



National Apostolate for  
Inclusion Ministry

*Promoting the Full Inclusion of People with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities in the  
Life of the Catholic Church*

## **Baptism Themes: Suggestions for Accommodating Learning Styles**

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is adapted and reproduced  
from Chapter 1,

### **Sacramental Preparation Baptism: Individualizing Lesson Plans**

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*Nihil Obstat:*

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Below are key ideas about Baptism that are included in most student religious education books. Each theme that is listed has a number of suggestions about how to teach the theme in a visual, auditory or kinesthetic manner. Read your text to determine themes. Use these suggestions by matching them to the themes in your student text. Then, use those suggestions that will help your student with intellectual challenges.

Plan to team the students into pairs or small groups when the activity requires tasks too difficult for the person with intellectual limitations. For instance, with a group art activity, allow the students to assist with pasting rather than writing words on the project. Or, team people so that one can dictate a message for the other to write down. You may want to create a system for forming different combinations of people such as by birth month, by first letter of last name, or by preferred color.

These suggestions may spur your own creativity. Your creative energies will be needed to find a multitude of multi-sensory ways of giving input to the students. Also, be flexible in terms of what form their response takes.

### **THEME 1: BELONGING**

#### ***Visual***

Have students gather pictures, scenes of groups of people with one person off to the side, obviously alone.

Show the Human Race Club video "The Unforgettable Pen Pal, A story about Prejudice and Discrimination" (try Amazon) as an example of being excluded.

Ask students to look through magazines to select pictures of family celebrations, scouts, church, youth groups, Special Olympics, or other groups of people that show belonging, being part of a group.

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***Auditory***

Have students discuss feelings about being part of a group or left out of a special event.

Sing songs with the students such as “We Are Many Parts,” “Gather Us In,” “One Bread, One Body”

***Kinesthetic***

Send a student from the room, telling the group a special secret, or giving everyone a piece of candy except the person who is outside the room. The person reenters and then references are made to this special information, or at a predetermined time everyone would take out their treat to eat. Students could then draw something to show how they felt about belonging or not belonging.

Have students participate in “The Cactus Play” found in the book *Come Mime with Me*. (try Amazon).

**THEME 2: WELCOME**

***Visual***

Students can create welcome cards for a new classmate, a new family in the parish, or a new sibling of a classmate.

After students draw or find pictures of objects that show welcome, I.E., a welcome mat, an open door, a smiling face, have them paste the pictures onto poster board as a semi-permanent collage.

***Auditory***

Sing hymns from the hymnal with the students, using songs such as “Gather Us In” or Welcome In.”

Read stories from the library about families welcoming a new member.

***Kinesthetic***

Students could have a welcome parade or make up a welcome dance.

**THEME 3: LIGHT OF CHRIST**

***Visual***

Students identify and draw examples of many light sources. Some students can identify; others draw.

Students make tiny slits of different shapes in black construction paper and shine a flashlight through the slits in a dark room.

Have students work in small groups and develop lists of the many uses of light.

Have students explore prisms and discuss light and rainbows.

***Auditory***

Have students sing songs such as “This Little Light of Mine” or Light of the World.”  
Have students tape record their own thoughts about light and what they think it means to be the light of Christ for others.

***Kinesthetic***

Have students develop several skits involving flashlights and darkness. For example, the students could develop a short skit about some young people lost very late at night on a dark

street and unable to find the way home. An “angel” of light could come to them and use the flashlight to show them the way home.

Ask for student volunteers to dress in black pants and shirts with fluorescent tape on them to emphasize the significance of light when you find yourself in darkness.

#### **THEME 4: CALLED BY NAME**

##### ***Visual***

Have students make large “posters” with their names as the central feature. Use materials such as yarn or macaroni. Buddies may be needed for this project.

Make an acrostic with their names, I.E., Paul = Polite, Agile, Up-beat, Likable. It may be necessary to go through the alphabet to list general descriptions for each letter and then allow the person with intellectual limitations to point to the words that they want when prompted for the letter. Most people will know their name but some may be unable to spell it.

##### ***Auditory***

Discuss the origin of the student’s names. Use a dictionary to find the section of names. Ask the readers to locate the names for everyone in their group.

Ask them to discuss with parents who they were named after and why their parents chose that particular name.

Create a “rap” using their names.

##### ***Kinesthetic***

Have students make a name mobile. Use a coat hanger, string and 3x5 cards for this project.

Teach students to spell their names using a manual alphabet.

#### **THEME 5: FRIENDS/FOLLOWERS OF JESUS**

##### ***Visual***

Have students view short videos of the lives of several saints.

