

Profile of a First Grade Child

Characteristics

Children of this age are growing away from egocentric social behavior toward an awareness of other people. They are entering into peer-group activities with zest. Now they need guidance in learning to handle playtime conflicts and to exercise the social skills needed to establish and maintain friendships. These skills include learning to give and take and to share responsibility with peers, learning boundaries, learning to read and to write, and other related intellectual skills.

First graders are capable of understanding a story and can retell it from beginning to end. Some are even capable at this stage of finding hidden meaning or discovering the moral in a story.

The children's sense of self-worth is quite fragile at this stage and it is imperative to be sensitive to this fragility. When disciplining a child, it is important to focus on the behavior that needs to be corrected. This correction should be handled in such a way that the child's emerging self-image is not damaged or hurt.

Faith Development Needs

Six year old children, in order to develop in a well-rounded manner (spiritually, emotionally, physically, intellectually, and socially) need to be loved so as to love. Faith has its roots in love. First graders need to be recognized, appreciated and praised as unique individuals, created in the image of God, and precious in the eyes of God. They need to experience a sense of security and belonging, which is essential to their growth.

Six year olds need to be helped to be faithful in daily prayer and included in other family religious activities. They should continue to experience times of silence in which to listen to and talk with God, to wonder, to reflect, to imagine. e.g., as can be seen in the Bible Story of young Samuel. Little children also need to be taught how to share, understanding that through prayer, God will assist them in their effort. They need to see role models from Scripture, the lives of the saints, and especially from the most familiar adults in their lives. In these models, they will begin to see that faith is to be lived out.

Children at this age need to appreciate that each person is unique child of God, who is good and loved by Him, regardless of social status, race, physical handicaps, etc. It is important to help children learn to value others different from themselves.

Young children need to experience an atmosphere in which self-discipline can be fostered by giving them real responsibilities. Gradually, they will learn that all actions have consequences, either positive or negative.

Implications

To help the children move from a moral stage known as self-interest, parents are to awaken in them an awareness of the needs and feelings of others, inviting them to reach out to others in love and concern. Even at this early age children can tell others about Jesus and His Family. (Evangelization) Children also require the development of the supernatural virtues of Faith, Hope and Love. Because children relate readily to the language of symbols and gestures and begin to acquire the spiritual attitudes which the gestures express, parents are to provide frequent opportunities for their children to make acts of faith, such as kneeling down and making the Sign

of the Cross before beginning to pray at night, showing reverence for the Bible, praising and thanking God in prayer and song, and worshipping Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

One way six year old children begin to understand who God is and what He wants is from the stories they hear. These images later become more mature concepts and feelings about God. Therefore Scripture stories which emphasize the love and providence of God and God's faithfulness are to be read in the home. The gift of Hope is developed especially through hearing Bible stories of God's faithfulness to His promises throughout history. One example: Jesus was out fishing with His Apostles and a storm came up. Due to the huge waves, the Apostles were scared to death that the boat would sink. They woke Jesus up and He calmed the storm. He was able to do this because He is God. Jesus will always help us when we ask Him.

Because the little child tends to imitate, parents who are conscious of God's presence in the world and in their life through a daily routine of prayer, who are joyful, and who strive to follow Christ more closely, are examples to their child of living the Catholic faith. Some children know at an early age what God is calling them to be. Contact with a priest or religious as role models may encourage these vocations.

Parental Support

As Christian parents, we need to realize the profound importance of handing on the faith that we have received. The most essential place to teach the Faith to the children God has entrusted to us is in the home. 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.

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 dinner, reading the life of a saint.
- **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, please visit [The Parent's Place](#) – a website connected to the Diocese of La Crosse website: www.dioceseoflacrosse.com. 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 First Grade Curriculum from the Office of Catechesis and Evangelization. For a complete Curriculum, visit the Diocesan website / click on Office & Ministries / Catechesis

Curriculum Guidelines

“The definitive aim of catechesis (teaching the Faith) is to put people not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ; only He can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity” (*On Catechesis in Our Time*, Pope John Paul II, n. 5).

The primary goal for the first grade year is dedicated to proximate formation and preparation for the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Jesus Himself in the Holy Eucharist. This formation is to always include the parents who have the primary responsibility for the education and formation of their children. It is necessary that families participate in Mass each Sunday and all Holy Days of Obligation. There is no meaning in being taught the Faith without the corresponding practice of the Faith.

I. Creed – Profession of Faith

The Creed pertains to what God, Our Heavenly 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. God has acted first. Faith is our response to what God has revealed.

