

What is spirituality?

Spirituality is an important dimension of being fully human. The word spirituality comes from a word meaning "breath." We believe that human beings are spiritual because the breath of God is within them.

Spirituality is a universal concept found in every faith and philosophy, across every age and in every culture. It is not an add-on extra.

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What can I do to help my child grow spiritually?

Nurturing a child's spiritual development means giving them opportunities for:

- **Time** to think and chat about themselves, other people and the world around them.
- **Space** to enjoy new experiences
- **Security** so that they feel able to question, explore, imagine and create.
- **Affirmation** that their thoughts about God, life and the universe are exciting, interesting and important.

Religious Education and Spirituality?

Religion and spirituality are related, but they are not the same thing.

Children's spirituality is not limited to talking about God, using special language, or going to church. Wonderful experiences, like the sight of snow, being cuddled, or gazing up into the night sky, are all spiritual moments.

Practical Ideas

- Focus on the five senses - sight, touch, hearing, taste and smell - and find ways of bringing them to your child's attention. E.g. crunching through Autumn leaves.
- Take time to experience and enjoy complete silence and stillness with your child - even for 30 seconds!
- Help your child to notice the shape of clouds, the phases of the moon, or how a tree changes through the seasons.
- Listen to, appreciate and share your child's enthusiasm about animals, plants, rocks.
- Help your child to listen to others, as well as to experience being listened to. Chat to your child about their day, and tell them about yours too.
- Encourage your child to collect "treasures" like feathers, leaves or shells.
- Go for an "eyes shut" walk, with one of you guiding and describing what you see.

- Create a special place where you keep a children's Bible, a cross or a religious picture. This could be a place where your child can go to be quiet or to say a prayer.
- As part of the bed time routine, enjoy some quiet time; maybe bless your child with the sign of the cross or sing a special song.
- When you go to church, give your child time to explore and make sure they can see what is happening.

Journeying with children through the Catholic Tradition

"Why is it important to introduce our children to the Catholic Faith?"

Isn't it enough to teach them to be caring and sensitive to others and to the natural world?"

By introducing your children to the Catholic Faith and the parish community you help them to have a great sense of belonging and an experience of our God as a God of love.

And finally...

Remember; you don't need to be a saint, have a degree in theology, or have all the right answers to help your child on their spiritual journey. Like your child/children we believe that each one of us has the breath of God within us. The most powerful gift we can give our children is the gift of love. God doesn't ask us to be perfect, just authentic!

Together we will teach our children to:

**smell the earth
taste the rain
touch the wind
see things grow
hear the sunrise and nightfall
care and love.**

(adapted from North American Indian Spirituality)

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Insert school or parish name

Children and Spirituality in the Catholic Tradition