**ACTIVITIES TO ENHANCE CHILDREN’S SPIRUALITY**

(Adapted from ACU Masters of Religious Education – History and Theories of Religious Education by Christine Mulherin 2015)

Parents need to develop their own spirituality and be ready to share their experiences and act as a role model during prayer.

Parents first must accept these assumptions about the spiritual development of children if there are to build on their spiritual competence:

* Recognise that each child is born as a spiritual being
* Be prepared to work alongside the child
* Listen to what the child has to offer
* Honour each child’s relationship with the divine
* Always try to make the experiences of meditation positive
* Children must be free to choose to pray
* Never judge the child’s meditation (Christie, (2008)

Religious language gives a framework for the children to express themselves (Hyde, 2008).

Adults need to talk about spiritual things with children as they need to sort out their world and asking questions about aspects they do not fully comprehend is part of the experience.

Adults need to create a climate of openness so children feel comfortable to share their stories. Coles, a psychologist says, teachers need to actively listen to children, take them seriously, acknowledge their experience and resist the urge to place our own interpretation on their experiences (Hyde, 2008). We need to nurture instead of stifle their perception and sensibilities.

Adults need to allow children to take advantage of quiet places and utilise these spaces for reflection and meditation. Children need to be given journals as a means to sort out issues of meaning and value (Hyde, 2008). They need to be given new and authentic ways to learn to relate to each other by focusing and naming the people to whom they feel compassionate and empathic (Hyde, 2008).

Children derive meaning from different frameworks so adults must be familiar with their worldview. The way they have woven together their threads of meaning must be taken seriously as these can be a great starting point when dealing with issues (Hyde, 2008). Adults must find ways to encourage questions and explore issues in a way that doesn’t demean the child’s worldview which gives meaning to their lives and addresses their spiritual needs (Hyde, 2008).

Children’s experiences must include activities to:

* enhance wonder and awe, joy in the sensory, tactile, ordinary everyday activities e.g. Bring children’s attention to the beautiful things that God has created – the sunrise, the sunset, the ocean, a beautiful flower, a smell of a rose. There are thousands of things you can bring to their attention daily.
* encourage and make time for play
* provide sensory equipment or focus materials;
* live in the present and engage with and pay attention to what is happening;
* provide opportunities for stillness, silence, encourage taking the time to stop or slow down, to listen and become aware of their breathing;
* plan time for them to be by themselves which allows time for spiritual questing;
* develop trust, selflessness, perseverance, humility, gratefulness, kindness, compassion, empathy for others, peace within and harmony with others; - When issues arise in the family or on TV take the take to discuss ‘What would Jesus do in this situation?’.
* develop and exercise imagination;
* verbalise and discuss their spiritual experiences (Hyde, 2008).

We need to ignite their wonder and curiosity and in turn their spirituality.