Welcome to Together in Jesus — First Reconciliation!

One of the most common dreams of parents of children who have disabilities is for their child to have friends and experience a sense of belonging to a caring community of people. What an opportunity we have to help this happen in the religious education setting, where the goal is to help and guide children to live as Jesus did! The purpose of this special needs guide is to help you as a catechist feel comfortable including children who learn differently as part of your religious education class. Some general guidelines to follow:

- Focus on the child’s strengths, on what the child can rather than can’t do.
- Ask the parents of the child for suggestions or ideas; they have years of experience to share with you.
- Sometimes class members are the best resource of all. Ask the students for ideas as you plan for an upcoming class, e.g., “If we do...what are some ways we could include John in this activity?”
- Understand that the child with a disability does not have to grasp every concept at the same rate as the other students. Repetition of an idea at home, or in small groups with another student for extra practice, is acceptable.
- Many things in life are learned through trial and error. It’s okay to make mistakes!

For the six lessons, suggestions will be provided for teaching the lesson through visual, auditory, and kinesthetic means. It is our hope that you use our suggestions and adapt them to work in your learning environment.

Note: Students with motor difficulties will need assistance with their stickers. When you design an activity, ask yourself, “If I do this activity, is there someone who couldn’t participate?” If the answer is yes, then ask yourself, “What could I do differently so Marie can take part in it?”

Page numbers following the headings in this document refer to the Teaching Guide for Together in Jesus First Eucharist Preparation.
Suggested Accommodations for Children with Special Needs

ALL ARE WELCOME

The USCCB has given us the following guideline for the reception of Reconciliation. A person can receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation; “as long as the person is capable of having a sense of contrition. It can be expressed in writing, and through gestures. For those who are not able they can still experience and participate in penitential services to the best of their ability” (Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities).

Our students learning strengths come to us in many forms. We have students who process information using a multitude of multi-sensory ways. The information that follows is provided to help the catechist find a delivery system that will assist the student with learning disabilities in understanding the concepts being presented.

Students (and even some teachers) may view the extra attention special needs students receive as unfair. It is important to begin your class time with the understanding that we are all God’s children and some of us learn differently.

Your class will have a wide variety of students, with a wide variety of talents and abilities.

It is recommended that you provide a learning buddy that can assist the student who has learning difficulties. This can be a teen mentor or a student in the same class that has the desire to help. When the student helper is of the same age, an adult helper should be present for guidance. Training for the student helper, before classes begin, is advantageous. Inform the student helper of the child’s special needs and what to do and not do.

When working with students who have special needs, you will most likely hear the terms accommodations and modifications. An accommodation is a device, material, or support process that will enable a student to accomplish a task more efficiently. Modification refers to changes to the instructional outcomes; a change or decrease in the course content or outcome. You will find yourself making modifications to your lesson plans during your class time, due to time constraints or schedule changes.

To read the revised Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities, click here.

TIPS FOR CATECHIZING OUR STUDENTS WHO HAVE SPECIAL NEEDS

Be aware that special needs students may not want to be singled out to do a different task than the other members of the class. To do so may identify their disability for other students, and cause them to receive some form of attention they may not be able to handle. Always ask the parents and child what they are comfortable sharing about the child’s disability.

Ensure that your attitude and responses to special needs students are identical to those of other students. See all your students as gifts from God, because they each have their own special gifts to contribute.
Consider various ways of learning. Students with special needs may require more time to learn prayers and complete projects. You may need to repeat information several times and reinforce it in many ways. Don't forget to ask your parents for help.

Catechists need to be cautious about just seeing the weakness(es) or difficulties that our students with special needs bring with them. It's easy to focus on what's wrong and not on what strengths they bring to our classrooms.

As we are all God’s family, we want students to learn from each other. Structure a variety of learning activities in which the social climate of the classroom is both promoted and enhanced. It is important that everyone feels like he or she is contributing.

Do not make assumptions based on the student’s needs and abilities. Just because a student can’t sing, doesn’t mean they don’t like music. Just because there is a specific disability in one area of the student’s life, doesn’t mean that other areas are compromised.

