

Who are your Kindergarteners?

“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)

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 praise for accomplishments. Build on children’s desire to please others as a first step in deepening a sense of selflessness and concern for others.
- Allow the children to make decisions as a basis for developing a 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.

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.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

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 and 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 childlike 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.