

# *Catholic Parent* **KNOWHOW**

Practical  
Pointers,  
Scripture  
& More

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# Bringing **Allelu!** Home

KINDERGARTEN

# Using the Family Components of Allelu!

Dear Parents,

God reveals himself in many different ways but most completely in the person of Jesus Christ, who teaches us to call God "Father." In doing so, a parent's love, protection, and discipline are signs of God's own relationship with each of his children. It's no wonder, then, that the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states, "The role of parents in education is of such importance that it is almost impossible to provide an adequate substitute" (CCC 2221; *Gravissimum Educationis*, n. 3).

*Allelu!* is an early childhood religion program that understands and values the essential role of families in forming children's faith. For this reason, the program contains a variety of ways parents can share their faith with their children.

This booklet contains an overview of the development of the kindergarten-age child, a summary of the six basic tasks of faith formation and how to help your child in each of these areas, a summary of the key themes your child will explore this year in *Allelu!*, and a prayer for parents. Keep it as a reference throughout the year as you work together with your child's teacher to help your child discover the treasures of our faith.

Each week, your child will also receive an *Allelu!* Activity Sheet, designed in the form

of a placemat, with specific sections you can use for sharing with your child.

In addition to the Activity Sheets, be sure to take advantage of other resources, such as the *Allelu!* music CD, which contains the music your child is learning, to go along with the lesson materials. Music can be



**Families are the first and primary place children learn about God.**

a very powerful way to learn new information especially when it includes age-appropriate lyrics and catchy tunes that children are likely to remember. Another resource is the *Allelu!* website, [Allelu.com](http://Allelu.com), which contains additional activities for parents and kids, family podcasts, and recommendations

of where to go for further family-friendly information on various topics covered in the *Allelu!* program.

May God richly bless you as you help your child discover the beauty of our Catholic Faith!

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Censor Librorum

*Imprimatur*:  
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Bishop of Fort Wayne—South Bend  
March 3, 2011

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Published 2011.

15 14 13 12 11 1 2 3 4 5 6

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Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division  
Our Sunday Visitor, Inc.  
200 Noll Plaza  
Huntington, IN 46750  
1-800-348-2440  
bookpermissions@osv.com

ISBN: 978-1-59276-998-8  
(Inventory No. X1172)

Design by: Amanda Falk  
Cover photo by: Media Bakery

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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# Your Kindergarten Child

As they prepare for the challenges and excitement of “going to big school,” kindergarten-age children grow quickly and gain new skills rapidly. Most five-year-old children are much more coordinated than children just one or two years younger. They can climb, hop, stand on one foot, and run circles around most adults, with a seemingly endless supply of energy.

Cognitive growth is very rapid for kindergartners as well. They are better able to judge time and speed, to classify things into groups, to identify letter sounds, and to express themselves with language. The attention and problem-solving skills of the five-year-old child are continuing to grow. Five-year-olds have about a five- to six-minute sustained attention span, meaning that they can pay close attention to one thing for about five or six minutes without becoming distracted. (Note: This does not mean that the average kindergartner cannot engage in an activity longer than five or six minutes, as “distraction” may simply be just momentarily looking away or missing a short part of what someone is saying.) Children at this age still learn best through experiences, but they are becoming more and more aware of the “main ideas” in verbal information, such as stories. Active learning and pretend play continue to be essential to their learning, but they are growing in their ability to use listening, reading, and writing as tools for learning.

We recognize a considerable growth in language skills in most kindergarten-age children. They become better at describing parts of a movie, story, or event and at answering questions about something they have heard or experienced. Many adults delight in the fact that they are

beginning to have “real conversations” with children this age. Many children use up to 2,200 words by age five. Children this age use sentences with an average length of eight-ten words, and they begin to use more complex grammatical structures, such as dependent clauses (for example, “If I clean my room ...”). Parents can encourage their children’s language development at this age by continuing to read to their children often, asking them questions about the sequence of events in the stories as well as asking focused but open-ended questions about what they are doing at school and in other environments.

Children this age are beginning to understand cause and effect, and they will gradually think more and more logically. They are better able to distinguish between fantasy and reality, and they have (mostly) learned that merely saying something doesn’t make it true. They still have difficulty understanding the perspective of others, and they may sometimes behave in ways that are insensitive or unfair because they do not understand how their behavior makes someone else feel. However, they are beginning to develop a strong sense of conscience, and they will generally feel sad or even guilty if they realize they have hurt someone’s feelings. Five- and six-year-olds are continuing to grow in their ability to organize their activities with peers. Their play tends to occur in cooperative small groups in which each person has a role.

If they have been both nurtured and encouraged to do things independently, five-year-olds tend to have a strong and positive sense of self. They are confident and ready to take on the new challenges of kindergarten!



