



Tips for Catechists

Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)

General Tips

- Collaborate with parents/guardians and set small attainable goals.
- Demonstrate to child what you want them to do. Then prompt them verbally and visually through the process.
- Give child the opportunity to communicate to you in the way they communicate the best.
- Wait for responses - if you repeat a question/request too quickly, this could interfere with child's processing your initial request.
- Be aware of sensory sensitivity (e.g. light, sound and touch).
- While reading a story or teaching a concept, a child with an ASD may notice and attend to incidental details (e.g., number of stones in wall). Engage child's interest by relating the object that catches his/her attention to the topic.
- Say traditional prayers with child "Our Father, Glory Be, etc." repetition and predictability can be powerful tools to learning for a child with an ASD.

Activities to Prepare

- Take Polaroid or digital pictures of child's own church, objects and parishioners and make a book that child could use at home or take to church (assists with child's difficulty in generalizing).
- Use Velcro picture boards and booklets - Use Picture Exchange Communication Program (PECS).
- Have show and tell time with religious objects and pictures
- Use pictures of Mass objects, Sacraments, Religious concepts and play matching name game. (repetition is important).
- Place 3 different pictures on a table and teach child who or what each object is. Then ask child to point to the object e.g. "priest" "cross" "pew," etc.

- Take child and parents to church and match Polaroid/digital picture of object with object in church.
- Read story child has read before and purposely leave out a picture, a paragraph or a page (This can engage child as they may seek deleted picture or information).
- Have child match holy cards, pictures of saints and sacramental pictures to words or concepts.
- Color religious coloring books, use stamps and stickers to convey Emotions, e.g. heart = love.
- Put puzzles together.
- Use songs and music as part of the lesson experience.
- Take important facts e.g. *The Eucharist is the body and blood of Christ*, split the sentence in two and place on cards. Have child repeat the sentence 3 times - Remove one half of the sentence and have child put it together. (Sentence can be split into as many pieces child can manage).
- Children with ASD's thrive with predictability. Read stories that child enjoys often.
- Use visual schedule of the PREP classroom activities.
- Create a visual schedule of God's time (sun comes up and sets, when is moon full, etc.); Mass, Confirmation Rite or the topic being taught.
- Engage parents by asking thoughtful questions of theme of the lesson e.g. How does God's creation speak to you?
Is there a way you can share your experience with your child?
Are there ways that could convey this experience to your child.

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