

## **Who are your Fifth Graders?**

“The catechist – must take into consideration all the human factors of a particular age level in order to present the Gospel message in a vital and compelling way.” (NDC #48)

### **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

#### **Catechists can:**

- Provide reasonable explanations and increased group activities because the children have developed a longer attention span. Augment the docility and the unquestioning acceptance of adult explanations by capitalizing on the children's interest in sharing in small group discussions.
- Provide group projects in which all the children can be involved because children learn most effectively when engaged in the learning process.
- Stimulate the children's creativity through music, art, drama, and related activities. Provide an opportunity for them to express and appreciate religious concepts.
- Use daily situations and discussions to help students develop skills in moral decision making. Challenge the students to correlate what they say they believe with their actions. Encourage them to do what is right because it is right, whether it pleases the group or not. Stress the reasons and the values underlying the rules, as well as the importance of right motives.
- Accept pre-adolescent restlessness, boredom, and awkwardness as a way to help students experience God's love for them as individuals. Repeat the message of self-worth again and again.
- Understand that as peer pressure is a reality and pre-adolescents fear peer rejection, liturgical/sacramental experience rooted in the group is appealing and that community is an inviting concept. Encourage students to participate fully as a group in preparing materials and place for celebrations, playing musical instruments, reading the scripture, dramatizing the Gospel story, carrying the presentation gifts, making decorations, and presenting commentaries.
- Encourage the understanding of God as a friend, someone to whom they can talk, someone who affects them personally, someone with whom they can enjoy periods of silence and reflection.
- Establish a positive attitude toward prayer and its purposes. Offer a variety of prayer experiences: rote prayers, silent prayers, spontaneous prayers and petitions, meditative prayer, and prayer services.

### **FAITH DEVELOPMENT**

#### **Children at this age:**

- Continue to grow in their relationship with God through prayer.
- Can take greater roles of responsibility in prayer and worship.
- View all events in their lives as part of faith.
- Understand symbols, stories, and religious images of God in a way that can be somewhat literal.
- Need help to develop their own unique God-given gifts.
- Catch the tradition of the past through stories (scripture, Jesus, stories of the Church).
- Can identify outstanding role models of the present.
- Begin to glimpse themselves in the future through observing the virtues and character of heroes and heroines and mature adults.
- Respond to lived faith witness by willingness to participate in more systematic presentation of the faith, liturgy, and religious practices.
- Need help to see the reasons behind Church rules, privileges, and responsibilities.
- Need help to understand that God desires the good and happiness of everyone.

- Vest greater importance in their expanding world of school, community, people, and events around the world (the latter brought closer through media).
- Can be introduced to care for the aged, persons with disabilities, the poor in the neighborhood and the world, through their expanded involvement with others outside the home.
- Gain a sense of responsibility and develop care for others by being involved in charitable collections, community clean ups, and other organized events.
- Begin to have a genuine sense of fairness and equality.
- Can take others' views into account in bargaining to meet their own needs.
- Grow in the ability to understand abstract qualities in the future such as justice and injustice by participating now in activities with sharp contrasts between good and evil.

### **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT**

#### **Children at this age:**

- Are unpredictable
- Worry about body development.
- See body as an embarrassing object because of the vast differences in rate of change among this age group.

### **SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

#### **Children at this age:**

- Are strongly influenced by the group; need to be like peers; are developing close friendships.
- Are in a transition time between adolescence and the peaceful years of middle childhood; are unpredictable, having both spurts of high and low energy at the same time.
- May act/dress older than their age; need help to cultivate virtues like modesty and consideration for others.
- Need help to identify feelings and how to act upon them in a positive manner – (giggling covers up emotions regarding the opposite sex).
- Like quiet time (e.g. reading) and time with peers (eg. Playing complex games).
- Do not want to risk being laughed at; may avoid answering orally in a large group; enjoy discussions better; prefer recording and reporting back to the large group.
- Are influenced by media and advertisements; are attracted to and value whatever enables them to experience physical/mental control over their environment.
- Are idealistic; are beginning to ask questions about themselves and their lives; are aware of problems in their families and world.
- Have feelings close to the surface; worry about looks, self, family, almost all think they are different; experience self-consciousness and sensitivity to criticism.

### **COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT**

#### **Children at this age:**

- Think on a factual/concrete level.
- Are able gradually to form abstract ideas/concepts based on experience.
- Manifest intense curiosity, a thirst for new experiences and a desire to collect, organize, and correlate factual material. Enjoy making collections of all kinds.
- Are able to observe people, situations and form conclusions about them.
- Search for explanations and are beginning to work with universals.
- Can memorize details, but should always have this coupled with understanding.
- Have attention spans that usually exceed 20 minutes.