

## Godly Play

Godly Play is what Jerome Berryman (the creator) calls his interpretation of Montessori religious education. It is an imaginative approach to working with children, an approach that supports, challenges, nourishes and guides their spiritual quest. It is more akin to spiritual direction than to what we generally think of as religious education.

Godly Play assumes that children have some experience of the mystery of the presence of God in their lives, but that they lack the language, permission and understanding to express and enjoy that in our culture. In Godly Play, we enter into parables, silence, sacred stories and sacred liturgy in order to discover God, ourselves, one another and the world around us.

In Godly Play, we prepare a special environment for children to work with adult guides. Two teachers guide the morning session, making time for the children:

- To enter the space and be greeted
- To get ready for the presentation
- To enter into a presentation based on a parable, sacred story or liturgical action
- To respond to the presentation through shared wondering
- To respond to the presentation (or other significant spiritual issue) with their wonderful work, either expressive art or with the lesson materials
- To prepare and share a feast
- To say goodbye and leave the space

To help understand what Godly Play is, we can also take a look at what Godly Play is not. First, Godly Play is not a complete children's program. Christmas pageants, vacation Bible school, children's choirs, children's and youth groups, parent-child retreats, picnics, service opportunities and other components of a full and vibrant children's ministry are all important and are not in competition with Godly Play. What Godly Play contributes to the glorious mix of activities is the heart of the matter, the art of knowing and knowing how to use the language of the Christian people to make meaning about life and death.