**FIVE SUGGESTIONS WHEN PREPARING YOUR LESSONS**

1. It’s not all or nothing! Limit the number of new concepts introduced in a lesson. Be sure that students understand one concept before introducing the second.

2. Be obvious and concrete: Use clear models to teach basic concepts. Some language is too abstract. Use simple language. Ex. “reconciliation” replaced by “to make up for doing something wrong”

3. Take small bites: Break things down. All students learn as you build upon previous lessons. In class, provide practice time to reinforce what they are studying at home. Together in Jesus does this for you as you follow the lesson plans.

4. See the whole picture: As students learn their faith words, talk with them about the different meanings.

   Example: Church and church. Do hands-on projects that show how things are done. Go on church tours to see where things are and use sacred objects to see and feel the church’s sacramentals. Lessons following the initial lesson should apply new concepts to build up the students’ ability to remember.

5. Being on the same page: Find out if what you are saying is what the students are hearing. Look carefully at the language you are using to determine if your instructions or explanations need to be simplified.
Suggested Accommodations for Children with Special Needs

Notes:

FINAL THOUGHTS

For the six lessons that follow, suggestions will be provided for teaching the lesson through visual, auditory, and kinesthetic means. It is our hope and prayer that you use our suggestions and adapt them to work in your learning environment. Each section of your teaching guide also provides suggestions that work well with students who have special needs.

Each lesson begins and ends with prayer and/or song. With each lesson, your prayer sessions will take the form of Bible readings and Ritual Prayer. Providing a prayer space in your room will help create a sense of the sacred. Depending on your lesson you may want the students to contribute to the prayer space each week. You may choose to print out the prayers or songs in larger letters and have students volunteer to read. Songs may have gestures that can be applied. Students that are nonverbal can still perform the gestures or movements of clapping hands, raising arms, praying hands, etc. Follow the suggestions in your teaching guide for other ideas for your prayer space. Your teaching guide will assist you further as you prepare for your prayer gatherings.

Each lesson has a sticker that will be applied during the lesson. For our students with dexterity issues, the teen mentor/class helper can assist them. For those with visual impairments, the area where the sticker is placed can be outlined in a bright color so they can see where to place it.

Allow the student with special needs to apply the sticker to the best of their ability, and compliment them on what they accomplished. It is important that all students feel a sense of accomplishment; we are not looking for perfection.

Encourage cooperative learning activities when possible. Invite students of varying abilities to work together on a specific project, or toward a common goal. Create an atmosphere in which a true “community of learners” is facilitated and enhanced. Offer learning disabled students a multisensory approach to learning. Take advantage of all the senses in helping these students enjoy, appreciate, and learn.
Lesson 1 – I Belong to a Loving Community

OPENING PRAYER (page 12)
To help children remember the words to the song, print words on a poster and tape the song for students to listen to. It can also be played in the background during another part of the lesson. For children who are nonverbal, put the words together and tape them on small pieces of poster board. They can hold them up whenever these words are sung, or clap whenever they hear the word together.

I BELONG TO A LOVING COMMUNITY (page 13)
For a student with a visual impairment, outline the sticker with yarn. In discussing being together in Jesus, role-play some experiences of being part of a group versus feeling left out and alone. Or, prepare a set of faces with emotions a particular character in the situation may be feeling.

THE TROUBLE WITH THREE FRIENDS (pages 13-14)
Choose some students to pantomime the roles of the three boys as the story is read. Have additional props, such as felt images of a pool and a school bus. This will tap into the visual strengths of some students. For a student with fine motor impairment or who is nonverbal, list the actions on the board with a number next to each one. Give students numbers 1-4 on 3x5 file cards. Tell them to hold up the number of the action they would choose.

HOW DOES JESUS ASK US TO TREAT PEOPLE? (pages 14-15)
Include children with disabilities to act out this story. A student in a wheelchair could play the role of the innkeeper. A student who is nonverbal could assume the role of the person who was too busy and simply went on. A follow-up activity for this story: create small groups and develop posters that answer the question: who is our neighbor? This would be a great opportunity to discuss how wrong it is to judge other people on the basis of appearance, skin color, or where they live.

