

Profile of a Sixth Grade Child

Characteristics

Sixth graders feel they do not belong for they are too old for elementary school and too young for junior high. Along with increased physical growth, eleven year olds are developing new emotional patterns and are subject to variable moods from one extreme to another. They may be fidgety, disagreeable, resentful, argumentative, insolent, and sulky at one time and at other times exuberant, out-going, candid, communicative, sincere, and friendly.

Pre-adolescents are interested in bodily development. Sexual curiosity intensifies, and some begin to take care of their personal appearance. Most eleven year olds exhibit a growing interest in clothes, although this does not mean they know how to choose or how to care for their clothing.

By now most are comfortable with abstract ideas and reasoning, though they still need concrete objects and examples in order to grasp general principles. They become curious about details of the past, about “what really happened.” They are aware of social problems, and of the need for group action to meet human needs.

Faith Development Needs

Sixth graders need to learn to make sound moral judgments based on Christian principles, realizing that each choice or decision they make either strengthens or weakens their relationship with Jesus Christ and others. Pre-adolescents, due to their growing awareness of their impulses and their feelings, may begin to have definite ideas about their future. Parents should assist them to learn about vocations of Christian service in religious life and/or the priesthood. Learning about the vocation to the Sacrament of Marriage will come later.

Eleven year olds are beginning to recognize connections between the past and the present. This is the appropriate time to teach, in a detailed manner, the Story of the Bible which is the Story of God’s family throughout history. God’s Plan to bring us into union with Himself is still unfolding and He continues to speak to us through reading the Scriptures, through prayer, and through the events of our everyday life. This is an opportunity to remind them of their ongoing need to call upon God for His favor and help in our life, especially in time of need, referred to as actual grace.

At this age, there is usually an interest in and awareness of the opposite sex which is part of normal development, but this should not be encouraged except through appropriate supervised group activities. Friendships should be fostered, especially with a group of people who share the same love for God and the desire to be faithful to Him.

Young people are to foster the virtue of hope. Christian hope is based upon the knowledge that with the love God has for us, He will help us through everything. Scripture is to be studied to deepen hope. The pages of the Bible reveal to us that God has kept all of His promises. He sent His Son as our Savior and instituted the Church through which we can receive the Sacraments.

Eleven year olds are self-conscious about themselves. Therefore, through prayer and encouragement, they need to be led to understand and accept themselves as persons who possess the dignity (worth) of being children of God. The pre-adolescent is beginning to experience the inner “world” of emotions, confusion, and laziness. Consequently, parents can help to develop a deeper realization that our wounded nature due to original sin has an effect on human passions and desires, intellect, and will. Therefore, pre-teens need help to avoid being drawn into the media image of the perfect person, to resist becoming a slave to societies pressures by needing to purchase the “right” brands and doing and saying sinful things to be accepted.

Implications

Sixth graders are more aware of social problems and have a strong sense of social justice, which results in their willingness to help others, even at some risk or actual cost to themselves. Youth are willing to work hard and have a zest for “community projects.” Planning activities that are of service to those in need and grounding them in prayer is valuable. Further, it is beneficial to study God’s concern and actions for the oppressed like delivering the Israelites from slavery in Egypt.

As peer pressure is becoming stronger, students at this age need a safe and secure setting for exploring questions and doubts. As they try to integrate the reality of their life experience with their religious beliefs, they need a forum in which to explore their feelings. It is crucial that the parents provide such a forum. It would be helpful to have the students write down their questions so that answers can be carefully prepared in a concise manner.

In teaching young people to pray, the parents are to keep in mind that learning to pray is different from learning prayers. Memorized prayers are very important. However, prayer is to be taught so that young people speak with God with spontaneity about what is on their heart. Family prayer at meal times is especially important. A pre-teen seeing their parents in prayer speaks volumes.

