



GRADE 7 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, first graders are enthusiastic and eager to learn and to socialize. They have a growing desire to interact with peers, but often do not possess the social skills necessary to avoid and resolve conflicts. They are beginning to understand that other people are different from themselves and need to be guided in growth of acceptance of others. Learning to act with respect and responsibility towards others is an important task at this stage, and the need for love, support and approval from parents and other significant adults is real. Attitudes and values that are held within the family shape the child’s perception of the world and influence their understanding and experiences.

Your Child’s Faith Development

Like other stages of development, your first-grader’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:

- ✠ Grow in their relationship with God particularly through prayer based on life experience
- ✠ Accept attitudes of parents, teachers, the Church, and other social institutions toward differences in people
- ✠ 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 the sacraments
- ✠ 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

In this coming year our goal is to work together with you to bring your child to a deeper understanding of:

- 1) God our Father and the ways that He shows His love for us through the many gifts of creation;
- 2) Jesus, God's Son and our brother, who teaches us about the Father and sends the Holy Spirit to be our helper; and
- 3) How we become members of the Catholic Church through baptism.

We will use the best practices that we know to communicate these truths to your child, and in turn hope that you will always remember that there is no greater influence on your child's faith development than you. We will work together to ensure that this will be a year of growth for your child in his/her faith and relationship with Jesus!

Below are some of the highlights of what your child will be learning this year:

- There are three persons in the Blessed Trinity
- God is a loving Father and the loving Creator of all things
- Jesus is the Son of God, our brother and teacher
- The Holy Spirit was sent by Jesus to give us gifts of peace, strength and joy.
- Through baptism we are made sons and daughters of God and we become part of God's family.
- God's family includes people of every race, age, culture and ability.
- We belong to the Catholic Church.
- The Eucharist is both a special meal that Jesus shares with us and a sacrifice of his love.
- God always forgives us if we ask and are sorry; God gave us a special sacrament of penance.
- Mary is the Mother of Jesus and Joseph is his foster father.
- Christmas celebrates the birth of Jesus and Easter celebrates the resurrection of Jesus.

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 to learn and participate in various types of prayer (i.e. quiet reflection, guided meditation, song, spontaneous, petition, thanksgiving, praise and sorrow).
- ➔ Help your child to learn and pray formal prayers: Sign of the Cross, Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be, Prayer before and after meals
- ➔ Participate in activities for advent and lent to appreciate the significance of these liturgical seasons – e.g. advent wreath, stations-of-the-cross for children.

- ➔ Explore ways we can show care for all of God’s creation.
- ➔ Talk with your child to help them understand that we must love ALL peoples, even those who are different from us.
- ➔ Discuss the lives of the saints with your children so that they may see examples of people who lived lives of holiness and service in God’s name.
- ➔ Read Scripture stories together, some good suggestions are:

Creation -
Genesis 1:1-2:4

Annunciation –
Luke 1:26-56

Nativity –
Luke 2:1-20

Epiphany –
Matthew 2:9b-11

Good Samaritan –
Luke 10:25-37

Zaccheaus –
Luke 19:1-10

Finding in the Temple –
Luke 2:40-52

Jesus Blesses the Children –
Mark 10:13-16

Lord’s Prayer –
Luke 11:1-4

Jesus’ Entry into Jerusalem –
Matthew 21:1-11

Last Supper –
Matthew 26:26-29 or Luke 22:14-20

Resurrection –
John 20:1-18

- ➔ Help your child to become familiar with the following terms:

Advent	altar	Baptism	Bible	Catholic	Christ	Christian	Christmas
Church	create	Family	forgiveness	God	godparent	Holy Spirit	Jesus
Joseph	lent	Mary	Mass	Parish	prayer	priest	Saint

Learn all you can about our Catholic beliefs. Obtain a copy of the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* <http://www.usccbpublishing.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=1182> and use it as a reference book and adult learning resource. You can also check out the diocesan Christian Formation website <http://richmonddiocese.org/office/christian-formation/> for other resources, both online and to order.

