

Profile of a Second-Grade Child

Characteristics

Because second-graders are beginning to expand socially, they enjoy involvement in group activity such as singing, recitation, and other learning experiences that are activity and story-oriented. They can learn to respect others as good, created, and loved by God.

Seven-year-old children have become more cognizant of right and wrong and of their power to choose. They begin to develop a set of action patterns based on those they observe in adults they admire.

Seven-year-olds have a short attention span (about 10-20 minutes) and tire easily if lesson segments are too long or if too many ideas are presented at once.

They can memorize simple prayers, phrases from the Psalms and Scripture, as well as other prayer forms such as the response in a litany.

Their ability to think in the abstract is very limited. They still learn best through concrete experiences. They grasp concepts like "unity" and "belonging" from doing things such as sharing, listening, eating together, conversing, giving, thanking, and celebrating.

They show interest in how things are made, especially living things. This interest readily transfers to prayers of praise, wonder, awe, and thanksgiving.

Faith Development Needs

Second-grade children need not only the freedom to make choices but also the help to realize the effects of their personal choices, especially how these affect their relationship with God and with others. (justice, prudence)

They should be taught the value of prayer as a means of deepening their relationship with God. They also need to know that experiencing the Sacraments of Penance and Reconciliation, Confirmation, and Holy Eucharist deepens this relationship. (faith, hope, love)

Seven-year-olds learn by doing and listening. They need to be taught how to engage in activities such as role-playing, dramatization, story telling, singing, and celebrating in religious ceremonies.

They need help to understand and handle constructively their feelings and emotions. Reassurance and encouragement, praise and reward, direction and love from the catechist, from parents, and from other adults whom they admire foster their growth in becoming whole persons in a Christian community. (temperance, fortitude, faith, love)

Implications

In helping children form their consciences, the catechist should be careful to react consistently to an action, incident, or situation. Thus, the children will realize that there are differences between what is dangerous, what is improper, what is annoying, what is accidental, and what is sinful.

As the catechist helps to prepare the children to receive God's forgiveness in the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation, concentration should be placed on the reality of God's love rather than on the enormity of sin or the magnitude of human failure.

Because second graders are still limited in their sense of history and time, they tend to confuse past and present experiences. The catechist needs to bear this in mind and repeatedly clarify the differences. Pointing out relationships between current events and those of the past help the children. The catechist should bear in mind the children's limited sense of time and history when introducing them to the examination of conscience. Children live in the present, generally. When they remember past sinful actions, it is frequently true that they mix what happened years or months ago with what happened last week. They need assistance in sorting out what is real and relevant to the current examination of conscience.

The child begins to be aware of the imbalance between what he or she wants (the will and sense appetite) and the need for tempering these drives by knowledge (reason).

The child needs to recognize situations that have cause and effect, and be responsible for the effects of his/her actions.

The catechist is instrumental in cultivating the moral and theological virtues according to the age level of the child.

For children to understand their personal value of being created in the image and likeness of God, the catechist must show them respect and love in action and attitude, consistently building them up with praise, recognition, and appreciation.

The catechist's personal relationship with God in prayer, his/her appreciation of the sacraments manifested through frequent reception, and his/her relationship with others will be a criterion on which the children form their values.