Parental Support

As Christian parents, we need to realize the profound importance of handing on the Catholic Faith that we have received. The home is the most essential place to teach the Faith to the children God has entrusted to us. It is the responsibility of each generation to hand on the truth of 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 will provide 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 our own faith as an adult in order to pass the truth on to our 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 Faith as a family. Remaining part of the Church community is essential and 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, Christian Prayer and Scripture; having faith conversations with your son or daughter. The following three pages provide key points for this important 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 second presentation, entitled *Growing in Love*, is designed for parents and the children who are entering puberty (typically grades 4-6). The final presentation, entitled *Bodies and Boundaries*, is designed for parents and youth who are in middle or high school (grades 8-10). To learn more about this series please visit The Parent’s Place – a website connected to the Diocesan website: www.dioceseoflacrosse.com. Go to the home page & click The Parent’s Place. With regard to ongoing formation of your child in the Faith, please take the time to read the enclosed condensed version of the 6th Grade Religion Curriculum. A complete Curriculum is on the Diocesan website www.dioceseoflacrosse.com. Click Ministries / Catechesis / Curriculum.

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 sixth grade year is formation in discipleship. This will include the study of Jesus’ teachings about the Kingdom of God, the path to His Kingdom, His call of discipleship and the first step of discipleship, living by the Ten Commandments. Another emphasis of faith formation in sixth grade is the study of people of the Old Testament. The example of Moses helps the students understand the meaning and commitment of discipleship. God gave Moses the necessary tools to succeed in his mission. Moses stuck to the task, even though it was challenging, at times unpleasant and even unpopular with his own family. With God’s help through prayer, Moses accomplished the desired outcome as His faithful follower.

Active participation in the life of the Church is part of being a true Christian. Families should participate in Mass each Sunday and all Holy Days of Obligation. Parents and young people will also want to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation on a regular basis – more than once or twice a year.

I. Creed - Profession of Faith

1. 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.
2. God reveals to us in Sacred Scripture that there is only one God and He is a Trinity of Persons. God created all that exists as a way of sharing His love with us. God is Creator and Lord of all things and so deserves our worship and adoration.
Exodus 2:23-3:14 The Burning Bush: God reveals that He is a personal God.
3. God is our Father Who loves us and cares for us. God created each person to be in communion with Himself. Only we, as human persons, are able to know and love our Creator. We are called to share by knowledge and love, in God’s own life and this is the fundamental reason for our dignity. (Genesis 1:26-27)
4. God created Adam and Eve in His image and likeness. He created Adam and Eve and the whole human race to know, love and serve Him so that we can be united with Him both here and forever in Heaven. Adam and Eve were united with God through sanctifying grace within their souls – a participation in God’s Divine Life. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)
5. God gave Adam and Eve everything they needed to live with Him forever. But they disobeyed God. (Original Sin) Through their sin, they lost sanctifying grace, their union with God. God still loved them and promised that He would send a Savior to reunite us with God.
6. Jesus is God. Jesus was born as man on the first Christmas as our Savior. (Luke 2:11)
7. Jesus came to bring His Kingdom of truth and love, of justice and peace, of holiness and grace. Jesus instituted the Church, which “is the seed and beginning of this Kingdom.”
“Everyone is called to enter the Kingdom” (CCC 567, 543).
The Proclamation of the Kingdom of God
Mark 1:14-15 “Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming...the Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the Gospel.”

We are to enter the Kingdom, that is, become a disciple of Christ, in order to ‘know the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven.’ Those who stay outside cannot know the secrets.

Jesus' invitation to enter the Kingdom – Parables (short stories)

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23 The Parable of the Sower: We must receive the word of God, believe it and cooperate with God's grace to live it.

Signs of the Kingdom of God

Luke 7:18-23 "The blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor hear the good news.

"The miracles of Jesus manifest that the Kingdom is present in Him and attest that He is the promised Messiah" (CCC 547). A miracle is an act above the laws of nature that only God can perform. Sometimes God performs a miracle to prove that a person He has sent is telling the truth. Since Jesus is God, He worked them by His own power.

The Keys of the Kingdom

Matthew 16:18-20 "You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the powers of Hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven" (CCC 553).

Jesus endowed His Church with a human structure that is hierarchical, with the pope to lead.

