



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 relationship 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 may have disabilities. *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.

No two children are alike, but some general characteristics apply to many children ages 10 through 11. Children at this age love to learn factual information. They have mastered many rules at home and at school, and they are beginning to think abstractly. They are developing a sense of community and enjoy making plans. The onset of puberty signals significant physical changes at this age, particularly for girls, whose development is usually ahead of the boys' development. The excitement and confusion during this year make it a critical time for faith formation.

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT

Children in fifth grade often

- ▶ are insatiable readers with an increased attention span and capacity for memorizing, understanding chronology, and learning factual information.
- ▶ are energetic and love 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.
- ▶ like to explain things and demand explanations for things they find confusing or inconsistent.
- ▶ like to have rules (even though they may challenge them) and enjoy logic.

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 when distinguishing right from wrong.
- ▶ are eager to understand the *why* of Church moral teachings.
- ▶ rely to a large degree on the viewpoints of others when making moral decisions.
- ▶ experience strong positive or negative feelings after taking actions they consider right or wrong.
- ▶ experience conflict between a developing internal moral compass and strong peer-group norms.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Children in fifth grade often

- ▶ enjoy the company of a wide variety of people, such as family, friends, teachers, and coaches.
- ▶ are keenly aware of being included and excluded from peer groups.
- ▶ enjoy cooperative learning activities as both boys and girls gradually begin to work together.
- ▶ enjoy being noticed and rewarded for their accomplishments.
- ▶ are moody or sensitive or act silly at times.
- ▶ enjoy helping others—for example, helping or tutoring younger children.
- ▶ challenge previously accepted rules and norms and are genuinely surprised that these challenges appear rude to adults.

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

Children in fifth grade often

- ▶ enjoy the quiet and are capable of reflecting for long periods of time.
- ▶ are capable of taking 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.
- ▶ have a need for acceptance by the Church community.