

Parish Directors: Building Community

Most Directors of Religious Education would like to have happy committed catechists. Many of the strongest lay leaders in a parish begin as catechists. Many catechists get their first taste of spirituality and theology as beginning catechists and go on to study theology, religious studies, and spiritual direction. Others stay with the program and are nourished into a deeper faith. Most of these commitments grew out of experiences of being a part of a faith community that developed when they were beginning catechists. While a Director of Religious Education cannot program the development of a faith community, there are some things he or she can do to facilitate a faith community:

- Develop a relationship with the catechists. Know and call them by name. Interview or just have a conversation with new catechists to get to know them better.
- Make it a priority to be available to catechists before and after sessions.
- Affirm. Affirm. Affirm.
- Celebrate important personal events within the group of catechists. It does not have to be another meeting; just gather for a short time before or after sessions. Have child care available at those times for children of catechists.
- Have catechist meetings which always include personal faith sharing, prayer and reflection, and helpful input and background.
- Always use an adult education model with catechists that involves discussion and open questions.

- Empower experienced catechists to act as mentors and presenters.
- Pray with catechists often.
- When individual catechists face difficult times and are willing, plan a short prayer celebration with the catechist community.
- Keep in touch and continue conversations.