I PREPARE FOR THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION (page 16)
For the student with an intellectual disability, the term forgiveness may be too abstract. Use words such as “feel bad,” “doing something wrong,” “sorry,” or “not doing the same thing wrong again.” Forgiveness is a way of saying, “It’s okay…I still love you.”

As an alternative to coloring the picture (#3a), have students pair off to generate specific examples of kindness toward others. For auditory learners, record the prayer. For students with an intellectual disability, shorten the prayer and/or add pictures and gestures, e.g., “I am sorry for not being good. I want to be good. Help me love other people.”

PRAYER RITUAL 1 – I CAN LOVE (pages 16-17)
The prayer service doesn’t require any modifications. One important caution: Do not call on students to read in class. Ask for volunteers. Some children who can read silently become very nervous when asked to read aloud. It might also be fun to invite a sign language interpreter to sign the prayer celebration. It raises the awareness level of students in regards to people who “hear” differently.
Our first lesson provides the perfect opportunity to talk about friendships. Some students with special needs, especially some children with Autism Spectrum Disorders, don’t feel a need to develop friendships, while others desire to have friends but do not have the necessary skills to do so. The Catechist can offer direct instruction on making friends like, “Say hi to Mary and tell her your name. When you talk to people who you want to be friends with, look at their faces.” As you continue your lesson, allow time for students to learn from each other.

**VISUAL** - Cut out pictures of people helping people, then pair up the students and ask them to select a picture they think shows someone being helped or someone being kind. Have them share what they see, and then place their picture on a poster board, or a bulletin board if you have one available to you. This activity is a wonderful introduction to your section of the lesson called; “I Prepare for the Sacrament of Reconciliation”.

**AUDITORY** - Use the Music from the Pflaum Gospel Weeklies Promise/Good News music CD, Track #19 “Serving Each Other.” Print out the words for the students to follow. Let your creativity take over and put some hand motions with the song. This is also a good time to speak about our differences and how this love for one another allows us to help each other. Speak to the parents of your students that have special needs and ask them if their child is comfortable telling others about their disability, or if the parent would like to come in and share.

**KINESTHETIC** - Have students act out a skit prepared by the catechist that demonstrates “The Trouble With Three Friends.” Make it a point to include the child or children with various disabilities in the skit.

You will probably be teaching most of the class how to make the sign of the cross. This is where your helpers and prayer buddies can provide tremendous assistance. Also, don’t hesitate to ask parents to work with their children on accomplishing this goal. Provide lots of praise as they get closer to achieving their goal. Offer incentives to encourage their progress. (ie. pencils, erasers, stickers, ribbons).
Lesson 2 –
We Keep God’s Commandments

Notes:

OPENING PRAYER (page 18)
Refer to Lesson 1 regarding ways for students who are nonverbal to participate in the song. Assist visual learners by displaying the words to the song on chart paper where everyone can see them.

WE KEEP GOD’S COMMANDMENTS (page 19)
For students with an intellectual disability, simplify vocabulary whenever possible, e.g., substitute the word “rule” for “commandments” (p. 1, student copy).

Students with intellectual disabilities or memory difficulties need prompts and visual or auditory cues to help them remember things. Student helpers/teachers can re-enact the Good Samaritan story from the previous lesson or show students pictures to help them recall this scripture passage. Proceed with #2. In addition to listing the rules generated by the students on chart paper, state the rules as they are recorded. This will help students with visual impairments as well as those who learn best auditorily. For the kinesthetic learners, have students role-play the rules on the chart.

SLAVES BECOME GOD’S OWN PEOPLE (pages 20-21)
Accompany the explanation under 1a with pictures and a map of Egypt. Provide a recording of the story for non-readers and students with cognitive and visual impairments to listen to as other students are reading their parts silently. If a student with a hearing impairment is going to sign his or her part of the story, have another student read the part out loud (reverse interpreter).

