



National Apostolate for
Inclusion Ministry

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

Confirmation Themes and Learning Styles

By Mary Pat Carter with Marilyn E. Bishop



Here are twelve key ideas about Confirmation 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.

Use these suggestions by matching them to the themes in your student text. Read your text to determine the themes. Then, use the suggestions that will help your student with intellectual challenges. These are suggestions for the students to do, depending on their learning preference, whether it is visual, auditory or kinesthetic.

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.

Repeat key ideas many times during the lesson. If possible send home with students a sheet that lists the key themes covered in class today. This can be the task of one of the brighter students who is then responsible for pairing with a highly active student to photocopy the sheet and distribute for all students to take home.

THEME 1: GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

Visual

Have students work in pairs to create an 11" x 14" poster of one of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. The posters can be laminated and a volunteer could use calligraphy to label each poster. The students need the freedom to use whatever medium they chose to represent each particular gift. Examples:

Wisdom: Merlin the Wizard, Solomon, an elderly person in a rocking chair

Understanding: Diary, journal, a Pulitzer Prize winner

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Judgment: courthouse, the scales of justice sitting on tip of a Bible

Courage: The cowardly lion from the Wizard of Oz wearing his badge of courage, pictures of war medals and ribbons

Knowledge: A collage of pictures that show trust, two children who are sharing, a Monk who is meditating, an empty chapel

Reverence: Recycling posters, care of the land, Native American spirituality and ideas about caring for mother earth

Wonder and Awe: Pictures of giant redwoods, incredible mountains, breathtaking scenery atop a mountain, the Grand Canyon, Niagara Falls, ocean scenes at sunset, a baby chicken emerging from the shell, a newborn baby

Auditory

Use a sampling of country songs (they are usually told in a ballad or story form) that illustrate each of the gifts.

Kinesthetic

Using streamers, banners and ribbons, have the students create a dramatic interpretive dance with background music such as Gregorian chant or another appropriate song about the Holy Spirit such as “Wind Beneath My Wings.” (Bette Midler)

THEME 2: WITNESS

Visual

If you are able, obtain the video “Confirmation Faith Alive” by Twenty-Third Publications. Use the video to develop a list of opportunities to give witness to Jesus and the message of the Gospel.

Auditory

Have students work in small discussion groups to create a list of characteristics of good witnesses and a definition of what a witness is. Also have them generate some potential roadblocks to being a witness for Jesus, i.e. being teased, being ostracized, etc.

Kinesthetic

Use a courtroom scene setup and include a witness stand. Have a prosecutor and a defense attorney. The prosecutor represents evil and the defense attorney represents God and goodness. Use a scene from a party involving drinking and drugs, and question the “witnesses” about what they specifically did that would demonstrate to others that they were giving witness to the message of Jesus.

THEME 3: COMMITMENT

Visual

Have the class make a poster of symbols of commitment. Pictures can be taken from news magazines, etc. Examples: heads of state signing treaties, wedding rings, or a picture of a wedding, a lawyer witnessing the signing of a contract, two people shaking hands, or a guarantee certificate on a product.

Auditory

Provide a decorated bag of examples of realistic age-appropriate commitments that students might make to one another, to their parents, to their church community, or to a homeless shelter. Have students draw an example from the bag and talk about whether the commitment would be easy or difficult and why or why not.

Kinesthetic

Have students role-play some situations where students failed to stick with a commitment they made to their parents. Possible scenarios: student receives a poor report card and makes a commitment to his or her parents to watch less television, play fewer video games and devote extra time to studying. However, the student does not follow through and the next report card

is worse than the previous one. Follow this with a discussion of why the student did not keep the commitment.

THEME 4: SERVICE

Visual

Ask Confirmation sponsors to provide students with a list of social service providers who are in need of volunteers. Have students work in groups of three and decide which groups have requirements that are realistic for the students to consider as part of their Confirmation service hours project.

Auditory

Teach the song “Service” by Buddy Caesar. (Glory and Praise) As a service project the auditory learners could record some books on tape either for people who are blind or for young students unable to read.

