

Profile of a Kindergarten Child

Characteristics

The self-image of a child at this age is delicate, easily altered by people and situations near to him/her. A healthy self-concept is encouraged by positive reinforcement including the fact that God made each person and loves each person. The kindergartner is egocentric, absorbed in his/her impressions and sometimes fails to realize that others may not share the same perceptions.

A five year old needs a strong sense of security and a feeling that he/she is loved and belongs. Improved socialization skills are a goal for the kindergarten year. Kindergartners involve their body and spirit as well as their mind in learning.

This child relates to the concrete, to experiences of everyday life, has a short attention span and needs a variety of activities and approaches to learning. The kindergarten year provides a time for the child to acquire a sense of initiative, to experience opportunities to affect the world in which he/she lives.

Faith Development Needs

The five year old child, in order to develop holistically (spiritually, emotionally, physically, intellectually, and socially) needs to be recognized, valued, praised, and accepted as a child of God, created in His image and likeness as well as being a unique individual with specific talents and gifts. This child needs to feel loved by God and loved and appreciated by others, including the tough love of discipline in learning what is right and wrong. Each child needs to experience a sense of security and belonging, which is essential to growth and healthy expression.

The kindergartner needs to see and experience how to share. Each child needs models from real-life, Scripture, the lives of saints, and especially from familiar adults in his/her life. This moral training helps with the development of the virtues of justice and fortitude.

Children need to experience a climate in which self-discipline and moral training is fostered by giving them real responsibilities and allowing them to experience that all actions have related consequences, either positive or negative. Training in self-discipline leads to the development of the virtue of temperance, which is self-control.

Five year olds learn best by doing rather than listening; they need to participate in activities like role-playing, story telling, singing, and celebrating.

Children at this age can be introduced to brief moments of silence in which to communicate with God, to wonder and to imagine. They may describe what God has communicated in prayer. Parental help with the memorization of prayers and having conversations about the major points of Catholic teaching, (to come to know Who Jesus is and what He wants) are essential for children to grow in their friendship with Jesus Christ.

Implications

As the prime role model for their children, parents need to have a strong relationship with Jesus Christ through prayer and active involvement with a faith community.

To encourage a positive self-image, it is good if parents take opportunities to interact individually with each of their children recognizing them as a unique gift of God.

Children need to hear Bible stories often and should be encouraged to tell the stories themselves. When reading a Bible story, parents may help their children to visualize the scene, to pick a word or phrase that stands out, and to see how this story can be related to their own life. For example, Jesus called His followers to spend time with Him, to help Him in His work to teach people the way to Heaven and to carry on when He ascended to Heaven. We are part of the family of God through our Baptism. However, we must choose to spend time with Jesus in prayer, to live by His Commandments and to help others come to know Him.

Children relate readily to symbols and gestures. Life situations in the family can provide religious experiences that involve praising, thanking and celebrating God through various prayer forms. To develop the sense of belonging to and being responsible for God's creation, parents are to encourage in the children an awareness of the needs and feelings of others and to see the entire world as a gift. An essential aspect of living the Faith is to serve others, especially by helping those in need. Children find great joy in going with a parent to visit a sick or elderly person, to take food to a shut in, to drive someone to Sunday Mass etc.

Parents can guide their children in the development of virtue by presenting situations in which children learn that they have a mind (intellect) to know the good and a will to choose the good. Good actions help to form good habits (virtues).

Parental Support

As Christian parents, we need to realize the profound importance of handing on the faith that we have received. The home is the most essential place to teach the Faith to the children God has entrusted to us. It is the responsibility of each generation to hand on the teachings of the Faith to the members of the succeeding generations; the primary responsibility here belongs to the parents and godparents. We are assured of the indispensable blessings of God in a covenantal bond that "He is our God and we are His People" to the extent that we pass on the teachings that He has given to us through the Scriptures and Tradition of the Church. God will help us with this important responsibility.

As responsible parents, we want to raise our children to be healthy, respectful, joyful and holy so that they may one day be united with Our Father in Heaven. It is essential to grow in your own faith as an adult in order to pass the truth on to your children. The Catholic Church is here to guide and support us in this most noble task. The key is to be faithful to God through living the Catholic Faith as a family.

Remaining part of the Church community is essential. This is achieved through:

- **Prayer:** receiving Jesus at Mass every weekend as a family; going to the Sacrament of Reconciliation on a regular basis; making time for family and individual prayer, such as: Reading the Bible, praying a decade of the Rosary at the dinner table, reading the life of a saint etc.
- **Faith Knowledge:** teaching the Creed, Sacraments, Morality, Prayer and Scripture; having faith conversations with your son/daughter. The following pages provide key points for this work.
- **Community:** being supported by the Church family; sharing your talents and gifts; living out the Christian life; participating in parish activities
- **Service:** taking the time as a family to serve those in need

The Office of Family Life and the Natural Family Planning Program offer parent & family seminars and resources. The family seminar called *Teaching the Way of Love* is a series of three presentations. The first presentation, entitled *Embrace Parenthood*, is designed for parents with children in grades K-2. The second presentation, entitled *Growing in Love*, is designed for parents and the children who are entering puberty (typically grades 4-6). To learn more about the *Teaching the Way of Love* series visit The Parent's Place – a website connected to the Diocese of La Crosse website: www.dioceseoflacrosse.com. Just go to the home page and click on The Parent's Place.

With regard to ongoing formation of your child in the Faith, please read the condensed version of the enclosed Kindergarten Curriculum from the Office of Catechesis and Evangelization. For a complete Curriculum, visit the Diocesan website / click on Office & Ministries / Catechesis / Curriculum. You will also find a list of recommended Bible story books, prayer books, booklets on specific teachings like angels and saints' stories.