After reading page 3 of the student copy, show a video from a movie of Moses receiving the commandments from God. Simplify the wording of the commandments for students with an intellectual disability, (e.g., Do what your mom and dad tell you to do. Don’t take things that are not yours. Tell the truth, etc). Cut the commandments into strips and let each student choose one to work on during the next week.

GOD’S COMMANDMENTS HELP US LIVE TOGETHER (page 22)
For students with an intellectual disability, provide stickers with simplified vocabulary: Help Mom, Pray to God, Pay for things. Have students work in pairs to put the stickers in the right locations. If there are non-readers in the class, #3 is a perfect substitute for reading the commandments in #2. For 3a, simplify vocabulary and shorten questions for students with limited intellectual ability. Provide pictures for key words.

COMMANDMENTS PRAYER RITUAL (pages 22-23)
No modifications are necessary.
Lesson 2 is a great way to implement speaking to your students about self-control. Students with autism struggle with self-control, especially in a busy classroom setting. They may lose track of their homework, have difficulty listening to directions, or experience meltdowns because of sensory overload. They may have intense emotional outbursts and have difficulty calming down. Students with autism are often described as “emotionally brittle.” Teachers can help by setting up a calm, predictable environment. Ask the student’s parents about their child’s triggers and signs of sensory overload, such as hand-flapping, pacing, or grumbling. Create visual schedules so the student knows exactly what to expect throughout the class. Ask the student’s parents what helps their child calm down when they become upset.

Students with learning disabilities will often have difficulty in oral expression. Teaching children with learning disabilities will present the catechist with specific challenges. They require a bit more of your time and patience, and will require instructional modifications to enhance and support their understanding of the new concepts being presented.

- Provide oral instruction for students with reading disabilities. Present reading materials in an oral format.
- Give immediate feedback to learning disabled students. They need to see quickly the relationship between what was taught and what was learned.
- Make activities concise and short, whenever possible. Long, drawn-out projects are particularly frustrating for a learning disabled child.
- Learning disabled youngsters have difficulty learning abstract terms and concepts. Whenever possible, provide them with concrete objects and events—items they can touch, hear, smell, etc.
- Learning disabled students need and should get lots of specific praise. Instead of just saying, “You did well,” or “I like your work,” be sure you provide specific praising comments that link the activity directly with the recognition; for example, “I was very impressed by the way you put the rulers in a neat pile.”
- When necessary, plan to repeat instructions or offer information in both written and verbal formats. Again, it is vitally necessary that learning disabled children utilize as many of their sensory modalities as possible.

SIMPLIFYING THE TEN COMMANDMENTS
For students with learning/intellectual disabilities, substitute the word “rule” for “commandment”.

VISUAL - Have the class generate a list of rules that help people live together. Place them on large construction paper and display them around the room.

AUDITORY - As the students listen to the story of “Slaves Become God’s Own People”, have students volunteer to read the parts. For the question, What do you think Moses should do? Ask if any of their class rules would work for the slaves. Read over God’s Commandments/Rules and let the students hear the simplified wording printed on the next page.
Suggested Accommodations for Children with Special Needs

Bonus Tips for Lesson 2 –

The Ten Commandments Defined

1. Love God more than anyone or anything. Nothing in your life is more important than God.
2. Always say the name of God with love and respect.
3. Make Sunday a day to rest, and show your love for God by going to Mass.
4. Love and respect all adults in your life, especially your Mom and Dad.
5. Never hurt anyone by what you say or do.
6. Be kind and respectful to yourself, your family, and your friends.
7. Do not take anything that does not belong to you.
8. Always tell the truth.
9. Be happy with the people in your life. Don’t be jealous of other people.
10. Be happy with the belongings you have. Don’t wish you had what other people have.

KINESTHETIC - Ask for volunteers to show what is happening in each of the pictures under “God’s Commandments help us live together”.

Notes:
**Lesson 3 – We Can Act Like Jesus**

**OPENING PRAYER (page 24)**
Have a list of the commandments posted in the room where they are visible to the class. Show the class pages 2 and 3 from last week’s lesson to help them recall the problems the people had before they received the Commandments. Have a picture or statue of Jesus to accompany the discussion of Jesus as God’s son who taught people how to love. Add simple gestures to the song to facilitate participation by students who are nonverbal. Having a recording of the song and the words printed on chart paper will help the students whose learning strengths are visual and auditory.

