

Profile of a Third Grade Child

Characteristics

Children at this level seek group identification - they have a special group of friends, usually all boy or all girlfriends. They define their roles and duties from the community in which they live. This is the “good boy” or “nice girl” period during which it is important to follow accepted expectations.

Eight year old children begin to take responsibilities seriously, but are very sensitive, at times moody, and easily disturbed by criticism from adults. They are developing a positive, though quite fragile, self-image. Strong adult support is still very much needed.

These children, because of their growing group consciousness, enjoy events in which they have a role in planning: planning prayer services, dramatizing stories from the Gospel and planning such events as an All Saints Day party.

Faith Development Needs

Children at this stage like time to be alone. Thus it is appropriate to introduce meditative and spontaneous prayer, as well as silent prayer. It is helpful for third graders to be given the opportunity to reflect on what was presented in a teaching and to pray by themselves. This contemplative method of prayer does not in any way exclude public, private, spontaneous and formal prayer. The meditation sheet “Praying with Scripture” can be used verbally with third grade students, helping them to learn how to relate the Scriptures to their own life. The simple “Praying with Scripture” sheet can be downloaded from the Diocese of La Crosse website: www.dioceseoflacrosse.com, click on Office and Ministries and then Catechesis.

Eight year olds need stimulating personal and group relationships that foster feelings of belonging and being cared for and cared about. To feel good about their exposure to the Christian community, they need constant reassurance that adults, even when they punish, love them and will not turn away from them. Stories about the love of Jesus demonstrate that God always loves us, even though He does not approve of our wrong deeds.

Due to their need for group identification, children at this age begin to think they are not only different from others, but also better. They need to realize that each person is created by God and therefore, deserving of respect and love. They can be taught loving attitudes and behaviors by hearing stories about missionaries, saints, and present-day persons involved in justice and peace issues such as Mother Teresa.

The child begins to learn that happiness comes from knowing God, loving God, living by His Ten Commandments, following His guidance and serving Him by serving others.

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.

Implications

Because third graders are in the “hero-worshipping” stage (even though we should worship God alone) they need models of Christian behavior to emulate. During this time of sex role identification, the catechist should make sure that stories from Scripture and from the lives of the saints include both heroes and heroines.

Eight year olds are developing socially and becoming more aware of the effect they have on a group. Parents can help their children to choose the good that God wills, begin to understand temptations, reject the wrong, and begin to accept greater responsibility for their actions.

Third graders can be made aware of social ills and human needs resulting from injustice, greed, lack of mercy, violence and war. It is best if they see Christian witnesses who use their God-given gifts to respond to the needs of others. As an essential element of the Christian life, parents are to include their children in works of mercy such as visiting the sick, helping an elderly person with yard work, taking a meal and/or groceries to a shut in, driving a person with special needs to Sunday Mass etc.

Parents must assume responsibility for involving their children in daily prayer and in Christian service according to God's unique call of the individual. It is through the parent's example as well as their instruction that they will encourage the children in a life of prayer and response to the call of God. In addition to seeing married couples practice their faith, it is also essential for the children to have a priest and a consecrated person speak with them.

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 important place to hand on the Faith to the children God has entrusted to us. We must pass on the Story of the Bible, which is the Story of God's family, given to us through the Scriptures and Tradition of the Church. Through Baptism, we become children of God and our family Story allows us to know where we have come from, our purpose in life and the direction to our ultimate destiny of union with God in Heaven. Without knowledge of and ongoing formation in the family Story, we can be ignorant of the meaning of life and lose our way, which can lead to a life of misery. God will 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 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

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. Just go to the home page and click on The Parent's Place.

With regard to ongoing formation of your child in the Faith, please read the condensed version of the Third Grade Curriculum which is enclosed. Refer to the Diocesan website under Catechesis for a complete Religion Curriculum for each grade level, including recommended reading.

Curriculum Guidelines

Jesus established the Catholic Church and instituted the seven Sacraments. Through the Church we receive the Sacraments, in which Jesus shares His love and strength with us (sanctifying grace).

The third grade year is dedicated to greater understanding and formation in reception of the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. The focus is on deepening the student's personal relationship with Jesus through daily prayer, greater understanding of the Church's teaching and reading Bible stories.

In the Gospel of John, the crowd came to hear Jesus speak. The men, women, and children were hungry and had nothing to eat. Jesus multiplied the five loaves and a couple of dried fish to feed the five thousand. Jesus wanted us to see that He will take care of our needs. Later, Jesus instituted the Eucharist so that we can receive Holy Communion, giving us His grace to be united with Him both here on earth and forever in Heaven.

Parents have the primary responsibility for the education of their children and therefore are to be involved in ongoing formation of their children. Families are to participate in Mass each Sunday and all Holy Days of Obligation as well as taking their children to the Sacrament of Reconciliation on a regular basis.

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 continually calls out to us in love, inviting us into an intimate personal relationship. Our response to His personal call is faith.

