



National Apostolate for
Inclusion Ministry

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

Reconciliation Themes and Learning Styles

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Chapter 6, **Sacramental
Preparation**

Reconciliation: Individualizing Lesson Plans

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Below are eight key ideas about Reconciliation 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: GOD'S LOVE

Visual

Develop a bulletin board to display pictures of families and to emphasize what father and mothers do to show their love for their children. Relate parental love to God's love for us, his children.

Auditory

Play the country western song "Love Without End, Amen" by George Strait. Give students a copy of the words to follow along (get music and words from the internet). Use this as a small group discussion starter about experiences of making mistakes and being afraid of getting into trouble. Emphasize God's unconditional love for us even when we make mistakes.

Kinesthetic

Have small groups of students act out the story of the Prodigal Son from the Bible. For younger children, try to provide props and scenery.

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THEME 2: GOD'S WELCOME

Visual

Have the class generate a list of examples of the variety of ways God welcomes us as His children. Use magazines to have students find pictures to complement the list. No cutting is necessary. Simply have students point to the picture that they chose.

Auditory

Teach the song "You are the Voice" (David Haas, Gather, GIA Publications). Repeat the chorus two or three times to allow the slower students to pick up some of the words. Use simple hand motions with this song.

Create a welcoming cheer for new students or new parish members. Repeat the cheer at the beginning of class and at the end of class for several weeks.

Kinesthetic

Provide several small groups with poster board with the word "welcome" in very large letters in the middle. Have students add magazine pictures, drawings, or decorations to the poster. Donate the poster to a homeless shelter.

THEME 3: GOD'S GUIDANCE (HELP)

Visual

Use a McGee and Me video (check internet or public library) in which God provides help to the characters in the story. Emphasize the need to ask for God's help. Stress that sometimes God provides help through other people in ways we least expect it.

Auditory

Teach the "Angel of God" prayer (Prayer to My Guardian Angel) asking for guidance. Have students write their own individual prayers asking for God's guidance. Students who do not write could dictate their prayer to their class buddy to write for them. Use all the prayers in a closing group prayer experience for the students.

Kinesthetic

Ask for two volunteers to demonstrate that sometimes making choices depends on asking for help. Ask one student volunteer to be the guide; the other student is blindfolded. The guide leads the blindfolded student through a maze of chairs to reach a destination. Ask the blindfolded student to answer these questions: Were you scared? Did you need help to reach your destination? Was your guide helpful? Could you have reached your destination without your guide? Explain to all the students that God is our guide and we need to ask God for help when we need direction.

THEME 4: CHOICES

Visual

Find a video clip about a person making a poor choice. If you are able, use a video clip from the Oak Street Chronicles, Tape 1, Episode 2, produced by Tabor Inc. 1987.

Provide a visual chart and handout and have students practice the Christian decision-making process.



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Choices

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

Have students produce an audio tape designed to help other students make healthy choices. The students provide simulations of circumstances and then talk students through a healthy decision making process. Use the text if it provides a story to discuss. To allow the slow learner to participate, ask a question of this student who can record his simple “yes” or “no” answer on audio tape.

Get a Catholic volunteer from AA to share their story with the students regarding the consequences of making poor choices. Allow time for questions and sharing with the presenter.

Kinesthetic

Provide students with a variety of age-appropriate dilemmas and choices that were hypothetically made in those circumstances. Have students make a decision about their stance regarding the decision. As a decision is stated, have those who agree with it stand or raise their hand. Or, give four choices and ask students to go to a different corner depending on their answer.

THEME 5: SIN

Visual

A good visual demonstration of the effects of sin is to have a clear fish bowl with water in it. As each student names a “sin” add a drop of dark food coloring to the water.

Have students visit the Reconciliation room and when they are gone add bleach to the water so that it is clear when they return. Relate this to sin as making us less like God and unable to shine as well as the light of Jesus in the world.

Auditory

Clarify the difference between “sin” and “accident” by asking students to name things they think are sins and put them into a list of either SIN or ACCIDENT. This is important for students with intellectual/developmental disabilities because they sometimes have accidents that they could misconstrue as sins.

Kinesthetic

As students practice for the Rite of Reconciliation have students remove small pieces of black tape on their clothing or hand each time they confess a “sin.” Explain that they are now different than they were before the sacrament.

THEME 6: FORGIVENESS

Visual

Locate the video “Forgive and Forget” 1987 by Franciscan Communications. Your diocese may have a copy. Show students the video and briefly discuss it.

Auditory

Use an auditory recording of the “Our Father” played with emphasis on the phrase, “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.” For people with intellectual/developmental disabilities simplify the vocabulary with words such as forgive us our “bad deeds,” or “wrong doings” – whatever can be comprehended by the person.

Kinesthetic

Students can use a dead tree branch to make a “forgiving Tree.” Write words relating to forgiveness on 3 X 5 index cards. Provide a hole-puncher and yarn. Have students string the words and hang them on the tree. Magazine pictures that show forgiveness could be glued to cards and added to the tree. Make a sign for the top that says, “Jesus Forgives.”

THEME 7: RECONCILIATION PROCESS

Visual

Provide the student with a construction paper outline of a hand with the steps in the reconciliation process written on the fingers of the hand.

Create small picture books with each step of the process and include a copy of a simple act of sorrow. Explain that they may take that book with them when they go to Reconciliation.

Use an age-appropriate video about reconciliation with the students. Check the list from the Archdiocese of Baltimore: <http://www.archbalt.org/evangelization/elementary-sacramental/loader.cfm?csModule=security/getfile&PageID=15512>

Auditory

Give the auditory learner an audio tape or CD with the steps of the reconciliation process on it so that they can listen to it at home. Talk them through the steps and have them repeat the steps of the process to a partner. Put the steps of the process to a familiar song to help students remember.

Kinesthetic

Have the students role-play both student and priest with repeated opportunities to practice the ritual itself. Kinesthetic learners will benefit from multiple opportunities to visit the actual room where the sacrament takes place.

THEME 8: PEACEMAKING/JUSTICE

Visual

Show students some edited video clips from the evening news and have them identify examples of a lack of peace and justice in those clips. Justice is an abstract concept for students with intellectual/developmental disabilities. Substitute the word “fair” for justice.



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Have students bring in newspaper articles that reflect the many injustices in the world. Give students a reminder slip about this assignment. Give this to all students; it is especially important for those students with intellectual/developmental disabilities.

Auditory

Use songs about social concern such as “We Are Called,” “The Beatitudes,” or “City of God.”

Kinesthetic

Using small boxes, have students make dioramas about peace and justice issues such as abortion, women’s rights, children’s rights, etc. Work in pairs. Use pre-cut figures from a Christian bookstore or school supply store.

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