



GRADE 4 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.

At this particular stage of development fourth graders begin to view all events in their lives as part of faith. They begin to see themselves in the future through observing the virtues and character of heroes, heroines and mature adults. It is those heroes who help them gain a sense of responsibility and develop care for others in need. A sense of fairness, equality and justice begins to develop. As parents, 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 fourth-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:

- ✠ Continue to grow in their relationship with God through prayer
- ✠ View all events in their lives as part of faith
- ✠ Understand symbols, stories and religious images of God in a way that can be somewhat literal
- ✠ Need help to develop their own unique God-given gifts
- ✠ Can take greater roles of responsibility in prayer and worship
- ✠ Catch the tradition of the past through stories (scripture, Jesus, stories of the Church). Can identify outstanding role models of the present
- ✠ Begin to glimpse themselves in the future through observing the virtues and character of heroes and heroines and mature adults
- ✠ Respond to lived faith witness by willingness to participate in more systematic presentation of the faith, liturgy, and religious practices
- ✠ Need help to see the reasons behind Church rules, privileges, and responsibilities
- ✠ Need help to understand that God desires the good and happiness of everyone
- ✠ Can be introduced to care for the aged, persons with disabilities, the poor in the neighborhood and the world, through their expanded involvement with others outside the home
- ✠ Vest greater importance in their expanding world of school, community, people, and events around the world (the latter brought closer through media, internet, etc.)

- ✚ Gain a sense of responsibility and develop care for others by being involved in charitable collections, community clean ups, and other organized events
- ✚ Begin to have a genuine sense of fairness and equality
- ✚ Can take others' views into account in bargaining to meet their own needs
- ✚ Grow in the ability to understand abstract qualities in the future such as justice and injustice by participating now in activities with sharp contrasts between good and evil

How You Can Help Your Child Grow in Faith

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 come to learn that everyone has a call to holiness in imitation of Jesus. That we respond to this call by living as members of the Church, by understanding and obeying the Ten Commandments, by following the great commandment of love of God and neighbor, as well as, the beatitudes and the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. Your child will learn that the Holy Spirit enlightens us and gives us the power to live as Jesus did.

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

- ➔ Attend and participate in Sunday Mass and holy days of obligation as a family.
- ➔ Create opportunities at home to gather and pray together as a family.
- ➔ Help your child to become aware of the needs of others in your immediate neighborhood and beyond. Become familiar with and discuss with your child the spiritual and corporal works of mercy.
- ➔ Get involved as a family in charitable events or causes outside the home by volunteering at parish/community events.
- ➔ Make it a practice to go to confession as a family at least seasonally. Discuss the importance of forgiveness and ways in which we can atone for our sins.
- ➔ Discuss with your child ways that he/she can take care of his/her body and respect the bodies of others. Let your child know that you are always available to discuss any issues that might arise.
- ➔ Discuss ways in which friends, society, and media can lead to occasions of sin as well as occasions of grace. Make it a point to mention the importance of safe use of the internet.
- ➔ Talk about some of the gifts and talents that God has given your child and ways in which he/she can use those gifts and talents to help others.
- ➔ Read the bible passage on the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12) with your child. Help your child surf the internet or find pictures in magazines that depict the Beatitudes and make a collage to hang in his/her room.
- ➔ Identify Mary as the ideal model of faith and holiness for us. Teach your child how to pray the rosary.

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/> or other resources, both online and to order.