The Path to the Kingdom

John 14:6 Jesus said, "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life; no one comes to the Father but by Me."

Jesus is the Way to Heaven. Only by following Him can we be with Him. Here are some things that help us to grow closer in our friendship with Jesus:

- Actively participate at Mass and receive Jesus in Holy Communion every Sunday (and more often if possible).
- Talk with Jesus every day in prayer.
- Follow Jesus by keeping the Commandments
- Help others as much as you can – think of others first
- Receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation regularly, even on a monthly basis

First Step of Discipleship – Living the Ten Commandments - God's laws of love.

Jesus did not set aside the Ten Commandments. The foundation of all law is God's love for us. Jesus teaches that the capstone of all law is our love for God.

John 15:9-17 The command I give you is this, that you love one another."

Jesus' call to daily prayer

Matthew 6: 7-15 "This is how you are to pray: Our Father..."

8. Jesus chose Peter as the leader of His Church and made him the first Pope. Furthermore, Jesus gave to the Apostles the power to bring God's mercy and forgiveness to all Christians. This power has been passed on to the priests and bishops whom God has called and will continue to call to carry on Christ's work of bringing people closer to God. (Mt 28:16-20)

Jesus instituted the seven Sacraments, which strengthen us to be faithful as a disciple of Christ

God wants you to be the best you can be. However, God has to help you because there are things you cannot do without His help. Sanctifying grace, a share in God's life received in the Sacraments, strengthens you in daily life.

John 15:1-17 "...Without Me you can do nothing" (cf. CCC 1108).

As believers, we are to look for ways to bring others to Christ by sharing the Gospel, the "Good News," with them. Our ultimate motivation in everything we do for our neighbor is to bring them to Jesus Christ so they will one day be with Him in Heaven.

II. Sacraments – Celebration of the Christian Mystery

1. Due to the effects of original sin, we have a weakened human nature (an inclination toward sin) and therefore we need sanctifying grace, which is a participation in God's Divine Life. Sanctifying grace is received in the Sacraments.
2. The seven Sacraments are efficacious signs instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church. Sanctifying grace transforms and strengthens us to live in imitation of Christ.

Sacrament of Healing – Jesus, Physician of our Souls and Bodies

3. Our Christian life can be weakened and our union with Jesus can even be lost by sin. The Church, through the power of the Holy Spirit, continues Jesus' work of healing and salvation through the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick.
4. Through **the Sacrament of Reconciliation**, God forgives our sins and increases our spiritual strength. Mt 16:16-20 Jesus gives the Apostles power to forgive sins.
5. 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 (CCC 1440, 1849-1852, 1443-1445) (2 Cor 5: 18-21)
6. Mortal sin is a serious disobedience to God's laws of love that destroys the Divine Life of God in the soul (loss of sanctifying grace). It constitutes a break in our relationship with God. 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. Venial sin is breaking a commandment in a less serious matter that wounds our relationship with Him.
7. One is not in the state of grace after committing mortal sin. The guaranteed way to be reconciled with God after committing a mortal sin is the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
8. A priest can never reveal what is heard in confession. There is no exception. This is called the sacramental seal of Confession. (CCC 1467)
9. Five steps to make a good confession: (CCC 1491-94)
In preparing for confession, pray to the Holy Spirit to help you know your sins. Pray for the grace to be sorry for your sins, and make up your mind not to sin again. Go to confession:
 - a) Make the Sign of the Cross.
 - b) Tell your sins to the priest. (Each mortal sin must be confessed - trying to remember the number of times the sin was committed).
 - c) Listen to the guidance of the priest to help you break sinful habits.
 - d) Pray the Act of Contrition (with true sorrow and a firm purpose to change).
 - e) After leaving the confessional, pray or do the penance that is given.
10. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is important for preparing to receive the other Sacraments. We must be in the state of grace to receive the Holy Eucharist.
11. The regular confession of venial sins helps us form our conscience, fight against evil tendencies and break sinful habits, and allows Christ to heal the wounds of our sins.
12. Through **the Anointing of the Sick**, the conferral of a special grace is given to those who are seriously ill, old, and/or close to death. Its full celebration includes Reconciliation, Anointing and Eucharist. The name "Viaticum" is given to the Eucharist for those who are about to leave this life, so that Jesus is with them.