**WE CAN ACT LIKE JESUS (pages 25-26)**
Children with a hearing impairment or intellectual disability need clearly presented stories. To concretize the scenarios, give names to children in the picture on page 1. Provide students who have motor impairments with index cards or strips of paper with each of the choices on them. Have the students either point to their choice or hold up their choice if that is easier for them. Another option: arrange the students into five small groups. Each group will look at only one situation. Have the class gather as a group to share their ideas.

**JESUS, WHAT SHOULD WE DO? (page 27)**
Add a visual component to the brainstorming session with the children by providing a large piece of cardboard with fluorescent question marks as a border. Record their questions for Jesus on the cardboard. Suggestions about gestures in #2 are excellent for all children. For #3, write the sentence: “Sometimes Jesus asks us to do hard things” to help visual learners and students with hearing impairment.

**WHAT DOES JESUS TEACH US TO DO? (page 28)**
Name the children on page 4 who appeared before. Make an enlarged version of the top of page 4 of the student copy. Complete the activity as a group with the teacher filling in the student responses on the enlarged version. Non-readers and non-writers could pantomime the children’s roles as the teacher reads each child’s words. The class could give Jesus’ responses from the enlarged version.

**I PREPARE FOR THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION (page 28)**
Before reading the questions, have students role-play such things as sharing, forgiving, or teasing. Proceed to read through the questions.

**JESUS PRAYER RITUAL (pages 28-29)**
No modifications are necessary.
During this lesson, a strategy we can work on is communication. Communication difficulties are one of the three hallmarks of autism disorders, and they play a big role in the student's social and emotional development. Some children with autism have very limited oral language, while others have highly developed vocabularies, but might not understand the pragmatics of language. Again, ask the student’s parents what their child's particular communication challenges are. The pre-verbal child can use signs or visuals to express their needs and wants. Verbal children might need encouragement to ask for help. They might also need directions repeated. You might wonder how communication plays into social and emotional development. One of the basic requirements for self-esteem is the ability to understand others and express needs and wants.

Refer to the examination of conscience under "What does Jesus Teach Us To Do".

**VISUAL** - Provide a visual chart with good choices and bad choices. Use a large smiling face for good choices and a large sad face for bad choices. Have students take turns placing the pictures or word descriptions under the appropriate face.

**AUDITORY** - Talk students through a healthy decision making process. Ask “What if?” questions. Let them respond and if the response is not a good choice, explain what they could do differently and ask them what other choice they could make that would please Jesus.

**KINESTHETIC** - Provide students with age appropriate scenarios that allow them to decide the right or wrong decision to make. You can also give four choices and have four areas in the room that they go to depending on their choice. Allow the children that picked that group to give their reasons.

After reading the suggestions in your teaching guide, you will be able to understand how the above activities can be adjusted into your lesson plan. As you prepare for your closing prayer ritual, many children with learning disabilities need time to process what has been explained. This lesson might allow for reflective time. This will allow the students to think about their good and bad choices. Ask them to think about choices that will please Jesus.
Lesson 4 —
Jesus Teaches Us to Forgive

OPENING PRAYER (page 30)
Add simple gestures to the song. Have the song on chart paper in the front of the room for visual learners. Play the melody before teaching the song.

JESUS TEACHES US TO FORGIVE (pages 31-32)
Record student definitions for the term forgiveness. Have students role-play situations in which it would be difficult to forgive the person creating the problem. For the slower learner, read one sentence at a time and ask him/her for a response before going on to the next question. Have expressive “feeling faces” that students can pick up to help them discuss the hard part of forgiving someone who has hurt them or made them angry. The suggestions under #3 will help the students who need movement and visuals to help them remember lesson content. Use scenery, props, and costumes to bring the Prodigal Son story alive for students.

HOW SHOULD I FORGIVE? (page 33)
Provide students who are nonverbal with feeling words on cards and direct feeling questions to them so that they can participate in the discussion. Students can role-play the cartoon story.