Kinesthetic

Have students make a large service banner that can be used at service club functions.

Ask the active students to stay a few minutes after class to assist with classroom clean up for their own class and/or for one nearby. Students will need a note to the parents to explain this. Write the note and have the active student pair with one who is slower to photocopy the page and distribute it. (Sometimes service means slowing down to another person’s pace.)

THEME 5: MEANING OF SPIRIT

Visual

Show the video “Confirmation: It’s Your Choice.” (Liguori, 1986) Have the students use clay to sculpt the meaning of Spirit after viewing the video.

Auditory

Play tapes of the hymns about the Holy Spirit such as “The Spirit is A- Movin’.” (Glory and Praise, Oregon Catholic Press) Have students listen to the songs to count the number of times they heard the word “Spirit.”

Kinesthetic

Have students create a mime involving streamers and fans to accompany the song “The Spirit is A-Movin’.” If possible, do this activity outdoors so that the wind can blow the streamers wherever they might go, without human control.

THEME 6: SPONSOR

Visual

Use pictures to tell the story of Emmaus as an example of two people on a journey together.

Have the students create a wall mural of “the journey of life” and then place silhouettes of people who can help to guide them to make Christian choices along the road of life. Explain that a Confirmation sponsor is a mature Christian who is willing to share the faith journey with them.

Auditory

Teach the chorus of the song “Come and Journey with Me.” (Haas, Haugen & Joncas) Have students talk about the process of choosing a sponsor. Help them discuss the qualities they want their sponsor to have.

Kinesthetic

Arrange to have students accompany a class of young children one-on-one to a site of pilgrimage on the church grounds. Ask the students to think about what they must do to be good companions for this journey.



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THEME 7: FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST

Visual

Before this activity, students need to generate a list of characteristics of people who follow Christ. Select several brief scripture quotes to help them generate a list of adjectives that describe Christ's values.

Provide students with a large wall mural with many paths on the mural. The background might include open space with green grass, lakes, mountains, trees, etc. On the mural include pictures from newspapers, magazines, and old textbooks. (scenes of the Civil War) Mix up the pictures on the paths so that some show examples of followers of Christ and other show people who have chosen to follow the "messages of the world."

Shrink and duplicate the mural so that students can work in cooperative groups and discuss which pictures merit the label, "followers of Christ."

A follow-up activity to this would be for students to make a list of events in their lives during the last week and to decide whether their behavior would be described as that of a follower of Christ.

Auditory

Provide the students with numerous copies of the current "top twenty" songs on the radio and have them determine the "main message" of each song and then compare and contrast that message with the message of Jesus. Read the words of the song out loud for the non-reader.

Kinesthetic

Use the list of characteristics of people who follow Christ to make small buttons in class. Ask the kinesthetic learners if they would be willing to wear one of the small buttons. The next week ask what were the comments or questions they got from other people.

THEME 8: CHOICE

Visual

Provide each group of students with some moral dilemmas that would be realistic for their age group. These can be written on 3 x 5 file cards. (Make sure that one member of the group can read the situations.) Have students create a flow chart about the possible choices in each situation and then have them apply their Christian decision-making skills to choose a Christian response to the situation.

Flow Chart:

1. What is the choice?
2. What do I believe is the right choice?
3. What would Jesus want me to do?
4. What could happen if I made my preferred choice now? later?
5. Make a choice.
6. Do the action.
7. Be responsible.
8. Was it a good choice?
9. Was it a bad choice?
10. What will I do next time?

Auditory

Students can be presented with the same dilemmas as the visual learners, but they will need to have a student volunteer to be the person trying to make the decision and then two individuals to play the two sides of conscience speaking for the opposing decisions. Suggest simple phrases to be used by students with poor language skills.

Sample: A student forgot to study for a test. Now the student has to decide whether to look on someone else's paper or get a bad grade.

Student # 1 says, "Look on his paper; it is okay."

Student #2 says, "That is cheating; don't look."

Kinesthetic

Present a series of moral decision making situations in a multiple choice format. Place large numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4 on the wall. As each choice is read, have each student stand under the number of the choice they think is best.