Curriculum Guidelines

I. Creed - Profession of Faith

The Creed pertains to what God, Our Father has revealed about Himself and His Plan for our salvation (saving us from sin) and sanctification (making us holy) through Jesus Christ His Son by the power of the Holy Spirit. Faith is our response to what God has revealed to us in the Bible and in the teachings of the Catholic Church.

1. The Story of the Bible is to be presented in simple sentences such as the following:
 - God loves us and created us to be united with Him.
 - Adam and Eve sinned by disobedience and separated themselves from God through the loss of sanctifying grace.
 - God the Father promised to send us a Savior (Genesis 3:15)
 - God the Father sent His Son, Jesus, to be our Savior and reunite us with God.
 - We become united with God when we are baptized. Through receiving the Sacrament of Baptism, we become a child of God and Jesus comes to dwell in our heart, strengthening us to be faithful to Him.
2. God reveals to us in Sacred Scripture that there is only one God. There are three Persons in one God, which we refer to as the Blessed Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.
3. God created the world and everything in it. God created each person in His image. Human persons have a body and an immortal soul. We are brought into God's family through Baptism.
4. God created angels as spiritual beings. Angels are God's messengers. Our guardian angel keeps constant, watchful care over us and guides us and protects us on our journey to God in Heaven.
5. Jesus is God the Son. Jesus was born as man on the first Christmas as our Savior. Jesus loves us. The Gospels are the most important part of the Bible because they tell us about Jesus' life, teaching, and how His death and resurrection saved us from sin and re-united us to Himself. (CCC 125)
Passages that show Jesus' love for people: John 6: 1-15 Jesus feeds five thousand people
Matthew 19:13-15 Jesus blesses children
6. Jesus founded the Catholic Church, the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. (CCC 541-542)
Luke 6:12-16 Jesus chooses the twelve Apostles

II. Sacraments – Celebration of the Christian Mystery

Sacraments are actions of God to bring us into communion with Him and to strengthen us to remain in communion with Him. He has given us a share in His divine life - for no other reason than He loves us. We need to respond to the grace God gives us in the Sacraments.

1. A Sacrament is a sacred sign, instituted by Christ, to give grace. We are very close to Jesus when we receive the Sacraments. We need the Sacraments. (CCC 1114-117, 1131, 1129, 1210-1212, 1263)
2. In Baptism we become children of God and members of God's Family, the Church. (CCC 1212)
Our families, the class, and the parish are part of God's Family, the Church.
3. It is very important that we go to Mass every Sunday. At Mass, we pray to Jesus and He blesses us. The bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Jesus when the priest prays Jesus' words, "This is My Body. . . This is My Blood. . . Do this in remembrance of Me." The Eucharist (Holy Communion) is no longer ordinary bread. (CCC 1352, 1353)

4. Students should know the names and meanings of the following sacred vessels and sacramentals: tabernacle, holy water, chalice, paten, candle, altar, and crucifix. (CCC 1145-1148, 1182, 1383)
5. Liturgical gestures are signs in which we show our love and respect for God: genuflection, kneeling, bowing, Sign of the Cross, folding hands for prayer. These are signs in which we show our love and respect for God. We genuflect before entering a pew in a Catholic Church as a sign of adoration because Jesus is truly present in the tabernacle. It is proper to genuflect before a tabernacle and to make a profound bow before the altar of sacrifice if the tabernacle is not directly behind the altar.
6. Students should know the name(s) of the parish priest(s), the bishop and the Pope.

III. Life in Christ

Life in Christ or the moral life is about how we respond to Jesus' love by the way we live. The moral life is not an arbitrary list of rules, but laws of love that help us to stay close to Jesus, a life of true joy and peace.

1. We are created in the image of God and He wills that we love ourselves. We show love for our soul by praying to Jesus and trying to be good. We show love for our body by proper hygiene, by protecting it from harm, by modesty (dressing properly) and purity (watching TV shows and movies that are age appropriate – that do not go against the dignity and self worth of the human person).
2. God loves each person. He wants us to treat others with kindness, to help those in need and to respect each person and their belongings.
3. God gave Moses the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments are for each person to know how to live as a child of God. We are to show our love for God by choosing to follow the laws of love that He gave us. (Deuteronomy 5:6-21) Some of His laws are:
 - Go to Mass
 - Pray your prayers every day
 - Do not tell lies
 - Obey your parents
 - Do not hurt anyone
4. There are right (good) and wrong (sinful) choices. We grow in holiness when we do what is right. Wrong choices are acts of selfishness. These sinful choices hurt us personally as well as our relationship with God and others. When we do something wrong, we ask God and the person we have hurt or disobeyed to forgive us. If we are sorry for our sins, God will always forgive us. We should also forgive others as God forgives us.

IV. Prayer Life

1. Prayer is talking with and listening to Jesus. Friendship with Jesus depends upon a daily commitment to prayer. Prayer can be in the silence of our heart or out loud, alone or with others. Prayer is necessary if we are to know God personally and to do His will.
2. God hears every prayer that we make and answers prayer in a way that is best for us.
3. The Mass is the most important prayer. We need to attend Mass every Sunday and the holy days of obligation. We want to participate fully in mind and heart in the prayers and songs of the Mass.
4. The memorization and understanding of basic prayers offers an essential support to the life of prayer. Students should memorize the following prayers and learn spontaneous prayers as "I love You, Jesus:
Sign of the Cross Our Father Hail Mary
Grace Before Meals Prayer to my Guardian Angel Glory Be