

Profile of a Second Grade Child

Characteristics

Second-graders are beginning to develop socially. They enjoy increasing involvement in group activities such as team projects, singing and joint recitation; they need to learn to respect others as created and loved by God, and to treat others as they would want to be treated (with love & respect); they need help to understand and handle constructively their feelings and emotions, reassurance and encouragement, praise and reward, direction, discipline, and love from the catechist, from parents, and from other adults whom they admire. This learning fosters their growth in complete Catholic Formation. (Temperance, Fortitude, Faith, Love)

Second grade children:

Are more cognizant of right and wrong and of their ability to choose between the two.

Are easily influenced by a set of action patterns based on those they observe in adults they admire. Therefore it is important for the teacher of the Faith to be aware that certain lessons, experiences, and influences (both true and false) will affect the 2nd grade child profoundly at this age.

Have a short attention span (about 10 to 20 minutes) and tire easily if lesson segments are too long or if too many ideas are presented at once.

Enjoy memorizing simple prayers, verses from the Psalms and Scripture, as well as other prayer forms such as the response in a litany.

Learn best through concrete experiences because their ability to think in the abstract is very limited. They grasp concepts like “unity” and “belonging” from doing things such as sharing, listening, eating together, giving, thanking and celebrating.

Show interest in the beauty and wonder of God’s creation. This interest can easily be cultivated to prayers of praise, awe, and thanksgiving.

Need *both* direction and affirmation in choosing virtue over sin in their daily life. It is helpful to lead the second-grader to realize the effects of their personal choices, and especially how these choices affect their relationship with God and with others. (Justice, Prudence)

Should be taught the value of prayer as a means of deepening their relationship with Jesus. In particular, they also need to know that experiencing the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Eucharist deepens this relationship: by strengthening their Faith, teaching them how to have Hope and trust in God, and helping them to have greater Love for God, themselves and their neighbor.

Seven-year-olds learn by doing and by listening. Seven year olds need to be taught how to listen, engage in activities such as role-playing, dramatization, story telling, singing, and celebrating in religious ceremonies.

Faith Development Needs

Children are to be helped to grow in the Theological Virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity. Leading the children to a deeper friendship with Jesus will take place through learning Bible Stories, learning the teachings of the Church and taking time for daily prayer.

Learning to live as Jesus wants us to will require training. The way that we make good and holy choices is through the exercise of virtue. A virtue is a good habit. We develop the Cardinal Virtues (moral virtues) of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance through education, deliberate acts and perseverance in struggle. These efforts are purified and elevated by God's grace (CCC 1810).

<u>Prudence:</u>	Discovering our true good and choosing the right means of achieving it (Simplified definition) making a right judgment
<u>Justice:</u>	Giving the proper due to God and neighbor Being fair
<u>Fortitude/Courage:</u>	Firmness in the pursuit of good The courage to do what is right
<u>Temperance:</u>	Moderating the attraction of the pleasures of the senses that provides balance in the use of created goods, acting with self discipline or self control (CCC 1803-1809)

Example: The virtue of justice is exercised when children are fair in playing sports.
The virtue of temperance is exercised when children take two slices of pizzas instead of five.

The catechist can help the children to choose to be good out of love for God by loving and respecting others. This will require that children be helped to develop the virtues so as to become habits in order to guide their conduct (CCC 1805-1809). According to *the Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality, Guidelines for Education within the Family* (hereafter TM), from the age of innocence until the time of puberty, children are to be trained in friendship skills and virtuous living. Developing the virtue of temperance involves formation in self-discipline and self-control. The virtue of temperance is the foundation of the virtue of chastity, which allows us to overcome the temptation to look upon or use another person as an object for pleasure and sexual satisfaction rather than a person to be loved. The virtue of chastity also needs to be developed.

The document notes that for children in the years of innocence, "this period of tranquility and serenity must never be disturbed by unnecessary information about sex" (TM #78). Chastity is training in the "gift of the person" (CCC 2346). "Chastity is not to be understood as a repressive attitude. On the contrary, chastity should be understood rather as the purity and temporary stewardship of a precious and rich gift of love, in view of the self-giving realized in each person's specific vocation...Chastity means the successful integration of sexuality within the person and thus the inner unity of man in his bodily and spiritual being"(TM #4). The integration of sexuality means self-mastery, in controlling desires and submitting them to love and respect as ordered to the gift of self. "The virtue of chastity blossoms in friendship" (CCC 2347).

"As in the first years of life also during childhood, parents [and teachers] should encourage a spirit of collaboration, obedience, generosity and self-denial in their children, as well as a capacity for self-reflection. In fact, a characteristic of this period of development is an attraction toward intellectual activities. Using the intellect makes it possible to acquire the strength and ability to control the surrounding situation and, before long, to control bodily instincts, so as to transform them into intellectual and rational activities" (TM #86).

"An undisciplined or spoiled child is inclined toward certain immaturity and moral weakness in future years because chastity is difficult to maintain if a person develops selfish or disordered habits and cannot behave with proper concern and respect for others. Parents [and teachers] should present objective standards of what is right and wrong, thereby creating a sure moral framework for life" (TM #86).

It is the understanding of the Catholic Church that parents are the primary educators of their children. In the Catholic Schools and Religious Education Programs, formation in chastity will be taught in the context of the moral life with a focus on the dignity of the human person. Human sexuality, which is to include formation in chastity, is the responsibility of the parents.

It is the duty of the parish to help and support parents “in fulfilling their fundamental right and duty to educate their children for love.” (TM #41-47) The Diocese of La Crosse, through the Office of Natural Family Planning, offers training and support for parents and parents/young people in matters of human sexuality and formation for chastity. For information call (608) 791-2658. The Diocese also offers resources such as *Taking A Stand, Helping our Kids Win the Battle for Sexual Purity* for both parents, Catholic school teachers and catechists in the religious education programs. Please call the Office of Catechesis and Evangelization for recommendations on resources or training for religious educators (608) 791-2658.

Implications

Children at this age also begin to be aware of:

- The difference between what he or she wants (desire and the will) and
- What obedience to their parents requires. (An understanding of situations that define cause and effect is most helpful here).

In helping children form their consciences through charitable, yet firm discipline, the catechist should be careful to react consistently to an action, incident, or situation.

Thus second-grade children will realize that there are differences between what is dangerous, what is improper, what is annoying, what is accidental, and what is sinful.

In addition, as the catechist helps to prepare the children to receive the forgiveness of God in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, concentration should be placed on both:

- The seriousness of sin, and
- The magnitude of God’s love and mercy.

Second graders are still limited in their sense of history and time.

They may confuse past and present experiences, including occasions of sin. The catechist needs to bear this in mind and repeatedly clarify past and present, right and wrong. Pointing out relationships between current events and those of the past especially help second grade children.

This becomes particularly important when introducing the examination of conscience. Children live in the present, generally. Therefore, when they remember past sinful actions, it is frequently true that they mix what happened years or months ago with what happened last week. As a result, they need assistance in coming to a full understanding of what an examination of conscience is, and how the past and present relate.

Perhaps most importantly, the catechist is instrumental in cultivating the Cardinal and Theological virtues in the child through example of life and simple teaching. This will help to foster an atmosphere of respect and love for each person in the classroom and beyond.

Therefore, the catechist’s personal relationship with God in prayer, his/her frequent reception of the Sacraments, and his/her growth in a love for Jesus (a life of holiness) will be a criterion on which the children come to internalize and live the fullness of the Catholic Faith.