

Choosing the Proper Learning Activities

There is no single teaching method or approach that should always be used to the exclusion of other techniques. Many methods are equally effective in presenting the message of faith and facilitating the student's learning experience. And, because certain techniques are more appropriate and effective on some grade levels than on others, a variety of teaching techniques is essential. Teaching is a lot more than telling!

Effective catechists are not afraid to experiment with new methods or try new approaches that might work better with their group of students. Once they find something that works, they incorporate these methods into their teaching. Choosing appropriate methods depends on the goals or objectives of the lesson. It starts with asking, "What are the desired outcomes for this lesson?"

When selecting a technique for a lesson, keep in mind that people learn in three ways:

- 1. *Cognitively*—through acquiring ideas, absorbing facts, and the content of knowledge from a given tradition.**
- 2. *Affectively*—Through feelings and attitudes.**
- 3. *Behaviorally*—through actions and experience.**

Lessons should include a variety of approaches in order to reflect these three ways of learning.

Methodology and approaches become catechetical when they are used to create conditions that encourage people to seek, accept, and integrate the Christian message more fully into their lives. Religious education goes beyond handing over a body of truths.

Some methods are especially effective for religious education. Catechists can weave into lesson plans various experience of prayer, liturgical participation, Christian service, and opportunities for public witness. Finally, remember that methods are only tools. They merely set the stage for the students' possible growth in faith and never force or guarantee it.

Pause and reflect for a moment:

- **How can a student's life experience affect a religion education lesson?**
- **How does the process of revelation in Scripture parallel the process of learning in religious education?**
- **From which type of learning activity do you usually learn best? Enjoy most? Grow in faith?**