

# Preassessment Informs Teaching

We at Saint Mary's Press chose to include preassessment options for each unit in the ninth-grade year of the Living in Christ series. We have heard from you that your ninth-grade classes contain well-catechized Catholics, non-catechized Catholics, non-Catholics, students from religious families and nonreligious families. Where are *your* students coming from?

## What Is Preassessment?

Preassessment is a form of diagnostic evaluation that can be done formally or informally to learn what students know and understand about a topic before teaching about that topic. You may also use it to identify students' skill levels for topics that have a skills component. A formal preassessment can take the form of an ungraded test or quiz. An informal preassessment can range from a voluntary show of hands, an exercise-based gathering of knowledge, or some other method that gives you an overall sense of the class's knowledge.

## Who Are Your Students? What Does This Mean?

Because you undoubtedly have a diverse group of students, it is important to get a sense of what they know, can do, and understand at the beginning of the course and of each unit.

One reason that preassessment will enhance your teaching is that it will help you to figure out which students know a little and which students know quite a bit. Students with little knowledge may have a difficult time building new understanding because they lack the fundamentals that other students have. You may need to suggest some background study for them so they can begin to catch up with their peers.

Another reason to preassess the students is to find out which students are well versed in the Bible already. Not only do these students have the potential of studying the Bible at greater depth, but you can also intentionally pair them with students with less understanding so that the more knowledgeable students can share what they know with the students who are new to the material.

You will also want to know what the "middle of the road" students know so that you can either start right into the learning experiences in the teacher guide or adjust any of your teaching based on misunderstandings that you pick up from the preassessment.

When there is an oral element to the preassessment, it can become a learning experience for all of the students. Even an ungraded quiz can be reviewed in class so that all of the students can hear the correct answers to the questions. When students volunteer knowledge aloud in a preassessment, all of the students learn more about the topic.

These are some preassessment options:

- ungraded diagnostic test
- ungraded association quiz
- mind map
- think-pair-share
- whip-around
- scavenger hunt

