

Perspectives in children's spirituality

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If spirituality may be considered as the experiential wing of theology, then addressing children's perspectives in theology also refers to their spiritual life, its nurture, its testimony to the quest for meaning and the call for being all of us share.

What would be the common threads or the distinctions among "child theology", "theology of childhood", "doing theology with children" and "children's spirituality"? How might reflection on children's spirituality contribute to those domains? Could children themselves contribute to this reflection?

Consideration of children's spirituality brings forth the postulate that children do indeed experience a spiritual life. This affirmation, while not being agreed to by all theologians, demands that not only the idea of spirituality be clarified but also that ontological perspectives on children, in addition to sociology and psychology, be included in the reflection. This situates children and spiritual life in general, not only in the context of their "growth", but it especially draws the attention to their proper worth at the present time, as Rahner reminds us.

The dynamics of spirituality are based on the qualitative aspect of its relational dimension rather than on its goals. This is to say, that spirituality, as a mode of being, is recognized in its sensitive, relational and existential qualities. Therefore, it needs to be addressed "relationally", including all the strength and limits of this position. From this existential and post-modern perspective, children's participation in spirituality is not only hoped for but also required for the common benefit of adults as well as children. How then to articulate this relationship with the One who is both "same and other"?

Consequently, nurturing and caring for children's spirituality requires that the perspective of the child be taken into account while reflecting theologically. In doing so, children themselves are constantly questioning our capacity to include the "other" and our disposition toward the part of "mystery" that lies within every relationship.