##### ***Auditory***

Invite several speakers, i.e., brothers, sisters, lay missionaries, to share their stories of life as friends and followers of Jesus.

Divide students into cooperative teams and have them create a list of characteristics of friends and followers of Jesus. Appoint a leader, recorder and reporter for each group.

##### ***Kinesthetic***

Mime several simple scenes that show the characteristics of followers of Jesus: friend, follower, lover, helper, healer, teacher.

#### **THEME 6: COMMUNITY**

##### ***Visual***

Give students a simple definition of community: “a group of people who help each other and do nice things together.” Use the *Maryknoll* magazine which is filled with pictures of community living in different cultures. Students select a reader and recorder (who could use images rather than words) to describe the essence of true community based on the story in the magazine.

##### ***Auditory***

Listen to an audio tape of a talk given by a foreign missionary, then record a tape to send the missionary describing what the class is doing to help his or her mission community. Or simply send a message of good wishes and prayers.

***Kinesthetic***

Create a class community banner or quilt that has both symbols and words that convey the essence of community. Possible materials include burlap, felt, quilting material, etc. The more active student can pass out material. The slow learning student can focus on gluing the symbol to the banner.

**THEME 7: OLD/NEW LIFE**

***Visual***

Involve students in two different action scenes. In scene 1, the teacher behaves meanly toward an elderly person (played by a student) by teasing or calling names. In scene 2, the teacher is very kind and patient with the same elderly person. Use flip chart paper to write two columns with words “before” and “after.” Ask students for words that described scene 1 and 2 “before” Jesus and “after” Jesus. The emphasis needs to be on how one would behave differently.

***Auditory***

Play old (1950’s-60’s) songs and recent songs for the students. Ask students to listen to the music carefully and to share with the class about the differences in terms of themes messages being communicated in both old and new music. For the student with intellectual challenges, identify key words for them to listen for and then to indicate if they hear these particular words.

***Kinesthetic***

Bring in old and new items such as shoes, shirts, toys, dishes, etc. Put words “old” and “new” on paper and tape to opposite walls. Pull items from the bag. Students move to correct side of room based on whether an item is old or new. Relate this to a new way of behaving after one is baptized.

**THEME 8: CREATION**

***Visual***

Ask students to bring things that they have made – i.e., necklaces, or model cars, etc. Discuss the difference between God creating from nothing and their creations which use the things God has given us.

Create a class “ecology” poster for the school to emphasize care of creation. Some students may only be able to help select the pictures from magazines while others will be skilled enough to cut them and past them to a piece of large paper.

***Auditory***

Sing “Canticle of the Sun” which emphasizes a creation theme.

***Kinesthetic***

Have students create a symbol of new life in Jesus using a medium such as clay, paper maché, or finger paint. Give examples for the student who cannot generate his or her own ideas.

**THEME 9: LOVE**

***Visual***

Create “Love Baskets” using construction paper hearts. Paste or draw pictures of loving acts on them and place them in the Love Basket. Do this in small groups. Place the Love Baskets on a classroom prayer table.

***Auditory***

Read the book *Love You Forever* by Robert Munsch to the class and discuss unconditional love for someone. (try Amazon or YouTube <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6z-oBkgJ4Ow>)

Have students listen to some current Christian music where love is a recurring theme.

***Kinesthetic***

Give an assignment to go on a scavenger hunt during the week to bring in objects that they think are indications of God's love for us. These would also be placed on the prayer table as part of a concluding prayer service after covering the Baptism themes. Print this assignment out for the students. Give to the active students to photocopy and distribute to the class.

**THEME 10: DEATH TO LIFE**

***Visual***

Show the Human Race Club Video "The Letter on Light Blue Stationary" (try Amazon) and give the students a list of classmate's names. Have them write or say a positive adjective about each classmate. Discuss how this can encourage people and make them feel more alive.

***Auditory***

Teach students the refrain of Psalm 122. Explain that to rejoice means to be happy. Ask the students to tell about times when they were happy.

***Kinesthetic***

Have students work in groups of two or three to create a 3-5 minute skit with the theme of moving from death to life. With coaching, the students can create skits about their own life issues – being in the dark about a particular decision they have to make, etc.

Example: Have students use a plant that is dry. Let someone be the voice of the plant. The person says, "If I don't get water soon, I am going to die. My leaves are brown and I am falling over." Use a second very healthy plant. Have a student say "I was so brown and dry and thirsty. That water was wonderful. With more water and sunshine, I will be as good as new."

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