

Methods and Class Management: Lesson Planning

Introduction

The heart of success in teaching religion is preparation and planning. Good lesson planning will give you confidence, clarity, and assurance with children. To get the most out of this session, reflect on the *first question*. Then read the article. Then answer the *reflection questions*.

First Question

What comes to your mind when you think about lesson planning?

Article

This article is not meant to be the one and only way to develop a lesson plan. It is a general overview that highlights the key steps of doing a lesson plan. If you have been using the *Alive In Christ* Catechist Guide, you already know what a helpful tool it is. For those who are just beginning, it won't be long before you realize that you do not have to start from scratch. Your Catechist Guide along with the aliveinchrist.osv.com Lesson Planner make it easy to do lesson planning.

Steps in Planning a Lesson

1. A few days before your session, choose a specific time to plan. It is important to do this so that you will be able to assemble any materials you may need.
2. Begin with a prayer to the Holy Spirit asking for guidance, or use the Catechist Prayer, which you will find on the first Background

page of each lesson.

3. Ask yourself these three important questions as you begin your plan:
 - ***What am I going to teach?***
 - ***How much time do I have?***
 - ***Which activities will most engage the children I am teaching?***
4. Find the answers to those questions by reading the whole lesson plan in your guide.

What am I going to teach?

Open your *Alive In Christ* Catechist Guide and look at the Background pages. There you will find the Key Concept and Doctrinal Content which describe the Traditions of the Church that underlie your lesson. Read the Catechist Background, which will help you reflect on the Tradition from an adult perspective. The Lesson Plan also lists the objective for each segment of your lesson. The same objectives are also found in your Guide at the beginning of each segment. On the next page, read through the Teaching Strategies on how to teach the Tradition in an age-appropriate way. *Alive In Christ* is a total program, and content is developed from Kindergarten through Grade 8. Acquaint yourself with the Scope and Sequence in your Catechist Guide, especially your grade level, and follow it. Do not be tempted to veer away from your content to present your favorite topic, because the children will lose the benefit of a well developed Scope and Sequence.

How much time do I have?

Even though your session is scheduled for a certain amount of

time, you will find that you may not really have that much time. It may take time for announcements, or for children to settle down, or to greet and welcome them. Keep in mind that the catechetical process in *Alice In Christ* has three steps. It is important to do each step. Pay attention to choosing activities that will fit your time allotment. Small group discussion with sharing takes more time than a large group question and answer activity. At times, you may wish to summarize a page rather than read it aloud, or have the children read it aloud or silently. While suggestions are given in your Guide, they are suggestions. You are the one who has to decide what is best. No matter what, don't sacrifice activities that engage the children to save time. Children learn better by doing, than they do by listening. One of the fears of any catechist is "What will happen if I run out of things to do and finish early?" Always have an activity on hand that you can use if that does happen.

Which activities will most engage the children I am teaching?

There are several options for using activities offered in your Guide and on aliveinchrist.osv.com. They are written to give a variety of options for your lesson planning. They are based on learning styles, age-appropriateness, and interest. As you get to know your group and observe the activities that the children really participate in, it will become easier to choose the best activities for them. Also in the background pages for each lesson you will find other tips for presenting the material. For more information, read the article *Learning Styles or Multiple Intelligences* in the Child Development section.

5. Once you have made your choices, list the supplies you will need and note if there is anything you need to do ahead of time, such

as obtaining supplies, or preparing children for a skit, or inviting a guest speaker. This should be easy since as you will notice that materials needed are listed for every part of the lesson on your Lesson Plan page in the Guide, and before each activity on aliveinchrist.osv.com.

6. Decide how you need to arrange your space for your lesson to flow. Do you need space for movement, for art activities, or for prayer?
7. Gather your supplies and copy any handouts you will need.

Following these steps should help you feel confident and competent as you begin your lesson.

Reflection Questions

- How do you think lesson planning will help you become an effective catechist?
- Which suggestion was the most practical in this article?