



KINDERGARTEN PARENT PAGE

Parents have the unique responsibility for the education of their children; they are the first educators or catechists. They teach by their witness of the faith, through their values and attitudes, by their Christian example of love for Christ and his church. When children are baptized, parents accept the responsibility to raise their children in the practice of the faith...(National Directory for Catechesis 234-235)

Dear Parents,

In a special document entitled *Letter to Families*, Pope John Paul II wrote: "Parents are the first and most important educators of their own children, and they also possess a fundamental competence in this area; they are educators because they are parents" (16). You are the first and best role model for your child in these growing years. Your role as parent to love, teach, and lead your child to Jesus is a remarkable and noble vocation. Congratulations and Thank You for accepting and honoring this God-given role.

At this particular stage of development, children are strongly influenced by adults and identify with them. They are moving into a larger circle beyond family and need continuing signs of affection, belonging, encouragement and praise. Kindergartners like to do what others do; however, they dislike being compared to other children. They finish self-initiated tasks and take pride in their work, are self motivated and self-sufficient. Children at this age are friendly and outgoing, have a good sense of humor, learn to play in small groups, but still may have difficulty sharing. They need freedom in choosing friends, as they are expanding their social contact to those outside their family. Kindergartners are eager to learn and learn best through active involvement. At this age, they begin to distinguish reality from fantasy and are eager to listen to stories and then retell them in their own words.

Your Child's Faith Development

Like other stages of development, your kindergartener's faith development is important. Although children at every developmental level have many characteristics in common, each child is unique and will not fit entirely into any model developed. Keep in mind then that your child will come to know and understand the faith at his or her own rate of development. However here are some general points to remember. Children at this age:

- ✠ Need parents and family life as a ground for their faith.
- ✠ View size, power, and position as reasons for responding to God, parents, and rules.
- ✠ Need to share in common language and rituals of faith.
- ✠ Can begin to develop a personal relationship with God, especially through prayer.
- ✠ Form dispositions toward the world and attitudes toward worship that will last a lifetime.
- ✠ Need continuity and routine to provide order to their world.
- ✠ Focus on images rather than reality.
- ✠ Need help to distinguish imagination from reality.
- ✠ Need assurance that scary wishes do not make bad things come true.
- ✠ View events in isolation.

How You Can Help Your Child Grow in Faith

Here are several points that will aid you in helping your child grow in his/her faith.

- Attend and participate in Sunday Mass as a family.
- Participate in special events with the parish such as the patron saint's feast, holiday customs and blessings.
- Help your child develop an appreciation for the simple ordinary things in life.
- Nurture a sense of reverence through informal prayers of praise and thanksgiving such as: Jesus, I Love You; Thank You, God; Sign of the Cross; Prayer before meals
- Balance your child's activities with quiet times and the opportunity for movement.
- Give praise for accomplishments.
- Allow your child to experience your love and care for them as a way to know a loving God – faith is more "caught" than "taught."
- Help your child to discover positive attributes of God through a caring environment at home and Church.
- Assist your child in developing a sense of responsibility and service to others, by giving him/her simple chores to do.
- Allow your child to make decisions as a basis for developing a social conscience.
- Read Scripture stories to your child, presenting the same theme in different ways—retelling of stories. The following are some examples:

Creation – Genesis 1:1-31	Annunciation – Luke 1:26-31 Birth of Jesus – Luke 2:1-20	Finding in the Temple— Luke 2:41-51
Calling of Disciples— Mark 1:16-20	Good Samaritan—Luke 10:25-37 Loaves & Fishes—Mark 6: 31-44	Grateful Leper—Luke 17:11-19
Jesus and the Children—Luke 18:15-17	Miracle of Jairus Daughter— Mark 5:35-43	Lord's Prayer—Luke 11:1-4 Last Supper—Luke 22:14-20
Death of Jesus— Luke 23:33-47	The Easter Story—Luke 24:1-12	

Help your child to become familiar with the following terms:

advent	amen	Baptism	Bible	Christmas	Cross	Easter	God
Holy	Jesus	Joseph	Last supper	Lent	Mary	Mass	prayer
Family							

Our diocese provides many resources and materials that will help you better understand the faith and work with your child at home. Among the resources is the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*, an adaptation of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. For more information contact the Office of Catholic Education, Christian Formation at (804) 359-5661 or e-mail Cf@richmonddiocese.org.