III. Life In Christ

Section three is about how we should respond to God by the way we live. As His children, we should live as God has asked. God knows how we are to live to have inner peace and joy.

1. Since we are created in the image of God and He loves us, He wills that we love ourselves. We show love for our soul by striving for holiness through loving God and neighbor. We show love for our body by proper hygiene, by protecting it from harm and through modesty. Modesty is decency in thoughts, words, deeds, and in dress. Immodesty in dress unveils that which should remain hidden, and draws consideration away from the person to the body through focusing attention on one part of the body. Due to the effects of original sin, immodesty can result in tempting another to lust, to view the person as a sexual object. A mother will want to guide her daughter (a father, his son) to protect her/his dignity by preserving the body in purity as a gift from God.

1. Since all people are created in the image of God and He loves each person, He wills that we love all people. To love means to will the good of another. To be able to love others, we need to be selfless instead of selfish. Jesus wants us to treat others with kindness.

2. Jesus’ two-fold Law of Love sums up the Ten Commandments. Jesus’ two-fold Law of Love is a command to love God and to love others as Jesus has loved us. When we love others and ourselves we are doing what God wants us to do. God asks us to love our neighbor even as He loves us, and forgive others as Jesus forgives us.

3. The Commandments are God’s laws of love that guide us to love God and our neighbor. Students should memorize and understand their meaning in a manner that applies to their life. John 14:15 Jesus said, “You are My friends if you do what I command you.”
Living by the Ten Commandments - God’s laws of love (Exodus 20: -17)
Exodus 20: 2-6 **The First Commandment:** There is only one God. You shall not have other gods besides Me. (CCC 2083)
Exodus 20:7 **The Second Commandment:** God’s name is Holy. You shall not use God’s name in vain. (CCC 2142)
Exodus 20:8-11 **The Third Commandment:** Remember to keep God’s day holy.
Exodus 20:12 **The Fourth Commandment:** Honor your father and mother.
Exodus 20:13 **The Fifth Commandment:** You shall not kill.
Exodus 20:14 **The Sixth Commandment:** You shall not commit adultery.
Exodus 20:15 **The Seventh Commandment:** You shall not steal.
Exodus 20:16 **The Eighth Commandment:** You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. (CCC 2464)
Exodus 20:17 **The Ninth Commandment:** You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife.
Exodus 20:17 **The Tenth Commandment:** You shall not covet your neighbor’s goods. (CCC 2534)

Conscience

5. God created us with an internal guide to help us determine which actions are good and which actions are bad. This is known as our conscience. The voice of conscience calls us “to love and to do what is good and avoid what is evil.” Our conscience must be properly formed through Catholic teaching and practice of the Commandments.
Questions to ask before making a decision:
 - Would this decision go against the Ten Commandments?
 - Will the results of this decision be good for me, my family, my friends?
 - Will my decision hurt anyone?
 - Would I make the same decision if my parents were involved?
 - Have I asked Jesus to guide me in this decision?

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. In order to know God and His specific plan for our lives, we must take time to pray, that is to talk, listen and be with God and His Family, the Church. Praying is essential for growing as a child of God in the family of God. A life without prayer is like a life without breath.

1. “Prayer is the raising of one’s mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God.” Prayer is the living relationship of the children of God with their Father, with His Son Jesus Christ and with the Holy Spirit. We are called to pray every day with our families. (CCC 2559, 2659-2660, 2565, 2615)
2. Prayer is a gift from God. God longs for us and calls us to respond to His love in prayer everyday. He gives us the strength (grace) to respond to that call. (CCC 2567, 2559, 2591)
3. The Holy Spirit teaches us how to pray and helps us to pray with our heart, which strengthens our relationship with Jesus. (CCC 2650, 2670, 2672, 2657)
4. Daily prayer and living the Christian life are inseparable. Doing the will of God and reaching Heaven is only possible through prayer. We cannot forgive enemies, understand suffering and love God above all things without prayer. (CCC 2744-2745, 2757, 2752, 1023-1024)
5. The Bible is the written Word of God and has an important place in Church, but should also be prayerfully read and meditated upon in the classroom and at home. 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 101-104, 125)
6. The memorization of basic prayers offers an essential support to the life of prayer, yet it is also important to help students savor their meaning. (CCC 2688) Young people are to be able to recite the following: (New prayers are bolded.)

