



Meditation, contemplation and well-being

Serving the spiritual and mental health needs of our children in a time of pandemic

Introduction



At any time, perhaps particularly in this time of the coronavirus pandemic, the need for each of us to be attentive to the anxieties and disquiets that we may experience is vital. We read in the Bible that Jesus regularly took himself off to a quiet place to pray, away from distractions, to draw near to the Father.

The coronavirus pandemic has massively disrupted life, not just in this country but around the world. People are experiencing dislocation from normal routines, from natural human contact, and isolation from loved ones. Any attempt to calm the anxieties that both adults and children may feel is a right step. The most important step that anyone can take, however, is a step towards God for whom our hearts were made.

In light of the anxieties and pressures our children feel, and in light of each person's need for God, we are delighted to offer some resources and ideas that teachers can use in classrooms and which parents may use at home. Each of these feature a way into prayer that serves to lead people to Jesus (for example, Christian meditation, Imaginative prayer or Lectio Divina).

Where to Start

Christian Meditation with Children (Paul Tratnyek)

<http://www.meditatio.co.uk/christian-meditation-with-children/>



Although they both utilise the same breathing and relaxation techniques, there are fundamental differences between mindfulness and Christian meditation. Christian meditation ought always to seek to draw the heart and mind into a deeper personal relationship with God. The above article includes a useful table on the key differences between mindfulness and Christian meditation.

Resources for Schools, Parishes and Families

The Mark 10 Mission

<https://www.themark10mission.co.uk/>



Mark 10 Mission in partnership with the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal, have launched the Mark 10 Mission for Catholic primary schools in England and Wales as a direct response to the pandemic. Each week they produce a video which contains: a welcome; the reading of the Sunday Gospel; a reflection on the themes; a meditative prayer time and song of praise. Many schools have incorporated this into their weekly prayer and liturgy offer for pupils.

Catholic Children's Society – Meditation with Children and Young People

<https://www.cathchild.org.uk/meditation-with-children-young-people/>



Developed as a response to the pandemic to support the material, relational and spiritual well-being of children and young people in collaboration with the World Community for Christian Meditation (WCCM). There are a sequential series of videos for both primary and secondary aged children.



Lectio Divina

Introducing Lectio Divina (the practice of a sacred reading of Scripture) would be a wonderful addition to the practice of any home or any school. This ancient practice has sustained religious orders for centuries and Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI talked about how Lectio Divina would lead to a 'new springtime' in the Church.

You can find a simple pictorial guide on the Agency for Evangelisation and Catechesis website: <https://aec.rcaos.org.uk/resources>

Lectio Divina for Kids: Teaching your kids to pray with Scripture

<https://teachingcatholickids.com/lectio-divina-for-kids/>

A video which explains the steps of Lectio Divina for Children which school staff and parents will find helpful can be found via this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m8BNSywsuF4>



Ignatian Spirituality

Ignatian (or Jesuit) Spirituality is a rich tapestry which includes, imaginative prayer, contemplative and reflective prayer. Children respond particularly well to these prayer forms as attested in these articles:

<https://godinalthings.com/2012/07/31/ignatian-spirituality-for-kids/>

<https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/six-reasons-ignatian-spirituality-appeals-to-children/>

<https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/praying-the-examen-with-children/>

<https://www.pathwaystogod.org/my-prayer-life/examen/examen-children2017> includes an excellent Soundcloud version of the Examen for children.

Older teens and adults may enjoy a short-guided contemplation:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-qilzEwe2cQ>

There are a number of Ignatian/Jesuit apps on Google Play and the Apple App Store. Two of our favourites are: 3 Minute Retreat (Loyola Press) and Examen Prayer (Father Michael Denk).



Hallow

Older teens and adults may enjoy using the Hallow app, available in on the Apple App Store and Google Play. Hallow contains a variety of short and longer daily prayers and Catholic meditations. It provides a good introduction to many of the prayer tradition of the Church. The free version contains a limited amount of content. For those who wish to access more, there is a monthly/yearly subscription fee with a free trial. <https://hallow.com>

Support for Catholic Schools and Colleges

If you would like to discuss how to support the spiritual development of the children you teach, please contact our Education Officer and RE Team Lead

Sharon Docherty, email: sharondocherty@rcaos.org.uk

Support for Families and Parish Catechists

If you would like to discuss how to support the spiritual development of your children or those in your parish, please contact our diocesan Family, Child and Youth Catechesis Advisor

Ingrid La Trobe, email: catechesis@rcaos.org.uk

