

Profile of a Pre-kindergarten Child

Characteristics

Three and four year olds focus on what they experience through the senses, especially what they can feel and move with their hands. “Hands on” work, with concrete objects, is very important.

Order is essential for these young children. A certain routine of daily prayer in the morning, at bedtime, and at meal times leads to a consistent growth in faith.

Children learn language very easily at this time in their lives. They love beautiful words, so this is a good opportunity to introduce

- vocabulary (such as “holy water font,” “crucifix,” “chalice,” “tabernacle,” “Stations of the Cross
- prayer words and phrases, which they can use to create their own prayers of praise and thanks (such as Jesus, will you help me with this? and Jesus, thank you for your love.)
- songs of worship related to the themes of catechesis.

Young children have a deep sense of wonder and awe. They are naturally curious and seek to “know” things with all their senses. They are open to and drawn by both “physical” and “spiritual” wonders, the natural and supernatural.

Faith Development Needs

Pre-school children’s capacity to receive and return love is immense. The announcement of God’s love for them and respect for their capacity to love God is essential to their proper formation.

Children are nourished by the very basic, but rich, announcements of our Faith. These are announcements that can be returned to again and again, constantly enriching the relationship between Jesus and the child. They include:

- the gift of creation
- God saves Noah and his family
- God reveals His Law to His people
- the birth of Jesus
- Jesus as the Good Shepherd
- Jesus’ love for people - Miracles
- the death and resurrection of Jesus
- the True Presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist
- Jesus as the light of the world
- Baptism as the gift of our receiving the risen life of Christ

Three and four year olds can pray with joy and simplicity. Praise and thanks come naturally to them in short phrases, song, and repetition of words like “Alleluia,” as well as in their art and their work with materials.

Pre-school children, when their relationship with Jesus is both respected and nurtured, experience deep joy. They believe Jesus is their Savior and in knowing that He loves them, they have a sense of great peace.

Implications

Young children’s capacity and need for love is great. Therefore, parents will want to announce God’s love through the reading of Bible stories, the lives of saints and other spiritual reading with their children and model God’s love through an attitude of respect for and service to the children. The relationship between Jesus and

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the child should be nurtured and respected. Parents who themselves take time for ongoing formation in the Faith, model this peace and joy, which is the fruit of a relationship with Jesus.

Wonder and awe can be nurtured in teaching the Truths of the Faith and by drawing attention to and teaching about sacred objects. A deep respect can be fostered through a quieter voice and through the way that the Bible or sacred objects are handled.

Parents will want to keep in mind the ability of young children to learn language by speaking carefully and respectfully. Difficult liturgical and biblical vocabulary **should be used** after brief explanations. Children will remember new words best if they are associated with an experience of the object in question, i.e. “chalice” should be taught when the children can see a real or model chalice or “genuflection” should be taught when the children enter the Church and can see the burning sanctuary candle and know that Jesus is really present in the tabernacle.

In order to foster the prayer life of the child, parents need to have a healthy prayer life themselves. A commitment to daily prayer assures a heart to Heart relationship with Jesus Christ. Parents are then witnesses, who speak of the Person of Christ that they really know and love.

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 provides His grace to help us with this responsibility.

Bible Stories are good teaching tools. Mary was chosen to be the Mother of Jesus. Mary said yes to God our Heavenly Father who asked her to take on this important role. God asks each of us to take on an important role in loving, sharing, being kind to and helping others. Sometimes this is difficult but God will always assist us when we turn to Him for help.

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

With regard to ongoing formation of your child in the Faith, please read the condensed version of the enclosed Pre-Kindergarten Curriculum from the Office of Catechesis and Evangelization. For a complete Curriculum and the Virtue Program, visit the Diocesan website www.dioceseoflacrosse.com, click on Office & Ministries, then click on Catechesis and the links located on the left side.

The Office of Family Life offers a parent & family series of presentations called *Teaching the Way of Love*. The first presentation, *Embrace Parenthood*, is designed for parents with children in grades K-2. *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, click on [The Parent's Place](#) – at the Diocesan website.

Faith Formation 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