



GRADE 3 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.

Third graders have a great fascination with heroes. They admire their parents and teachers and they begin to form attitudes based largely on the attitudes they perceive in them. Your witness of the faith and example of good Catholic practice is vital at this stage, because you are your child’s hero and he/she wants to follow your lead. Remember, there is no greater influence on your child’s faith development than you.

Your Child’s Faith Development

Like other stages of development, your third-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 that your child will come to know and understand the faith at his or her own rate of development. Here are some general points to remember.

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; view rules as inflexible
- ✚ Begin to sort out reality from imagination based on practical experience
- ✚ Need concrete experiences to understand concepts and religious truths
- ✚ Can begin to project themselves imaginatively into the position/situation of others
- ✚ Identify with heroes and heroines of the Bible and with the stories of the Church (i.e. lives of the saints)
- ✚ Desire to learn about people and their differences; accept attitudes of parents, teachers, the Church, and other social institutions toward differences in people

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.

How You Can Help Your Child Grow in Faith

This year your child will continue to learn more about the Church and the importance of belonging, participating, and sharing in the faith community—the life of the Church. He/she will learn about the apostles and their successors—the Church’s hierarchy—the pope, bishops, priests. Your child will learn that the Church continues the work of Jesus today by sharing the Good News, celebrating the sacraments and serving all God’s people.

Here are several points that will assist you over the course of this year, to help your child grow in his/her faith.

- ➔ Attend and participate in Sunday Mass as a family. Afterward, talk about some of the things that took place during Mass—the sounds, sights, smells, their experience of church—belonging, community, participation.
- ➔ Relate belonging to the family of God (church community) to their experiences of belonging to your family—discuss celebrations, rituals, symbols, prayer; family mealtime; sharing stories, songs, activities; forgiveness, giving thanks; helping family members and neighbors.
- ➔ Help your child identify ways to participate in your parish. Stress the importance of service to others by volunteering our time and talents.
- ➔ Discuss ways in which your child can spread the good news about Jesus (i.e. example to others, helping in the community/neighborhood, acts of kindness). Explain that Jesus works through us to reach all people.
- ➔ Help your child become familiar with a Church agency that serves the needs of the community (i.e. food bank, Meals on Wheels).
- ➔ Pray the Apostles’ Creed together. Reflect on the last part of the prayer with your child and discuss the meaning of *one, holy, Catholic* and *apostolic*.
- ➔ Identify the name of the pastor and other priests of your local parish. Visit the diocesan website at www.richmonddiocese.org to identify the bishop and other church leaders and their ministries.
- ➔ Identify the Pope as the successor to St. Peter, the first pope. Using the internet with your child, research and compare the life of St. Peter to that of the current Pope.
- ➔ Surf the internet for information on the lives of Catholic saints. Research with your child his patron saint and those of other family members. Hold a special celebration in honor of your family’s patron saints.
- ➔ Identify Mary as the Mother of God and the Mother of the Church. Explain how Mary is a model of faith and holiness for us. Teach your child how to pray the rosary.
- ➔ Help your child become familiar with stories from the Catholic bible. Identify the four Gospels as Jesus’ story.
- ➔ Pray the following prayers with your child: Sign of the Cross, Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be, Act of Contrition, Apostles Creed, Grace before and after meals. (If necessary, get the prayers from your child’s parish catechist).