

Who are your Third 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:

- Emphasize uniqueness and the people God has given to us who love and care for us. Praise, reward, and appreciate the children. Enhance their self-image by your attitude toward each child. Be an example for the children. Teach them that God loves them--showing them by attitude and action, that they are loved.
- Model Christian behavior for children to emulate because third-graders are in the "hero-worshipping" stage. Utilize stories from scripture and from the lives of the saints which include both heroes and heroines. Concretize experiences by the use of music, spontaneous prayers, and the use of imagination in class reflections.
- Help children develop socially and become more aware of the effect they have on a group. Help the children to choose the good that God wills, reject the wrong, and begin to accept greater responsibility for their actions.
- Stimulate thought by including a variety of methods and activities. Distribute responsibility throughout the group which will enable the children to develop self-control.
- Help children to become aware of social ills and human needs resulting from injustice, greed, lack of mercy, violence, and war. Teach them as Christians to use their God-given gifts to respond to the needs of others.
- Assume responsibility for involving the children in prayer and in Christian service.
- Provide example as well as instruction that will encourage the children in a life of prayer and service.

FAITH DEVELOPMENT

Children at this age:

- Grow in their relationship with God particularly through prayer based on life experience.
- Vest great authority in parents and other trusted adults.
- Desire to join in the ritual of the parish community as seen in the desire to participate in penance and Eucharist.
- Need help in formation of conscience.
- Begin to sort out reality from imagination based on practical experience.
- Need concrete experiences to understand concepts and religious truths.
- Use classes and categories to order actions around them.
- Can begin to project themselves imaginatively into the position/situation of others.
- Begin to order the religious world.
- View rules as inflexible.
- Understand reality best in story form.
- Identify with heroes and heroines of the Bible.
- Identify with the stories of the Church (lives of saints for example).

- Desire to learn about people and their differences.
- Accept attitudes of parents, teachers, the Church, and other social institutions toward differences in people.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Children at this age:

- Have greater control of large motor activities and increased mastery of fine motor skills.
- Enjoy group activities because of improved body coordination.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Children at this age:

- Are in an age of "I" and "you."
- Have increased awareness of social sense; may begin to feel pre-adolescent pressure to wear the right clothes, etc.
- Are more ready to share than at an earlier age, sometimes even caring for younger children.
- Begin to place great emphasis on friendships (best friends begin to develop); best friends may be good dialogue partners in group discussions.
- Can cooperate in group experiences (with about 4 or 5 others); boys and girls may work best in separate groups; do not want to be criticized or embarrassed in front of the group.
- Grow into making observations about the world around them, and exercise curiosity for life.
- Can begin to take responsibility for planning (i.e. prayer service).

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

Children at this age:

- Can do more logical thinking with concrete objects and events in the present.
- Begin to be able to see things from another's point of view, though not consistently.
- Are rapidly developing communication skills.
- Have speaking vocabularies which exceed reading vocabularies.
- Have an increasing ability to talk with others and not simply to them.
- Are enthusiastic.
- Are at peak creativity.
- Are developing the self-confidence needed to work on projects.
- Are interested in learning games.
- Begin to be "data" collectors.
- Display curiosity about life, nature, and people, but are able to learn more readily from their observations.
- Are mastering the ability to read and enjoy using this skill.