

I was very pleased with the experience of doing 12 Learning Stations on the Sacraments of Initiation with my 4th grade class. Here are some general observations/comments followed by specific comments on each station.

- I arrived 45 minutes ahead of time and had plenty of time to set up
- I have 14 students and 2 were absent so it was perfect to have 12 students and 12 stations!
- When they arrived, they found 3 bags on their desks...one for each of the Sacraments of Initiation. In each bag was their student worksheet.
- I walked them through each station, describing what they would do at each: fill in the information from the poster on their worksheet, complete the activity, place an object in their bag, move on to the next station
- I had 4 students begin with their Baptism bag, 4 with their Confirmation bag, and 4 with their Eucharist bag. They left their other bags on their desks until needed.
- I put instrumental music on in the background and the students moved about from station to station, keeping busy, with what I would call an acceptable level of energetic chit-chat.
- It would have been nice to have a bigger space so they could be more spread out but, we work with what we've got, right?
- Occasionally there was a "back-up" at a station that took longer than others to complete. I attempted to move things along when needed to avoid too much back-up.
- I walked around constantly from station to station, checking up on their progress and engaging them in conversation.
- Overall, it took about 45 minutes. 4 students finished in about 25-30 minutes, the majority in about 40, and one or two were still scurrying at the end to complete.
- I had no time left to process what we did other than to tell them to take their bags home and to go through them with their parents, explaining what each of the symbols mean.
- I am not concerned about not being able to process the activity last night because I'll be able to do that next week. In fact, I plan to design a quiz asking them to fill in the symbols from the learning stations for each of the Sacraments of Initiation. We'll use that as an opportunity to "unpack" the meaning of the various symbols. The memory of doing the learning stations will still be fresh in their heads and will serve as a reference point for our discussion.
- As promised, here are specific thoughts about each station.



Baptism 1: Water – students took an empty plastic bottle and filled it with water to place in their bag. Having a towel handy helped to keep things dry.



Confirmation 1: Laying on of hands – students traced their hand on a piece of paper and then cut it out to place in their bag. Be sure to use safety scissors and stroll about picking up scraps as they work.



Eucharist 1: Bread – students ate a piece of pita bread and then put one in their bag. Be sure to check for allergies. All but one of the kids liked the bread and many asked for "seconds!"



Baptism 2: Oil – students dipped a finger in the small bowl of vegetable oil and then made an oil print on the small piece of paper to put in their bag. This desk got a little oily by night's end and required a bit of cleaning up. Having the towel handy helped.



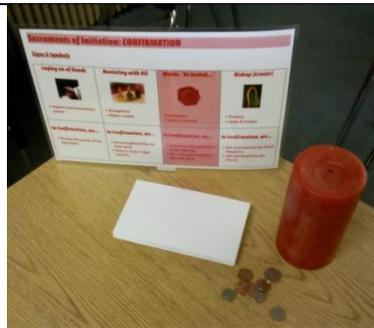
Confirmation 2: Anointing with Oil – students cut out the crown pattern and formed it into a crown by taping the 2 ends. Again, use safety scissors and walk about picking up scraps as they work.



Eucharist 2: Altar/Plate – Students took a marker and wrote RSVP to MHR (Most Holy Redeemer) on a small plate. Most chose to use all three marker colors to make their plate more festive looking!



Baptism 3: Candle – students took a flash light and reflected it into a mirror, trying to catch the eyes of classmates, my aide, and me! It was not at all annoying. They then took a birthday candle and placed it in their bag.



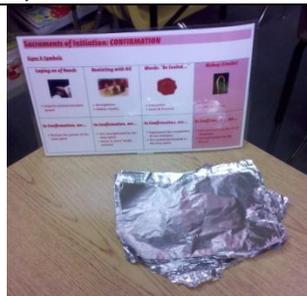
Confirmation 3: "Be sealed..." – my aide Daneen was stationed here all evening, holding the lit candle in her hand and pouring some wax on an envelope to seal it. When the wax hardened a bit, students took a coin and made an impression on the seal. They really enjoyed this but be sure that only an adult handles the candle.



Eucharist 3: Wine – again, check for food allergies and be sure to get seedless grapes (thankfully my wife reminded me to do so!). Students ate a grape or 2 and then put a couple in their bags. The grapes were really tasty and the kids asked for "seconds" as the evening progressed.



Baptism 4: White Garment – students "put on" my Chicago Blackhawks jersey (we'll talk about "putting on" Christ) and they loved it because it was so HUGE! It helps that the Hawks are reigning Stanley Cup champs! They then took a small piece of cloth shaped like a garment for their bag.



Confirmation 4: Bishop's Crosier – students took a piece of aluminum foil and rolled it into the shape of a bishop's crosier (a shepherd's staff). Tell them to make it into the shape of a candy cane and they'll "get it" right away.



Eucharist 4: Cup – students signed a "Contract" to show their commitment which is what drinking from a cup symbolizes (i.e. "Lord, let this cup pass me by, but not my will...") They then took a small paper cup for their bag.