FIND JESUS’ MESSAGE (page 34)
The activity as designed would be difficult for anyone with a visual perceptual problem or a fine motor impairment or a student with an intellectual disability. Instead, give them page 4, with the key letters outlined in red. Have students work in pairs with one tracing the letter and the partner coloring it.

I CAN FORGIVE PRAYER RITUAL (pages 34-35)
Provide simple motions to say “I forgive” nonverbally.
Suggested Accommodations for Children with Special Needs

Bonus Tips for Lesson 4 –

During this lesson you will be able to implement a strategy for understanding each other. Many of our students with special needs have difficulty understanding another person's feelings or behaviors and empathizing with them, especially students with autism spectrum disorders. They may also negatively misinterpret someone’s actions. If a student experiences these challenges, suggest a few structured activities about reading body language and facial expressions, as well as ongoing casual experiences. For example, the catechist could display a poster of facial expressions or have a group discussion on the topic. Games, such as charades, that require children to read body language, can also help. Many students with autism don’t understand jokes or sarcasm. They often take teasing literally and become offended. Show the class how feelings are sometimes hurt when we misunderstand and feel someone is being mean to us. Let the student know that they can ask questions such as, “Are you trying to tease me?” to clarify another child’s intent.

Have other students provide examples. They are often the best teachers because they have witnessed firsthand some of the “bullying” or mean things said to children who have special needs. This will lead into your discussion on forgiveness.

VISUAL-AUDITORY-KINESTHETIC - On the Pflaum Gospel Weeklies Promise/Good News music CD #2, play the song, “You’ve Got to Love Them.” This song has easy wording to print out for your Visual Learners. The lyrics are easy to understand for your auditory learners, and you can make word cards for the kinesthetic learners, prompting them to say the words in the song. Students can take turns with holding the word cards up as the words of the song are sung.

In the activity “Find Jesus’ Message,” you will have student or adult helpers as guides for your students with special needs. If you have the capability to enlarge this page, or enlarge each line, it can be a fun floor activity for all the students in the class. Give each student a section and a different color to work with. Bring the end result to your prayer space and you might want to add the song “You’ve Got to Love Them” in your closing prayer ritual.
Lesson 5 – Jesus Give Us the Holy Spirit

OPENING PRAYER (page 36)
Provide pictures of a river, a fountain, and an ocean as visual aids for the song. Consider using sign language for the words peace, joy, and love.

JESUS GIVES US THE HOLY SPIRIT (page 37)
As the story is read aloud, have the students close their eyes and use a guided image of Jesus going to the garden and being arrested and his friends all running away because they are afraid. Have them focus on how they think Jesus felt when his friends ran away. Supplement 2a and 2b with pictures of someone being arrested, a closed door, a key, and faces that express the emotions described under 2b.

OUR PRIEST GIVES US GOD’S FORGIVENESS (page 38)
Have the following words available on large index cards: sin, forgiveness, reconciliation, sign of the cross, and absolve. Provide a separate set of cards with the definitions and pictures from the lesson of each of these words. After completing #2, 3, and 4 on page 38, have the students pair up to practice the priest’s actions and words as described on page 2 of the student copy.

WE MAKE PEACE AT MASS (page 39)
Rather than have individual students read each section, page 3 of the student copy could be done as a choral response, with the teacher reading a line and the children repeating it. Simplify some of the vocabulary:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instead of</th>
<th>Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>confess</td>
<td>tell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trespass</td>
<td>mistakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sin</td>
<td>hurt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>peace</td>
<td>happiness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WE HAVE MANY WAYS TO MAKE PEACE (page 40)
Use chart paper to list different words and actions that can be used to make peace. Some examples: “I’m sorry,” “Let’s make up,” “I didn’t mean to hurt your feelings,” hugs, handshakes, letters saying you are sorry, flowers, home-made cards, etc. For students who are unable to describe what is happening in the pictures, ask them what a particular person in the picture should say or do and have them point to a picture or word response that is on the chart.

