

Dear Parents/Guardians:

What morals, values, virtues, attitudes, and beliefs do you want your children to possess when they are adults?

What are you doing with them right now to ensure they will possess these traits and dispositions?

Are you sure you are going to Heaven?

Do you know if your children will go to Heaven?

What does the Word of God say about raising children for Heaven?

Are you confident you are doing a good job of passing on your Catholic faith to your children?

Do you know exactly how the world is influencing your children's spiritual life.

If you are concerned about any of these questions or if you are unsure of your responses to these questions, seek Me.

Love God

Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it. Proverbs 22:6.

Don't wait another day to start intentionally nurturing children into their Father's Kingdom. Form a Catholic parenting ministry in your parish today! Everyday life is treacherous—full of temptations and illusions of happiness to lure us and our children, away from Jesus Christ, the Bridge to Heaven. Jesus is indeed the source of all happiness, the distributor of all graces that enrich our lives. From the moment you and your children step onto the Bridge—the Lord Jesus, His Holy Spirit empowers you to journey through life in love and virtue.

For I the Lord am a jealous God...but bestowing mercy down to the thousandth generation on the children of those who love me and keep my commandments Ex 20:6.

Once on the Bridge, you may claim your children for Heaven—nurturing them and pointing the way for them to go to their Father—through His Son, the Bridge.

Prayer of Pope John Paul II for the family

Lord God, from you every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. Father, you are Love and Life. Through your Son, Jesus Christ, born of woman, and through the Holy Spirit, fountain of divine charity, grant that every family on earth may become for each successive generation a true shrine of life and love. Grant that your grace may guide the thoughts and actions of husbands and wives for the good of their families and of all families in the world. Grant that the young may find in the family solid support for their human dignity and for their growth in truth and love. Grant that love, strengthened by the grace of the sacrament of marriage, may prove mightier than all the weaknesses and trials through which our families sometimes pass. Through the intercession of the Holy Family of Nazareth, grant that the Church may fruitfully carry out her worldwide mission in the family and through the family.

We ask this of you, who are Life, Truth, and Love, with the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

For more information on how to use *The Catholic Handbook of Child Growth, Development, and Learning* in your parish or home please contact

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Nurturing Children's Growth, Development, and Learning from a Catholic Perspective



Retreats
Workshops
Bible Studies
Focus Groups
Support Groups

Raising children for heaven is not accidental. It is a God-incident and you and every member of your community are a part of His plan.

The Catholic Handbook of Child Growth, Development, and Learning is a dynamic resource that invites parents and all who work with children to intentionally engage children in interactions that support their physical, social, language, creative, intellectual, emotional, moral, and spiritual growth. The readings and the activities in *The Handbook* reference Scripture, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and the traditions of our Catholic faith.

Retreat, Workshop, Bible Study, Focus Group, Support Group

As with any new ministry, seek pastoral approval. Then determine the best format to use in supporting the families and professionals of your community who work with children. Appoint a coordinator and a core team to plan, develop, and introduce the ministry. Prepare the team by reading the introduction to *The Catholic Handbook of Child Growth, Development, and Learning*. Explore the readings and activities prior to introducing it to your community. The following steps are a good way to review the materials and the format:

1. Review the first page of each tab (side margin of the book). Browse the six domain menus in order to select one single area of the child's development to support (affective, social, creative, cognitive, language, or physical). The area is called a **DOMAIN** of development.
2. From the Domain Menu, select one specific characteristic of the child's development for further study. Each numbered characteristic is called a **TARGET OBJECTIVE**.
3. Reference the Target Objective by number in the section behind the domain menu. Review the information about the Target Objective and share your findings with other members of the core team. Commit to support the Target Objective in a child or group of children.
4. Plan a follow-up meeting to discuss the outcome of your commitments.
5. In final preparation for your first gathering, plan for each participant to have a Bible, Catechism of the Catholic Church, *The Catholic Handbook of Child Growth, Development, & Learning*, notebook, and pen.

There are many formats that can be used to support parents and professionals who work with children. Consider the format below to be a guide for setting up retreats, workshops, days of renewal, focus groups, support groups, or seminars.

90 Minute Format

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| I. Opening Prayer: Large Group Gathering | 10 minutes |
| II. Small Group Sharing: Form into groups of four or five..... | 60 minutes |
| A. Read the definition of the TARGET OBJECTIVE . | |
| B. Read the Scripture passage presented in CHRIST EXPRESSES IT WHEN... | |
| 1) Reflection: Take a few moments to reflect on the scripture passage that illustrates how Christ expressed the Target Objective in his own life. | |
| * Put yourself and your child in the Gospel story with Jesus. | |
| * Put Jesus in your present life story and in your child's life story. | |
| 2) Discussion: Give each member of the small group an opportunity to share thoughts and ideas. | |
| * How could you express the Target Objective in your own life? | |
| * How could you help your child express the Target Objective in your child's life? | |
| C. Read IT IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE: | |
| 1) Reflection: Take a few moments to reflect on why the Target Objective is important in the life of a child. | |
| 2) Discussion: Give each member of the small group an opportunity to share thoughts and ideas. | |
| D. Read ONE WOULD EXHIBIT IT BY... | |
| 1) Reflection: Take a few moments to reflect on how a child/children might exhibit the Target Objective. | |
| 2) Discussion: Give each member of the small group an opportunity to share thoughts and ideas. | |
| E. Read WHAT YOU CAN DO TO SUPPORT IT: | |
| 1) Reflection: Take a few moments to review what an adult could do to support the Target Objective in a child/children in the coming week. Plan at least one faith-building activity that references Scripture, the traditions of our faith, or the teachings found in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. | |
| 2) Discussion: Give each member of the small group an opportunity to share thoughts and ideas. | |
| F. Pray THE SIMPLE BLESSING PRAYER (See Creative 7.0). Ask small group members to find a prayer partner. Each person has an opportunity to be prayed with for the person's greatest need. End the prayer by asking God to bless the person's interactions with children in the coming week. | |
| III. Large Group Sharing | 15 minutes |
| IV. Closing Prayer | 5 minutes |

Home Experiences

After each session, participants commit to support a child's growth, development, and learning using one or two activities related to the selected Domain/Target Objective. These activities can be modified to meet the needs of children and adults.