1. The following provides an overview of the Bible:
 - 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 grace.
 - God the Father sent His Son, Jesus, to be our Savior.
 - Jesus is God. Only God could fix the sin problem that was caused by the Original Sin. This sin caused the separation of all people from God through the loss of sanctifying grace (a share in God's Divine Life). The gates of Heaven were closed with the first sin.
 - 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 Church and gave us the seven Sacraments by which we receive sanctifying grace. Grace strengthens us to seek the good in living according to the Commandments and avoiding evil.
 - We are 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.
 - Jesus, through the person of the priest, forgives us and takes away our sin in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
2. 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.
3. Jesus founded the Catholic Church, the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. Jesus chose twelve men to be the leaders of His Church with Peter as the Head, the first Pope. After He returned to the Father, Jesus sent to His followers the Holy Spirit to help guide the Apostles and the Church in carrying on His work.
4. Our Pope and Bishops continue Christ's work of bringing us closer to God through proclaiming the Gospel and celebrating the Sacraments. In the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation, we receive the Gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit teaches us how to pray, helps us to understand the truth that we have been taught about God and His perfect love for us, and prepares us to receive Jesus in the Holy Eucharist.

II. Sacraments – Celebration of the Christian Mystery

1. A Sacrament is a sacred sign instituted by Christ to give sanctifying grace. Jesus shares Himself and His love with us through the Sacraments. (CCC 1131, 1210, 1114-1115)
2. Through the sin of Adam and Eve we lost sanctifying grace, a share in God’s life. We need sanctifying grace (a participation in God’s Divine Life) to know, love and serve God.

Sacrament of Reconciliation / Penance

1. The sacrament in which we confess our sins and ask to receive Jesus’ mercy and forgiveness is called the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession). In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we confess to the priest who acts in the person of Christ. Only God is able to forgive sins. However, Jesus gave to priests the authority to absolve us from sin in His name .
2. 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.
3. In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we can tell Jesus, in the person of the priest, that we are sorry for our sins and receive His forgiveness.
4. There is mortal (deadly) and venial sin. Mortal sin is saying no to our friendship (a serious disobedience to God’s laws of love) that destroys our friendship with Jesus (loss of sanctifying grace). For a sin to be mortal, three conditions must be present: serious matter, full knowledge of the evil act, and full consent of the will. Mortal sin completely separates us from God. Venial sin is breaking a commandment in a less serious matter that hurts our friendship with Jesus. (CCC 1855, 1857).
5. The guaranteed way to be reconciled with God after committing a mortal sin is the Sacrament of Reconciliation. When we are sorry and seek forgiveness through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, God forgives us. Contrition is sorrow for sin and a firm commitment not to sin again. (CCC 1496)

Sacrament of Holy Eucharist

1. 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
2. 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.
3. 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.” 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.
4. Jesus gives us His Body and Blood in Holy Communion, which helps us to give God the Father obedience and service.
5. The Sacrifice of the Mass continues (makes present) Jesus’ Sacrifice of the Cross; Jesus is offered on the altar again but without shedding His Blood.
6. Once we receive Jesus in Holy Communion, we kneel down in prayer and thanksgiving. We may close our eyes to give Him our full attention. We silently pray to Him and He listens and then we listen to Him. Jesus is pleased when we share our life with Him.

III. Life In Christ

The moral life is about how we should respond to God by the way we live. As His children, we should live as God has asked. The Commandments are God's laws of love, helping us to do what is right and good.

1. God is love. He wills that we love all people. To love means to will the good of another. Willing the good of another means to be selfless instead of selfish. Loving and helping others brings us joy.
2. God gave Moses the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments are God's laws of love for all His people. Knowing God's laws helps us to do what is right. Doing the right thing is not always the easy way. We need God's help, His grace, to do the right thing. (CCC 2056-2057)
3. Students are to memorize the Ten Commandments, become familiar with the major point of each commandment and understand their meaning in a manner that applies to their life.
The Ten Commandments - God's laws of love (Exodus 20: 2-17)
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. Deut 5:16
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 (lie).
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, "If you love Me, you will keep my Commandments."
4. Jesus became man to show us who we are and how we are to act. Jesus summed up the Ten Commandments in the Two Great Commandments:
 - a) Love God with all your heart.
 - b) Love your neighbor as yourself.
5. As children of God, we are invited to share in God's love and life by treating people the way God wants us to (the Ten Commandments). Due to the effects of original sin, we are tempted to sin. We commit personal sin when: 1) we know something is wrong 2) we have the freedom to choose 3) we do the wrong thing anyway. We can be tempted to sin through our own selfish desires, the devil, what we see and hear from other people, the TV, the radio, and the Internet. However, we do not sin if we refuse to do the wrong thing.
6. There are two kinds of sin: *venial* sins and *mortal* sins. Venial sins are little sins but they hurt our friendship with Jesus. Most sins are venial sins. Mortal sins are very serious sins. We say no to our friendship with Jesus and mortal sin destroys our relationship with Him (we lose the life of God - sanctifying grace within our soul). We cannot go to Heaven if there is a mortal sin on our soul.
7. It is important to examine our conscience and pray a sincere Act of Contrition every night.
In examining our conscience, we ask ourselves:
 - Did I pray to God today?
 - Did I listen to and obey my parents and teachers?
 - Was I kind to everyone or how was I selfish?
8. After we receive the Sacraments, above all the Holy Eucharist, we receive sanctifying grace, the strength to go forth to love and serve the Lord by loving and serving our neighbor.