PEACE PRAYER CELEBRATION (page 41)
Peace words will need to be provided to some students to glue on their medals. Have pictures of peace-making actions for students who are unable to draw the pictures. Students who are unable to write their names can use a name stamp. Teach the students the American Sign Language gesture for peace and have them use it during the prayer service. (The right palm is placed on the left palm and then turned so the left palm is on top; both hands, palms down, move down and toward the sides.)
Notes:

A perfect opportunity presents itself in this lesson as we learn about how the apostles ran away because they were afraid. We often run away or avoid people that have special needs. Sometimes we are frightened or do not understand. Most of your students will have a special need to be met before your time with them is completed. As we learn to understand each other and forgive those who do not understand, we need to take into consideration the disabilities that our students with special needs have. There are usually 6 categories that the needs will fall into:

**INTELLECTUAL**: This includes students who have superior intelligence as well as those who are slow to learn.

**COMMUNICATIVE**: These students have special learning disabilities or speech or language impairments.

**SENSORY**: Sensory-grouped students have auditory or visual disabilities.

**BEHAVIORAL**: These students are emotionally disturbed or socially maladjusted. They also include students who become disruptive from time to time. This would include our students with ADHD and Autism.

**PHYSICAL**: This includes students with orthopedic or mobility disabilities.

**MULTIPLE**: These students have a combination of conditions, such as orthopedically challenged and visually impaired.

In an average classroom of 25 students, it is expected that three to four students will be in one of these six categories.

Ask the students in the class if they have ever been uncomfortable around children that have different needs than they do. Ask if they know people who make fun of people who are different than they are. Ask the children who have special needs if they have been affected by people who do not understand their disability, and if it's easy or hard to forgive people who treat us unjustly.

**Visual, Auditory & Kinesthetic** - Have your student or adult helper play Jesus and jump into the room saying “Peace be with you”. Next, have a student act out being disrespectful to a teacher, and again Jesus jumping into the situation and saying “Peace be with you”. And finally, have a student act out being disobedient to a parent and Jesus says “Peace be with you”. Follow along with lesson 5 asking how did you feel when Jesus said “Peace be with you”, then ask the actors how they felt after they did something wrong and Jesus still said “peace be with you”. Now assign parts to the story “Jesus gives us the Spirit”. Gather the class together. Those who are not reading are Jesus’ followers.

All students will benefit from role-playing the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Let them take turns being the priest and doing the motion that the priest does to absolve us, and show us that Jesus is with us, forgives us, and blesses us.
Suggested Accommodations for Children with Special Needs

Bonus Tips for Lesson 5 –

When telling the students what certain words mean, always be ready to give an alternative word that is easily understood.

Examples:
- Absolve = take away
- Confess our sins = Tell the priest the mistakes we've made
- Absolve us from our sins = Our mistakes are wiped away
- We are reconciled by Jesus = We are forgiven by Jesus
- Trespasses = Mistakes

The activities suggested in the teacher guide for this session will reinforce the concepts presented for all students in your class. Some students with special needs will need the assistance of their student helpers in such activities as making a peace medal.
Lesson 6 –
I Prepare for First Reconciliation

OPENING PRAYER (page 42)
No adaptations are necessary.

I PREPARE FOR FIRST RECONCILIATION (page 43)
For students with an intellectual disability, more than one visit to the reconciliation room will be necessary. Prepare a reconciliation space for class demonstrations. It is important for all children to be comfortable with the reconciliation room. Some students may never celebrate reconciliation individually, but only in a communal setting. Provide additional pictures of people in the reconciliation room.

THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION HAS FOUR PARTS (page 44):
Use an extra copy of the student material and cut out the four pictures. For students with intellectual disabilities, provide one simple sentence or phrase to go with each picture. 1. I tell the priest what I did wrong. 2. I pray and say I’m sorry. 3. The priest tells me to say a prayer or do something nice. 4. The priest prays and Jesus forgives my sins. Give the children the opportunity to practice for the sacrament in the classroom setting.

