

# BEST PRACTICES FOR CATECHESIS WITH 9-YEAR-OLDS

Compiled by the Confirmation Age Working Group

- **Family Faith Formation is the context** – parents should be having shoulder-to-shoulder encounter opportunities and parallel experiences of catechesis (*whether or not they are in the same room, they should be reflecting on the same topics in such a way that parents are equipped to continue the conversation organically at home.*)
- **Remember that Family Faith Formation has four interdependent dimensions:** *Community Building, Formal Catechesis, Transformative Prayer & Liturgy, and Meaningful Service*
  - Help them know the REAL Jesus, see Him in the Church, and experience Him in the Mass, and the Community.
- **Remember that the Directory for Catechesis and Family Faith Formation Guidance indicate that we must move:**
  - **“from Rows to Circles”** (*literally and figuratively*)
  - **“from Teachers to Witnesses”** (*because people only listen to teachers when they are credible witnesses*)
  - **“from Consumers to Investors”** *in faith. (in other words, children and adults are protagonists in their own faith formation – you may be surprised what they are able to share!)*
- **9-year-old brains are thirsty sponges.**
  - Memorization will train the imagination of the 9 year old child – but the focus is not memorizing mere facts, but beautiful language and also images! Poetry and prayers recited aloud together (for example, “Come, Holy Spirit” or St. Augustine’s Prayer to the Holy Spirit) could be consistent moments repeated throughout process preparation.
  - Engage all the senses!
  - Don’t hesitate to use music, art (including sacred art), and movement as modes of catechesis, worship, and expression
  - Prepare opportunities for quiet, structured thoughtful time, perhaps in front of the blessed sacrament or in another sacred space. Consider building from very brief moments of quiet and gradually extending to longer periods of quiet.
  - Build real life skills that demonstrate the Gifts / Fruits of the Spirit, that they can practice and have recognized within the Church.

- Kids learn implicitly through stories, and then internalize them and manifest ideas by acting them out.
- ***Developmentally, 9-year-olds are not yet in a Logical/Analytical stage (that begins around 6<sup>th</sup> grade).*** Do not confuse observation with analysis!
  - Instead, a nine-year-old should be asked to pay careful attention and see as much as they can see, hear as much as they can hear, smell, etc. The parent or adult educator facilitates further integration of that information or, and this indeed may often be more appropriate, does *not* integrate it for them yet (unless they are specifically asking such questions), because the marinating of all these “ingredients” in their hearts and souls will bear the fruit in due season!
  - There are a myriad of activities, readings and prayer possibilities that reflect the cognitive abilities of this age that can be done of course, and especially with their parents. Any time a new idea is proposed for something to do/way of discussing with the children, it should be reflected on in light of this information regarding their development. Consequently, some things that were planned or executed with older children may still be fine in that light even though others may not.
- **What do YOU remember from age 9?** What made it memorable... How does it matter NOW? Age 9 is still an “affiliative” age group, so kids often benefit from seeing and spending time with others their age who they see as interesting, fun, engaging, and socially / emotionally attractive. Role models & life experiences leave lasting impressions.
- **Really Get to Know the Parents and Children** – what matters to THEM? Sacred listening and intercessory is not just important for the first stage of the Family Faith Formation Workbook implementation cycle, but is the center of all we do in ministry!