

## CATECHETICAL STAFF

### ORIENT YOUR CATECHISTS AND HELPERS

The first concern of volunteers is usually a clear insight into what is expected of them. These concerns can be quickly and accurately responded to using the *Catechist/Staff Handbook* (see Policy 412). This document will give the new catechist clear and direct insight into exactly what is expected. An orientation with prospective new catechists which uses the *Catechist/Staff Handbook* should enable the catechist to understand the primary expectations of them by the parish.

Reviewing the Catechist Guide's "Introduction for Catechist" information, found in the first pages of the book, will be helpful for learning about the developmental needs of the students, classroom management skills and the spiritual role of the catechist.

The second concern of most new catechists revolves around what they will be doing in the classroom itself. Most people who teach never completely lose their apprehension of the classroom. Actually this is a value for anyone who teaches, in that it helps keep them sharp and on edge to do their best. Undue apprehension, however, can be partially satisfied in three ways. After a thorough review of the catechist's manual and the catechetical process, consider one of the following three ideas.

1. The first and most effective way to alleviate undue apprehension would be to team the new catechist as a helper with a veteran teacher for the first year. This would allow the new catechist to go through the entire manual with someone who has experience. Often, however, programs do not have the luxury of a full year of preparation.
2. The second method would be to have the new catechist observe an experienced teacher and then establish the veteran as a mentor for the new teacher - someone the new teacher can call for ideas. This mentoring relationship allows the new teacher to ask for help in a peer to peer relationship.
3. The third approach would be for the REL to observe the new catechist for the first few weeks. This approach can help establish and deepen a relationship with the catechist but it can also be threatening for the new catechist because it is not a peer to peer relationship.

One of the goals of an orientation process is to link the new catechist with the existing community of catechists. If one of the primary goals of catechesis is to form community in the classroom then it only stands to reason that attention be given to forming community with catechists. A catechist will be able to model in the classroom only what they have learned as a member of the larger Christian community.

