



Teaching All Children

Children are introduced to more complex ideas and concepts as they progress in school. As catechists, we show our respect for God's creation by accepting all children as they are and mentoring them as they grow in their personal relationships with God. As catechists, we recognize that each child is unique. We know that developmental age does not always coincide with chronological age. Furthermore, we recognize that some children have special needs. *Finding God: Our Response to God's Gifts* effectively links faith formation to children by using lessons and activities designed to appeal to many different learners at various developmental stages.

Getting to Know a Fifth-Grade Child (Ages 10–11)

Although no two children are alike, some general characteristics apply to many children ages 10 through 11. They have mastered many rules at home, at school, and to use for games. It is a time when children begin to think abstractly. The onset of puberty signals significant physical changes, particularly for girls, whose physical development is usually ahead of the boys' development. The excitement and confusion during this year in school make it a critical time for faith formation.

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT

Children in fifth grade often

- ▶ are insatiable readers; have an increased attention span and capacity for memorizing, understanding chronology, and learning factual information.
- ▶ experience a period of relative calm, despite their physical and emotional changes.
- ▶ have an abundance of energy and love to engage in activities, especially in cooperative groups that make them feel grown-up and allow them to display their developed competencies.
- ▶ have an awareness of adult issues that allows them to participate more in discussions.
- ▶ are expressive and talkative; like to explain and begin to demand explanations for issues and relationships they find confusing or inconsistent.
- ▶ like rules and logic, even though they may challenge them.

MORAL DEVELOPMENT

Children in fifth grade often

- ▶ are idealistic and becoming increasingly competent in making moral judgments.
- ▶ are concerned with justice and are drawn to service.
- ▶ are focused on the intention of acts in determining right from wrong.
- ▶ are eager to understand the "why" of the Church's moral teachings.
- ▶ rely to a large degree on the viewpoints of others when making moral decisions.
- ▶ experience strong feelings after doing things they consider right or wrong.
- ▶ feel conflict between a developing internal moral compass and strong peer-group norms.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Children in fifth grade often

- ▶ enjoy being with a wide variety of people, such as family, friends, teachers, and coaches.
- ▶ have a need for acceptance by the Church and are keenly aware of inclusion in peer groups.
- ▶ enjoy cooperative learning activities, as boys and girls gradually begin to work together.
- ▶ enjoy being noticed and rewarded for their accomplishments.
- ▶ may be moody, sensitive, or act silly at times.
- ▶ enjoy helping others, such as tutoring younger children.
- ▶ begin to challenge previously accepted adult norms; love to argue and test the limits of rules and norms and are genuinely surprised that these challenges appear rude to adults.

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

Children in fifth grade often

- ▶ are capable of reflecting for long periods of time; can take complex prayers to heart.
- ▶ desire to experience prayer that is focused on emotionally confusing issues and conflicts.
- ▶ are interested in preparing for and participating in meaningful liturgy and prayer.
- ▶ love symbols and ritual; enjoy Bible stories, especially about Jesus and the lives of the saints.
- ▶ are beginning to recognize how they can use their gifts to serve the community.