KINDERGARTEN

BACKGROUND FOR CATECHISTS

Know Your Audience

Just like Jesus, every good catechist knows their audience.

“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)

Who Are Your Kindergartners?

Faith Development

Children at this age:

- ❖ Need parents and family life as a ground for their faith.
- ❖ View size, power, and position as reasons for responding to God, parents, and rules.
- ❖ Need to share in common language and rituals of faith.
- ❖ Can begin to develop a personal relationship with God, especially through prayer.
- ❖ Form dispositions toward the world and attitudes toward worship that will last a lifetime.
- ❖ Need continuity and routine to provide order to their world.
- ❖ Focus on images rather than reality.
- ❖ Need help to distinguish imagination from reality.
- ❖ Need assurance that scary wishes do not make bad things come true.
- ❖ View events in isolation.

Kindergarten Catechists

Guiding Principles

Catechists should:

- Provide activities involving the whole child (note: in both gross and small motor skills, be sensitive to children who are developing more slowly, avoid frustration for the children). Balance your activities with quiet times and the opportunity for movement.
- Give individual attention to children by using their names in a special way. Celebrate birthdays, baptism, and anniversaries. Plan social activities and celebrations which revolve around the changing seasons, and the liturgical seasons and feasts in the Church year, which may be inclusive of other family members.
- Give praise for accomplishments. Build on childrens' desire to please others as a first step in deepening a sense of selflessness and concern for others.
- Assist children in developing a sense of responsibility and service to others by rotating simple chores. Role play different jobs both in the home and in the community.
- Allow the children to make decisions as a basis for developing a social conscience.
- Use symbols to enhance learning such as bread, water, light, heart.
- Provide brief periods of silence to allow children to focus and internalize what has been learned.
- Review and repeat as necessary. Present the same theme in different ways, using different materials or activities—retelling of stories, especially those from the bible, is a good example.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Kindergarten

Children at this age:

- Are physically active, but have less energy than three and four year olds.
- Are more mature in motor control; hop, skip, are more balanced and poised. Participate in boisterous play.
- Build with blocks, have continued interest in puzzles.
- Have greater small muscle control in hands, enabling them to draw, cut.
- Usually have defined hand preference.
- Have increased competence in self-care.
- Are capable of sitting still for longer periods of time (10-15 minutes).

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Children at this age:

- Are strongly influenced by adults and identify with them.
- Are moving into a larger circle beyond family.
- Need continuing signs of affection, belonging, encouragement and praise.
- Like to do what others do; however, dislike being compared to other children, and may be damaged by this.
- Finish self-initiated tasks and take pride in work; are self motivated and self-sufficient.
- Are friendly and outgoing; have a good sense of humor, like jokes and tricks.
- Learn to play in small groups, but still may have difficulty sharing.
- Need freedom in choosing friends; are expanding their social contact to those outside the family.
- Develop a social relationship between self and teacher; like to role-play adult situations.

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

Children at this age:

- Are curious and eager to learn.
- Learn best through active involvement.
- Explore world symbols through the sensory mode.
- Begin to distinguish reality from fantasy.
- Can symbolize thoughts through drawings.
- May enter the “representative” stage of art—expressing their experiences more realistically.
- Have longer attention spans (10-15 minutes).
- Can remember and carry out two or three instructions with gradual development of listening skills.
- Talk without infantile articulation.
- Can narrate a long tale.
- Are eager to listen to stories and then retell them in their own words.
- May talk incessantly.
- Enjoy activities that allow an exchange of ideas among children.
- Can focus on detail and begin also to see things as a whole.
- Do not consider all the evidence in making judgments but will focus on one aspect.

