Grade *1*

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 First Graders?

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 stories of the Church (lives of the 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

Grade 1 Catechists

Guiding Principles

Catechists should:

- Help the children begin to acquire basic spiritual attitudes through the expression of gestures, since children relate readily to the language of symbols and gestures. Provide frequent opportunities for the children to engage in ritual: i.e. processions, offerings, praising, and thanking God in prayer and song.

- Help the children move from a moral stage known as self-interest. Endeavor to awaken in them an awareness of the needs and feelings of others. Invite them to reach out to others in love and concern.

- Help the children acquire an image of God through the stories you read and tell. Images later become more mature concepts and feelings about God. Emphasize the love and providence of God and God's faithfulness by using scripture stories.

- Provide examples of one who is conscious of God's presence in the world, in his or her life; of one who is joyful, and of one who is ever striving to follow Christ more closely. Remember children at this age tend to imitate others.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Children at this age:

- Tire easily physically and intellectually.
- Have short attention spans.
- Are very active.
- Prefer play over work.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Children at this age:

- Are centered on "self"; need help in developing relationships; seek to identify self as unique individuals in family, school, and world
- Use "me" a great deal; want desires fulfilled in a short time; only beginning to understand the concept of "our".
- Need boundaries of respect and responsibility set, need to be encouraged to share
- Grow by identifying with adults who must "model" for child
- Exhibit curiosity and enthusiasm
- Open and eager to tell about family; need sensitivity to family situations
- May have developed social skills because of preschool environment
- May give "windows to what is within them" through their drawings
- Boys and girls may prefer to sit, work, play in separate groups

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

Children at this age:

- Can usually think logically about concrete, real objects or personal experience
- Learn best by doing, showing, and experiencing
- Exhibit difficulty in reversing their thought processes in order to give the reasons that may have led up to a conclusion
- Have an excellent facility for memorizing, especially musical or rhyming refrains

For more information regarding curriculum or the faith development of children, please visit the Catholic Diocese of Richmond, Christian Formation website http://richmonddiocese.org/office/christian-formation/ or email us at cf@richmonddiocese.org.

NOTES

- Pope John Paul II in **On Catechesis in Our Time** encourages the use of advances in pedagogy; biology, sociology as they help us to model God's Divine Pedagogy (teaching us gradually in stages according to our level of development). The above noted information is consistent with such documents as the *General Directory for Catechesis*, the *National Directory for Catechesis*, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and other Catechetical Documents of the Church.

- The above sciences have limitations. While this information does provide references to typical age ranges, children continue to be viewed as individuals and individual differences need to be taken into account.