A RECONCILIATION PRAYER SERVICE (pages 45-46)
In addition to holding up each student copy, have pictures or props that will remind the students of the Gospel stories. Describe all pictures for students with visual impairments. Students with fine motor difficulties may need their booklets pre-cut and pre-folded or may need assistance with them. Use a name stamp for the front of the booklet if the student cannot print. If a student is unable to draw, he or she will need a picture to paste on page 2 of the booklet. Ask another student, when necessary, to write on the top of page 3 in the student booklet. Using page 45 of the Catechist Guide, give students a copy of the questions in large print so that as they are read, the visual learners will be able to follow along. Create a pictorial response page for the student to use for the next time he or she goes to Reconciliation. Include illustrations of the word sorry. The teacher can also write individual resolutions for students. Use simple motions to accompany the phrase “We thank you, loving God.”

PRAYER RITUAL RECONCILIATION SERVICE (pages 46-47)
Teach the sign for sorry. (Close fist, palm toward chest, make circle with fist over chest.)
Some children with Autism Spectrum Disorders and other learning or intellectual disabilities, learn visually, while others learn through auditory cues or movement. Using pictures, short stories, and lots of repetition is a must if you are going to have success in ensuring that all of your students succeed. Some children with special needs will appear relatively high-functioning and others unable to speak. When it comes to the mechanics of what to do to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation, you must explain/show all the steps in small parts. They need to see the various components one step at a time, before you put it all together for them.

Using PECS (the picture exchange communication system) is another method used to assist in understanding and communicating with children that have Autism Spectrum Disorders. It can be used to help all the students in the class understand the steps taken to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The pictures presented in student lesson 6 could be enlarged and placed on cardboard as students practice going through each step. Every parish will have their particular ways of celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Often times, there will not be a prayer service with a Gospel reading as the children receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation on their own. The pages that follow show pictures that can be utilized to assist students and their parents when they receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
Suggested Accommodations for Children with Special Needs

Notes:

Step 1: Examination of Conscience
Any picture of a child kneeling and praying, as they think about what they have done that may have hurt others, themselves or God, and shows that they are sorry.

Step 2: Waiting in Line for Reconciliation
After Examination of conscience and telling God of your sorrow, you wait in line for a priest.

Step 3: Sit or kneel in front of the priest. As the priest welcomes you, make the sign of the cross.

Step 4: You may say; Bless (forgive) me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been (what period of time) __________ since my last Confession.

Step 5: Tell the priest your sins.
Notes:

**Step 6:** The priest gives you a penance which is sometimes a loving act to do or a prayer to pray. A penance helps us think about what we did wrong so we will try hard not to do it again.

**Step 7:** The priest will ask you to tell God you are sorry or say an Act of Contrition.

O, my God, I am sorry for all my sins. Help me to live like Jesus and sin no more. Amen.

**Step 8:** You are given absolution. The priest tells you that God forgives your sins. As the priest says a prayer for you, say “Amen” when he finishes.

**Step 9:** I give thanks to God for his forgiveness. If the priest has asked me to say a prayer for what I have done, this is when I say it.

**Step 10:** We go home knowing that all of our sins are forgiven and we do our best to sin no more.
Notes:

The pictures on the previous page can be adjusted to include what will take place during your particular reconciliation service. You should take the children into the church, and show them how their Sacrament of Reconciliation will take place.

When our children with disabilities come to us to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we must remember “as long as the person is capable of having a sense of contrition for having committed sin, even if he or she cannot describe the sin precisely in words, the person may receive sacramental absolution. Those with profound mental disabilities, who cannot experience even minimal contrition, may be invited to participate in penitential services with the rest of the community to the extent of their ability” (USCCB).

The elements of the Sacrament of Reconciliation to be emphasized for the person with intellectual/developmental disabilities are: to show sorrow, express that they have hurt someone, and resolve to try not to do it again.

Our nonverbal students may be able to sign “I’m Sorry.” Some priests allow the non-verbal child to write down what they are sorry for and write their Act of Contrition. Other students may only be able to nod or blink in response to the priest asking them, “Are you here because you are sorry for things that you have done wrong?” Include your parish priest in the preparation of the child who has special needs.