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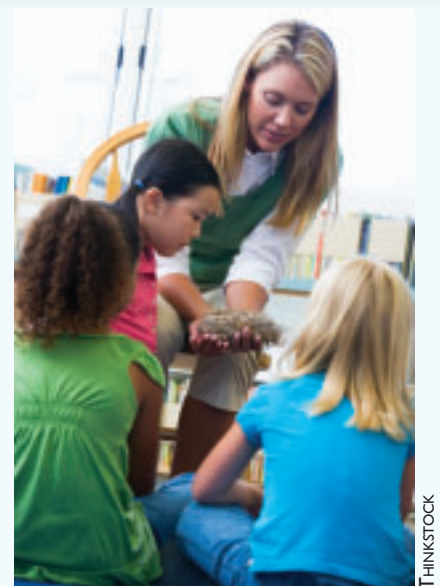
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## The Kindergarten Child and the Six Tasks of Catechesis

The *General Directory for Catechesis*, our Church’s “instruction book” for how to hand on the Catholic Faith to others, discusses six tasks of catechesis, or religious education. They are:

- Promoting Knowledge of the Faith
- Liturgical Education
- Moral Formation
- Teaching to Pray
- Education for Community Life
- Missionary Initiation

Keeping these tasks in mind helps us to ensure that we are handing on a complete picture of what it means to be Catholic and giving future generations a solid spiritual foundation. Let’s examine these tasks, one by one, with some attention to the developmental level and needs of the kindergarten child.

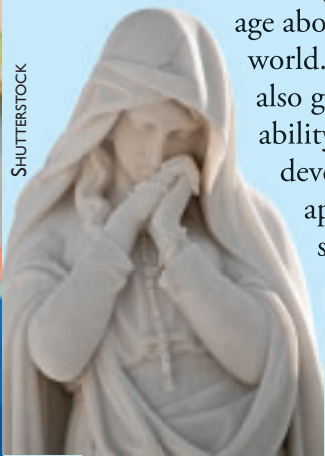


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## Learning about God and the Church (Promoting Knowledge of the Faith)

Kindergarten children who are beginning to understand cause and effect can understand that there is a God who made the things they see around them. They also infer that there is a God when they see parents praying and hear them talking about God. Concrete symbols of our faith — such as pictures, statues, and other visible objects — are helpful in teaching children this age about the spiritual world. Children are also growing in their ability to understand developmentally appropriate Bible storybooks.

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**Allelu! helps accomplish this task of catechesis with engaging,**

**developmentally-appropriate Scripture stories in the Discovering time and concrete activities that reinforce the faith in the Exploring time.**

## Celebrating with the Church Family (Liturgical Education)

Though our worship is mostly targeted to adults and can be a challenge to short attention spans, kindergarten-age children are beginning to better understand concepts such as sequence and ritual, so they can begin to participate in Mass a bit more. Sit close to the front so that your child can see what is happening,

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and explain special rites before they occur so that he or she will know what to look for. A children's picture missal may be useful in helping your child mark different events in the Mass and know what to expect next. This will capitalize on your child's beginning reading skills and make him or her proud to be following along with the grown-ups.

**Liturgical stories in the Discovering time and worship-themed activities in Exploring, along with liturgical concepts reinforced on the take-home Activity Sheets of Allelu!, all help children learn about the liturgy.**

## Following God's Plan (Moral Formation)

Beginning in the kindergarten year, children often develop a strong awareness of rules and consequences. Their increased understanding of cause and effect leads them to want to know what the rules are and to use rules to organize their understanding of things. Be sure to communicate clearly your expectations (and to point out that God expects your child to listen to you and follow your rules). Make a special effort to highlight what you *want* to see from your child rather than focusing on what you don't wish to see (for example, you might say, "Let me

see you using walking feet when we go inside the store" or "Be sure to whisper when you need to tell me something during Mass.")

Consistency between parents is extremely important for children this age. If one parent is considerably more lenient than the other is, this may inadvertently undermine the child's respect for both parents, teaching the child that what his or her parents say is not always that important. Provided that parents look out for a child's physical, emotional, and spiritual safety, there may be a range of parenting styles and level of permissiveness vs. strictness that would still result in a healthy child. It's most important to be together on this so that your child will take your most important lessons seriously.

**Allelu! assists in the moral development of children through discussions of God's rules for living, role-playing of positive behaviors, and information for parents about children's moral development.**



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## The Kindergarten Child and the Six Tasks of Catechesis

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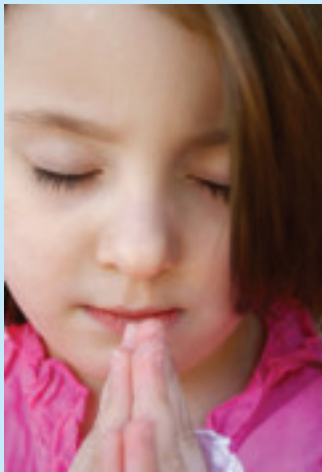
### Talking to God (Teaching to Pray)

Five- and six-year-olds can begin to learn some of the traditional prayers of our faith. These prayers are an important part of our Catholic heritage, and they also allow us to pray together as a Church, with one voice. Prayers such as the Hail Mary, the Our Father, the Glory Be, and the traditional mealtime prayer (“Bless us, O Lord . . .”) may be appropriate for children this age. Teaching children to pray also means more than just teaching

prayers. Less formal, spontaneous prayer allows us to converse with God as a friend and gives the child a strong sense of God’s presence in daily

life. Using the forms of prayer mentioned in the *Catechism*, we can help children compose their own prayers.

