



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 Sixth-Grade Child (Ages 11–12)

Although no two children are alike, some general characteristics apply to many children ages 11 through 12. This is often a time of significant cognitive growth, marked by truly abstract thinking. Children are able to consider the meaning of God's love and his call to love one another. As they become increasingly self-conscious about changes in their bodies, boys and girls gradually begin to separate along gender lines. Children look to adults to relate to them in an honest, direct, and loving manner.

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT

Children in sixth grade often

- ▶ have a deep curiosity that demands an explanation for everything.
- ▶ work well in groups; like work that is challenging and perceived to be "grown-up."
- ▶ have a heightened interest in peers; can see the world from a variety of perspectives and love to debate their viewpoints.
- ▶ like rules, even though they may challenge them.
- ▶ have a long attention span; alternate easily between being playful and serious.
- ▶ are interested in logic, problem solving, and factual information.
- ▶ enjoy ceremonies and rituals, particularly those that reflect their own "coming of age."
- ▶ are highly conscious of their individual achievements.

MORAL DEVELOPMENT

Children in sixth grade often

- ▶ are idealistic and becoming increasingly competent in making moral judgments.
- ▶ are concerned with justice and are drawn to service.
- ▶ are eager to understand the "why" of Church's moral teachings.
- ▶ rely on the viewpoints of others when making moral decisions.
- ▶ experience strong feelings in response to acts they consider right or wrong.
- ▶ feel conflict between a developing internal moral compass and strong peer-group norms.
- ▶ want to be good and to feel good about themselves.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Children in sixth grade often

- ▶ experience dramatic peer pressure; want to spend their time with friends their own age.
- ▶ tend to relegate adults to a position of less importance.
- ▶ enjoy and need cooperative learning activities.
- ▶ experience confusion as they cross between being a child and not being a child.
- ▶ may be moody, shy, and sensitive; use sarcasm; test the limits of rules and norms.
- ▶ experience an increase in tolerance, acceptance, and reasonableness.

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

Children in sixth grade often

- ▶ enjoy quiet reflection and can sustain it for long periods of time.
- ▶ are capable of taking complex prayers to heart; can relate to God in a variety of prayer forms.
- ▶ desire to experience prayer that is focused on emotionally confusing issues and conflicts.
- ▶ respond well to participating in liturgical celebrations.
- ▶ can recognize Jesus as an example to follow; relate messages in Scripture to their own lives.
- ▶ are capable of understanding God, community, and faith in a deep way.