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 sent His Son, Jesus, to be our Savior.
Through His Death on the Cross and Resurrection from the dead, our sins were forgiven and we could now be reunited with God.
Jesus began the Catholic Church and gave us the seven Sacraments so that we could receive sanctifying grace. Sanctifying grace is a share in God’s life, which is how we are united with Him. By cooperating with grace, we are strengthened to do what is right and good.
2. The Bible is a special Book where God speaks to us. We become more and more aware of God’s love for us and we develop a greater love for God in Sacred Scripture. 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 united us to Himself. (CCC 125, 426)
3. There is only one God. There are three Persons in one God: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The three Persons in one God is the Blessed Trinity. God has no beginning and no end.
4. God is our Father Who loves us and cares for us. God created us out of love and created the world around us. God made the angels, sun, moon, stars, flowers, animals, man and woman. We are special because we are made in the image of God. We have an immortal soul, which allows us to know and to love.
5. Jesus is the second Person of the Blessed Trinity. Because Jesus really is the Son of God, He could tell us the truth about God. Jesus also did wonderful things called miracles: healing the sick, feeding the hungry, and rising from the dead, which was His greatest miracle.
6. 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.

II. Sacraments – Celebration of the Christian Mystery

Section two focuses on the Sacraments. Sacraments communicate God's grace, which unites us with Him and strengthens us to remain in communion with Him. Through the Sacraments God communicates a share in His Divine Life out of love for us. We are to approach the sacraments with expectant faith and proper dispositions so as to receive the grace that Christ intends to give. Sanctifying grace transforms our hearts and conforms us to Christ.

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. God gives us sanctifying grace in the Sacraments. Sanctifying grace is a share in God's life.

Sacrament of Baptism

1. The Sacrament of Baptism is the gateway to all the other Sacraments. Jesus said that we need to be baptized to go to Heaven.
2. In the Sacrament of Baptism, the Blessed Trinity comes to dwell within the person's soul, making him/her a child of God and member of His family, the Church.
3. Through Baptism we receive cleansing from original sin and forgiveness of all personal sin committed before Baptism, sanctifying grace (a share in the life of the Blessed Trinity), which makes us children of God, members of the Body of Christ, and temples of the Holy Spirit and co-heirs of the Kingdom, and the Theological Virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit which are necessary to live as children of God.
4. If we were baptized as infants, our parents and godparents made the Baptismal Promises for us to God. The Baptismal Promises are to be lived in our everyday life. (CCC 1185)

Sacrament of Reconciliation / Penance

5. Grace helps us to treat people the way God wants us to (to live by His Commandments) and to say yes to God's love. When we do something wrong, we ask God and the other person we have hurt or disobeyed to forgive us. In turn, we should forgive others as God forgives us.
6. The Sacrament in which we confess our sins and ask to receive Jesus' mercy and forgiveness is called the Sacrament of Confession or Penance or Reconciliation or Conversion. In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we confess to the priest who acts in the person of Christ, because Jesus gave to priests the authority to absolve us from sin in His name.
John 20:19-23 Jesus instituted the Sacrament.
7. Sin is primarily turning away from God (an offense against God) that damages our relationship with Him, and at the same time, damages the Church and our relationship with others. We are healed and strengthened in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. (CCC 1440)
8. Only God is able to forgive sins. However, Jesus entrusted His own exercise of the power of forgiving sins to His Apostles on Easter Sunday night. The Apostles handed on this power to their successors, the bishops and to the priests who share in the ministry of the bishop.

Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist

9. Sunday is the Lord's Day. It is the day that Jesus rose from the dead and for this reason, we are to attend Mass and devote time to family, leisure, rest and works of charity. At Mass, we pray to Jesus and He blesses us. (CCC 2174-2176, 2184, 2172)
10. Jesus shows His love for us by giving Himself to us in the Holy Eucharist. (CCC 1337)