Sample situation: Dan sees Mark take money from Bill's desk.

Choices: 1. Tell the teacher; 2. Tell Bill; 3. Talk to Mark to try to convince him to return the money; 4. Do nothing. Ask students to explain their decision.

THEME 9: PENTECOST REMEMBERING

Visual

Have students view the video "Confirmation Faith Alive" (Liguori, 1986) followed by a discussion and the creation of Confirmation banners that incorporate the symbols of Pentecost. Some symbols of Pentecost are: dove, chrism (oil), tongues of fire, wind, candle and bishop's mitre and staff.

Auditory

Have students use the words of two or three common songs used for Confirmation and develop a choral response to be shared in a prayer service. Sample songs: "The Spirit is A-Movin'," "Anthem," "They'll Know We Are Christians by Our Love," and "Come Holy Spirit." Possible response: "Holy Spirit, come to me."

Kinesthetic

Read the story of the first Pentecost. Have students volunteer to mime the emotions of the Apostles as they waited in the room: "afraid," "alone," "worried." Then, as you continue to read the story, have the same students mime the emotions of the Apostles after the Holy Spirit came: "happy," "joyful," "brave," and wanting to "preach the Good News."

THEME 10: FRUITS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Visual

Divide the class into four groups. Give each group three "fruits" of the Holy Spirit. Give them a stack of newspapers. Have them search for images that portray the fruits. Be prepared to accept that not all groups will be able to find images that represent the fruits.

Fruits and possible image:

Love – heart

Joy – happy face

Peace – pastoral scene

Patience – elderly person

Kindness – service event

Generosity – money

Faithfulness – wedding

Gentleness – baby animal

Self-Control – car on the road

Goodness – people helping one another

Long-Suffering – person with disability

Chastity – wedding scene

Auditory

Have students work in pairs with each group taking one fruit of the Holy Spirit. Each group creates a short (2 or 3 line) verse that demonstrates their knowledge of that particular fruit of the Holy Spirit. Example: Generosity means sharing; patience means to wait for my turn, gentleness means to treat people nicely.

Kinesthetic

Write fruits of the Spirit on fluorescent cardboard. Hide them in the classroom for a scavenger hunt.

THEME 11: COMMUNITY MEMBERSHIP

Visual

Show the Human Race Club video: “The Letter on Light Blue Stationary.” (try Amazon) Have the class discuss the girl in the video who died – how she was and was not a member of her community. This video is intended for use in grades 3-6 but can provide much discussion material on belonging, being an invisible member of a group and yet making a significant contribution to the group despite seldom being noticed by others.

Auditory

Teach songs: “We are Many Parts,” (Marty Haugen, Gather), “Here I Am Lord,” “We Are One in the Spirit,” or “Rite of Sprinkling.” (David Haas, Gather) Have students listen to each song on tape and then illustrate what statement they feel that particular song is making about community. Students could work in groups with each group taking one song. Or, this could be a large group activity. Provide the words to the songs on individual sheets or on overheads if this is done in a large group.

Kinesthetic

Provide students with a large sheet of chart paper titled “COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS IN CHRIST.” Have the students take pictures of each other with an instant camera. Let each person attach their picture to the chart paper.

THEME 12: COVENANT

Visual

Display a banner with the words: “I will be your God and you will be my people.” Read it aloud for the non-readers. Have a small box with many synonyms for the word covenant (agreement, promise, contract, arrangement, commitment, deal, solemn pledge, etc.) mixed with other words. Ask student to select the synonyms. As each word is chosen, it can be taped on the banner

Auditory

Have students listen to the song “I Have Loved You.” (try internet, Fr. Michael Joncas) Discuss God’s promise to love us always. Play the song again at the closing of the class.

Kinesthetic

Provide students with a medium (wood, tile, stone, leather) that already includes the phrase: “I will be your God and you will be my people” into which they can etch their name as a sign of the covenant with God that they are entering as a result of their Confirmation. Some students will need assistance using tools.