topics by visiting Joe's blog, Catechist's Journey, at www.catechistsjourney.com. Besides the helpful answers you'll receive from Joe, you can also enjoy meaningful conversations and explore ideas with other DREs and catechists when you visit this site.



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