

CHILDREN'S RIGHT TO SPIRITUAL GROWTH

A PPP by Ulrika Erlandsson

AT BAPTISM, WE PROMISE TO RAISE OUR CHILD IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

A promise we did...

- At the wedding and at baptism, we promise to bring up our child in the Catholic Church.
- Convention on the Rights of the Child, §14 and § 27
- Maria Montessori: we are born with a natural religious need

What does it imply to be a Christian?

- **Content of faith:** We believe in a merciful God, that loves us.
- We have a personal relationship to God, to Jesus Christ.
- We belong to a Christian community, the Church.
- We experience a meaning to our lives.
- We keep hope, inspite of many difficulties.
- We look upon life in a Christian perspective.

- **Behaviour:** prayer, going to mass, confession, living with the sacraments, celebrating Christian traditions
- Humility: I don't know God's plan with my child.
- Matthew 25 – an ethical challenge

Not easy!

- Sweden is a very secularized country.
- Takes a whole village to raise a child.
- Children mimic adults.
- Important that the parents continue to deepen their faith throughout life.

What we can bring to Swedish society

- Knowledge of Christianity and the Bible

- Forgiveness, reconciliation
- Minority-diversity
- Reverence for the sacred
- Relationships, family
- The art of listening
- Rest in the certainty of being loved, without performance

Jesus' attitude to children

- Blesses them
- Hugs them
- Kingdom of God belongs to them.
- Children are models.
- Be like a child in order to come to heaven.
- To welcome a child is to welcome Jesus.
- The children know who Jesus is.

Children no status at the time of Jesus

- Children can be compared to the poor and the hungry at the times of Jesus.
- No status
- Compare with the beatitude, Jesus exalts the meek, the weak.

Children are rolemodels

- Become as little children, to enter the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 18:2)
- "Whoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." (Mark 10:15)
- The child has no power, is dependant, receives the kingdom of God as a gift.

The child is the greatest

- "Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." (Matt 18:4)
- "If any man desires to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all." (Mark 9:35)
- "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones." (Matt 18:10)

To welcome a child=to welcome Jesus

- "Whoever shall receive one of such children in my name, shall receive me." (Mark 9:37)
- Not to welcome children, is not to welcome Jesus.

Children have knowledge of who Jesus is

- The disciples have difficulties understanding who Jesus is.
- "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfect praise." (Matt 21:16)
- Children, lacking education, have an intuitive understanding of who Jesus is.

A new view on children

- Children are not just under the adults, but believers on their own.
- Children should not only be formed, but should be imitated.
- Not just ignorant, they have their own insight of Jesus true identity.
- Created in God's image
- Represent Christ.

Judith M. Gundry, *The child in Christian Thought*

Important throughout childhood: a good relationship to your child

- A good relation need to be nurtured all the time.
- Focus on the good sides
- Spend time together.
- Don't be afraid to set limits.
- Have patience, trust in God.

Prayer – a way of living

- An attitude to life
- Fixed times of prayer, evening prayer, at the table
- Gestures, blessings
- Spontaneous prayer

- Mary and the saints pray for us.
- Get a prayer book!

Traditions – a lot to celebrate!

- Important that faith should be associated with good experiences!
- Christmas, Easter, give the Christian background, read the Bible
- Celebrate the day of baptism
- Celebrate the day of the child's patron saint
- Special saints in your country, Lucia, St. Francis
- Days for Mary
- Christian songs, learn by heart

On Sunday we go to mass

- Make a routine
- Remind a few days in advance
- Praise if it went well
- What colour did the priest wear today?
- Let the children engage, help with practical things in the liturgy.
- Make friends

Our home is Christian, does it show?

- God does not only talk to us through words.
- Pictures, candle-lights in front of saints, icons...
- What hangs on the wall over your child's bed?

Make friends!

- Many young people stay in church if they make friends.
- Make it more easy for your child to make friends at church, invite home
...
- It takes a whole village...

Read Bible stories!

- Get a relationship to the persons of the Bible, compare their lives with yours...

- You and your family are also part of Gods people.
- We are part of salvation history.
- God acts in our lives.
- A Christian perspective on your life

Be evangelised by your child

- Be ready, when the opportunity occurs.
 - Children are open to everything, have a natural religiosity, let them show you what is holy.
 - They ask many important questions about God, God speaks to them directly.
 - Children wonder and become amazed: learn from this.
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- **What could I learn from Jesus' attitude to children?**
 - **How could I provide surroundings that make spiritual life for children more apt to grow?**
 - **What support do families need in order to better live out their spiritual dimension?**

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Tips på litteratur: *Kallad till förälder*,
ett studiecirkelmateriale.

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