

- *Listening.* It is very difficult to feel with people if you are doing all the talking. Take time to listen to your students. Make sure you understand what makes them sad and what makes them happy, what makes them angry or excited. Being listened to and taken seriously helps one learn how to be compassionate.
- *Understanding.* Be slow to anger. Put yourself in the children's shoes. Try to discover why a child acted in a certain way before jumping in to scold or correct. Start with the premise that even the worst-behaved child in your class is not all bad.
- *Forgiveness.* Children remember mercy. Every child (not to mention every adult) needs to know that there is a way back after having done wrong. Jesus told Peter to offer 490 ways back. That is just another way of saying, "Forgive always." Temper discipline with forgiveness, and you have given a lasting lesson in compassion.
- *Generosity.* Young people will notice when you are holding yourself back from them. It is no doubt a generosity of spirit that led you to the catechetical ministry in the first place. So, be sure to call on those generous feelings when you stand in front of a class or administer a program. The sincere gift of yourself is a treasure of compassion your students can always carry with them.
- *Humor.* The irony of the story of the unforgiving servant is a difficult lesson to forget. Don't take everything that happens in the religion class as life or death. Let the Erma Bombeck or the Bill Cosby in you come out, so that you can see how youngsters—even naughty ones—can be funny. You are funny, too. If you can laugh *at* yourself and *with* your class, you are indeed teaching a lesson in compassion.

Remember, these skills work with children and with adults. Learn these skills and you become a walking lesson in compassion—inside and outside the classroom.