***Allelu!* helps children learn to pray through prayer times in each session. Prayer times in *Allelu!* lessons draw from various forms of prayer and help children to learn both traditional prayers and how to pray in their own words.**



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### Your Child in Community (Education for Community Life)

Education for community life includes forming your child’s understanding of his or her place in the Christian community as well as helping your child learn about your family’s connection to the neighborhood or town in which you live, especially with regard to service to those in need. The Christian family is the child’s first experience of the community of faith. Another formative setting is the parish community. At home, it is important that families spend time together — for example, at family mealtimes — talking and listening to one another. Family identity is critical and can be strengthened both through family rules (for example, “In our family, we use our words instead of fighting”) and family rituals (how to celebrate holidays and birthdays, and everyday hellos and good-byes, including bedtime routines).

Connecting with other families in the parish, especially those that have children your child’s age, can be an excellent way of helping your child identify himself or herself as a member of the Church community.

Service activities in the surrounding community, such as a local trash cleanup or visiting a nursing home as a family, can help your child experience practical ways in which he or she can give to others and make the community a better place.



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**One strength of the *Allelu!* program is the way in which lessons are structured to foster community among the children in the group. In the Gathering and Sending times, children come together as community — praying together, sharing, and listening to one another. Exploring time includes opportunities for children to engage in cooperative activities that allow them to further their learning together.**

### Sharing the Faith (Missionary Initiation)

**Kindergarten-age children naturally want to share the new things they are learning, and *Allelu!* gives families helpful tools to facilitate this sharing.** Be sure to use the Activity Sheet your child brings home from class as his or her placemat at your family table. During mealtime, take the opportunity to ask your child the “Ask Me!” questions on the Activity Sheet, review the other items on the sheet, and pray together as a family. Also, be sure to engage your child in conversation about any craft projects he or she brings home from class, and invite your child to share songs he or she has learned on lesson themes.

# Allelu!

Growing and Celebrating with Jesus®

## Activity Sheets



Some of the most significant moments of Jesus' own ministry centered on meals (e.g., Jesus' meals with his disciples, the feeding of the 5,000, etc.). The Eucharist is a special kind of family meal that is also more than just a meal — when we celebrate the Mass, Jesus offers himself to the Father, and we offer ourselves with him. Considering all this, what better time is there for families to come together and talk about their faith than at mealtimes?

Each Activity Sheet gives you . . .

**This Week's Scripture Story** — Condensed versions of the lesson's Scripture story along with discussion starters to share with your child at bedtime.

**Ask Me!** — Questions that help your child remember and share what he or she learned in class, and which invite you to share your thoughts about the lesson with your child.

**It Helps to Know** — *Catechism* and Scripture points that help you review each topic on an adult level.

**How Four- and Five-Year-Olds Understand the Lesson** — Insights, written by a Catholic child psychologist, to help you understand how children of this age view each lesson.

**Keep It Simple** — Natural, practical opportunities for making each week's lesson come to life in your family's daily routine.

## This Year in Allelu!

The Kindergarten level of Allelu! focuses on five basic areas:

- **God and his relationship with us**
- **Our Catholic identity**
- **Jesus' life and his love for each of us**
- **God's plan for our lives**
- **Seasonal celebrations of the Church and their meanings for us**



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The year will begin, in **Unit One**, with opportunities to discover who God is and the various ways we can get to know him better. There will be a particular focus on knowing God through the person of Jesus Christ and his own teachings about God the Father.

In **Unit Two**, we will focus on our Catholic identity, which begins with our baptism and is strengthened through our worship with our parish family.

**Unit Three** will discuss some events from the life of Christ, as well as the stories, or parables, he told to help us know God better. In this unit, we will also look at our Church "family" in a broader sense by learning about the saints.

**Unit Four** will discuss God's commandments and the virtues that we are called to foster in our lives as we become more like Jesus. This unit will also discuss God's mercy and forgiveness when we have done wrong and are truly sorry.

**Unit Five** will focus on the seasons, as well as on Jesus' Passion and Resurrection, his Ascension, and the events of Pentecost Sunday.

In each lesson, your child will receive a take-home Activity Sheet that will help you to review and reinforce the themes of the lesson at home.

# *Prayer for Parents*

**Dear God,**

You have given me so many gifts, but I especially want to thank you for the gift of my child. It is sometimes scary, but also wonderful, to know that I am helping to guide and shape a little soul. Thank you for trusting me in this way, and help me to trust you more and let go of anything in my life that keeps me from being the parent you have called me to be. As my child grows and learns, help me to be the example and encouragement he/she needs in order to follow your plan for his/her life. Be with my child, and protect him/her when I cannot.

*Amen.*

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Inventory No. X1172

US \$1.95

ISBN 978-1-59276-998-8

5 0 1 9 5



9 781592 769988