11. The bread and wine becomes 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. The Holy Eucharist continues to look and taste like ordinary bread and wine after the consecration (transubstantiation = change of substance), though the substance has changed. Jesus is truly present in the Holy Eucharist. (CCC 1352, 1353)
12. Students should know the names and meanings of the following sacred vessels and sacramentals: tabernacle, holy water, chalice, paten, candle, altar, and Crucifix.
13. The following liturgical gestures are outward signs that reflect our inward love and respect for God: genuflection, kneeling, Sign of the Cross, folding hands for prayer, blessing ourselves with Holy Water. For example, we genuflect upon entering a Catholic Church as a sign of adoration because Jesus is truly present in the tabernacle. (CCC 1153-1155, 1208)
14. At the Last Supper Jesus changed bread and wine into His Body and Blood (transubstantiation); He ordained the Apostles as His first priests and told them to celebrate this memorial until His return. Matthew 26:26-30
15. The priest is a man who has been called by God through the Sacrament of Holy Orders. The priest represents Jesus in celebrating the seven sacraments and leading us in prayer.
16. Jesus gives us His Body and Blood in Holy Communion, which helps us to give God the Father obedience and service.
17. Christmas celebrates Jesus' birth. Advent is a time of preparation for Christmas. Easter celebrates the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Lent is a time of preparation for the Resurrection. (CCC 1168-1171)
18. Students should know the name(s) of the parish priest(s), the bishop and the Pope.

III. Life In Christ

We respond to God by the way we live. The Ten Commandments are God's laws of love that help us to know what is right and good for ourselves and our neighbor.

1. God is love. God created us in His image and likeness and He wills that we love ourselves. We show love for our soul by striving for holiness through charity toward others. We show love for our body by proper hygiene, by protecting it from harm and through modesty (dressing properly) and purity of mind and heart (watching and listening to good programs that do not make us feel uncomfortable or attack the dignity of the person).
2. God gave Moses the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20: -17).
The Ten Commandments - God's laws of love
The First Commandment: There is only one God. You shall not have other gods besides Me.
The Second Commandment: God's name is Holy. You shall not use God's name in vain.
The Third Commandment: Remember to keep God's day holy.
The Fourth Commandment: Honor your father and mother.
The Fifth Commandment: You shall not kill.
The Sixth Commandment: You shall not commit adultery.
The Seventh Commandment: You shall not steal.
The Eighth Commandment: You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
The Ninth Commandment: You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.

The Tenth Commandment: You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.
John 14:15 Jesus said, "You are My friends if you do what I command you."

IV. Prayer Life

Prayer is an essential way we respond to God who loved us first. Prayer is necessary if we are to know God personally and to do His will. Living the Christian life is impossible without prayer.

1. Prayer is talking with and listening to Jesus. We can pray everyday first of all by listening to Jesus and telling Him that we love Him and that we are sorry. We are to thank Jesus and ask Him to help us to be good. God hears every prayer that we make and answers every prayer in a way that is best for us even if we do not always understand God's ways. He is always faithful and is with us through all joys and sorrows. Family prayer is essential.
2. Children should develop a daily habit of personal prayer, encouraged by parents at home.
3. The Mass is the highest form of prayer. At the Mass, the bread and wine are changed into the Body and Blood of Jesus. The Holy Eucharist is the deepest encounter between God and us. We need to participate by praying and singing.
4. The memorization of basic prayers offers an essential support to the life of prayer. It is also important to help students savor their meaning. Students are to memorize the following and also to be helped with spontaneous prayers, such as thanking Jesus for all His gifts:

Sign of the Cross	Glory Be	Our Father
Prayer to my Guardian Angel	Hail Mary	Grace Before and After Meals
5. We show our love for Jesus by being devoted to His Sacred Heart. This is the devotion to the love of God, which is symbolized by the Heart of Christ. (CCC 478)
6. The Mass is the highest form of prayer. At the Mass, the bread and wine are changed into the Body and Blood of Jesus. The Holy Eucharist is the deepest encounter between God and us on this earth. (CCC 1374, 1391, 1324-1325, 1407)
7. We need to participate fully in mind and heart in the prayers of the Sunday Mass. Each person is called to actively participate in the Mass by praying and singing. (CCC 1071)
8. It is appropriate to be quiet when visiting a Catholic Church because Jesus is present in the tabernacle and we want to speak to and listen to Him. We also want to show respect for those who are praying in Church by maintaining an atmosphere of prayerful silence. (CCC 1185)
9. The Rosary is a wonderful form of prayer by which we meditate upon the mysteries of Christ's life and ask for Mary's intercession. (CCC 971, 2678, 2708, 1674)
10. Children can learn to recite and/or sing selected communal prayers and responses of the Mass:
 - Responses to Greeting and Penitential Rite
 - Responses to the Readings and the Gospel
 - Response to Intercessions
 - Response to Preparation of Gifts and the Eucharistic Preface
 - Holy, Holy, Holy
 - Our Father
 - Response to Sign of Peace
 - Lamb of God
 - Final Blessing and Dismissal