

Profile of a Seventh-Grade Child

Characteristics

One characteristic of the twelve-year-old is rapid growth: physical, mental, and emotional. As these changes occur, pre-teens feel awkward, uncertain, and self-conscious. Their interior turmoil and self-doubt are often expressed in symptoms associated with adolescence: boredom, frustration, sharp changes in mood, withdrawal, and apathy toward many things.

Twelve-year-olds may experience sudden, unexpected, sharp, and short-lived pains in various parts of the body, localized most often in the head or abdomen; these probably portend puberty. While children develop at their own rates, girls generally advance more rapidly than boys .

Junior high school students begin to question all authority and sometimes are rebellious, antagonistic, and negative toward adults.

At this age, girls and boys consider peer prestige more important than adult approval. They are curious as to how their peers think and feel about them. Such thinking greatly influences their behavior.

Faith Development Needs

Young people need to understand sexuality as a treasured gift for which they have responsibility. They need to be shown how to value their unique capacity for developing responsible relationships with others.

Twelve-year-olds need to come to terms with the influence of peers on responsible decision-making. They need to cultivate attitudes and habits that help them deal with such influences.

They need to realize that actions sometimes have serious consequences and that choices involve responsibility for the consequences.

They need to learn to deal positively with mistakes and failures in their lives, realizing and appreciating God's constant, unconditional, and unfailing love for them.

Pre-teens need to develop self-discipline and a spirit of sacrifice, to express sensitivity to the needs of others, and respect for human rights.

Young adolescents need to experience love, freedom, belonging, trust, support, and acceptance. They need to be respected as persons. This speaks to them of their dignity as baptized Christians who are sons and daughters of the Father.

Implications

At this age level, there needs to be a deeper explanation of the psychology of a human person and an introduction to a Catholic philosophy of life. The pre-teen needs to understand and appreciate the operations of the various human powers of intellect, will, and the sense appetite. The catechist must explain to the students that the interior turmoil and self-doubt they are

experiencing are typical of most maturing persons, that they must be patient with themselves while seeking to acquire skills enabling them to deal with these challenges.

The catechist is charged with the task of helping the students to perceive how the Catholic Faith gives meaning and purpose to their changing and often confused lives.

Opportunities and activities for exercising decision-making skills are to be provided.

Through example, by praying and worshipping with the students, by fostering in them a sense of reverence for the holy, catechists share their faith with the students. Thus all are enabled to grow in their faith.

The catechist should lead them to continued growth in the knowledge of their faith, to a deeper prayer life, to reflection on Christian living, to tolerance and compassion, mindful of the presence and action of God in our lives.

Pre-teens want a practical knowledge of Catholic tradition and heritage. They need faith-filled adults who will suggest, encourage, and guide field trips, service projects, and experiences of prayer.