Our Father	Hail Mary	Glory Be
Apostles Creed	Act of Contrition	Morning Offering
Mysteries of the Rosary	Prayer to the Holy Spirit	Memorare
Personal prayer to the Holy Spirit to know and be sorry for your sins before Confession		
Personal prayer to prepare for Mass and prayer of thanksgiving after receiving Jesus		
Act of Faith	Act of Hope	Act of Love

7. 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 our joys and sorrows in life. (CCC 2610, 2616)
8. 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 because we have received Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist. (CCC 1374, 1391, 1324-1325, 1407)
9. When we participate in the Mass, we share in the priest’s action by offering our obedience and service along with Jesus as a sacrifice to our Heavenly Father; this is the best prayer we can offer to God. To offer ourselves with Jesus means to do God’s will and to give up anything that keeps us from giving God obedience and service. Jesus Christ shows us His infinite love by giving Himself to us in the Holy Eucharist. (CCC 1324-1325, 1367)

10. In order to stay close to Jesus Christ, and to be strengthened to live a life in imitation of Him, we should regularly (monthly if possible) receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
11. There are four forms of prayer: Adoration (praise and blessing), Contrition (repentance), Thanksgiving (gratitude), and Supplication (asking God for things). This can be memorized simply by the acronym ACTS: adoration, contrition, thanksgiving and supplication. In all prayer, we are lifting up our hearts and minds to God. (CCC 2626-2644)
12. We know how much Jesus loves us because He allowed Himself to be crucified so that our sins could be forgiven. One way to remind ourselves of His great love is to pray in front of the Crucifix. This symbol of love draws us to serve God and our neighbor more lovingly. We want to pray the “Our Father” every day, asking God for all that we need.
13. An important way to return Christ’s love is to be devoted to His Sacred Heart. The enthronement to the Sacred Heart (for the home and classroom) is bound essentially to the Holy Eucharist, for it aims to bring Christ, truly present on the altars of sacrifice and in the tabernacles of our parish churches, into our homes and classrooms. It aims to link the altar and tabernacle of the parish Church with the places of prayer and devotion in the home.
14. 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)
15. Sixth graders are to be helped and encouraged to develop a personal prayer life, which should be fostered through silent meditation upon Scripture, spontaneous prayer, praying the Rosary and thinking about the mysteries of Jesus and Mary’s life and applying them to their own life.
16. Prayer helps us to grow in our friendship with the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, Mary and the saints. We need to be faithful to daily prayer. God will give us the desire to pray and the grace to be faithful to daily prayer. Moreover, we should pray for the souls in Purgatory who died in God’s friendship but who are being purified before they enter the joy of Heaven.
17. Sacred images, statues, saints’ pictures, a crucifix, holy water, and the rosary are reminders of God’s presence in our lives. Sacred images such as statues, icons and paintings help us to pray. Students should be encouraged to pray before the image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus that is displayed in the classroom. It is important to have these blessed objects in our home and at school to be mindful of God’s love for us and His constant presence in our lives. (CCC 478, 1159-1162, 1674, 2132)
18. Quiet time spent alone with Our Lord in prayer before the tabernacle where He is always present can be of great comfort and consolation to our youth. Further, to visit Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is a proof of gratitude, an expression of love, and a duty of adoration.

Recommended Prayer Books

U Got 2 Pray, Father Stan Fortuna, Our Sunday Visitor

The Pieta Prayer Booklet, MLOR Corporation

Prayer Book for Young Catholics, Our Sunday Visitor

Pure Faith, A Prayer Book for Teens, Catholic Answers (888) 291-8000