

Setting the Salesian Stage

We form a catechism family through our commitment to the children and their faith journey. Ours is the privilege of using 90 minutes every week to build something meaningful. While encouraging the use of our creativity to enrich this family experience, we also want to suggest some elements that will help create a “recognizable, healthy, unifying Salesian buzz” at all of our Catechism Centre’s. Coordinators and Catechists are encouraged to breathe Salesian life into the following guidelines:

1. Opening Assembly (10-15 minutes Max)

At the beginning of every lesson, the Coordinator will lead a brief, friendly, simple but joyful assembly. This assembly should include:

- The Catechists gathering their children together at the agreed upon assembly space (**not the group’s table**). Coordinators, If you notice that catechists and/or children are not making an effort to join the assembly at the agreed upon meeting space, ask them to join again-politely-lovingly and begin only after they have joined the assembly.
- A warm greeting and welcome from the Coordinator(s)
- A song for all to sing (Coordinator will have song-sheets ready)
- Whatever brief announcements need to be made for that lesson
- A short, inspirational thought linked to the lesson they are about to learn, or drawn from the lives of the saints (This can also be done during the concluding assembly)
- A prayer – this could be modeled first by the Coordinator, who in successive weeks can invite the Catechists or the children to lead it

2. Lesson time (60 minutes)

After the assembly, each Catechist moves with their group to their respective tables

5 minutes Reconnect With Your Group

Briefly check out what everyone is doing; be interested in what’s important to them & that they want you to know about. Take attendance; acknowledge anyone who was away the week before and tell them you are glad to see them again. This builds community and shows them you care. Don Bosco reminds us, “it’s not enough that you love the children; they must know that they are loved”.

45 minutes Lesson Content

The catechist animates the lesson, encouraging as much child participation as possible. On occasion, a DVD or a skit may be used. This needs to be coordinated and prepared so all groups have access to the resources they need, including silence. Don’t be shy to contact your Coordinator or DRE if you have questions or need help finding resources.

10 minutes Review Prayers

At the end of EVERY lesson, take time to review the classic prayers and the responses to the parts of the mass. All of this is easy to find: just flip to the back of the catechism book. Our children have a right to the treasures of our rich faith tradition. It contributes to their “Catholic literacy”. Don Bosco made his children memorize prayers; so should we. Memorizing comes easily to kids. Memorizing standard prayers also gives the children a model to follow for their personal, creative prayers.

3. Closing Assembly (10-15 minutes Max)

The Coordinator leads a closing assembly in the gathering space:

- Affirming the good they saw during the lesson; making gentle corrections where necessary
- Quizzing the children, in a playful way, on what they have just learned
- Passing on announcements,
- Distributing hand outs to be taken home
- Addressing parents
- Closing song prayer may also keep things Christ-centered and fun at the same time.