**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 may 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 througout 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 exeperiences!
* 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 childs 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.
* **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 studiecirkelmaterial.
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