GODLY PLAY

Godly Play is a practical yet innovative approach to Religious Education. The Godly Play process has been developed by Jerome Berryman from Texas, USA who based his process on the work of the internationally known biblical scholar Sofia Cavalletti (see her book *The Religious Potential of the Child*). Sofia herself was a Montessori student hence her hands-on approach in the development of the initial process called *Catechesis of the Good Shepherd*. Berryman was a student of Sofia’s, so his process is closely linked to her work both philosophically and practically.

Godly Play is an experience of adults and children dwelling together in the mystery of God. It is profoundly biblical and sacramental and at the same time is deeply respectful of the nature of young children who are able to make their way to God in freedom and joy.

Godly Play aims to make religion come alive for children, to assist their spiritual development, to help Christianity become part of daily life and to make the language of religion familiar.

It is based on the assumption that children are individuals with different needs. Play is an important way of learning for all children.

Godly Play involves

- telling the religious stories using three-dimensional materials to invite listeners into the stories and to connect the stories to their personal experience
- moving to wider dimensions of faith with the use of open questions and a time of responding to the story with a creative activity
- allowing children to decide for themselves on a way of responding to the story, which may be learning to re-tell the story by using games, books, maps or puzzles or by responding to the story by doing some artwork (Children have a variety of learning styles, if the leader chooses one activity for everyone, the style of that activity will not suit all the children equally. If they choose for themselves from a range of options, they are likely to choose a learning activity that suits their learning style.)
- organizing the group’s time and space so that it models the Christian community we seek to be. The room can then become a peaceful place in which the mystery of God can be experienced
- relating to worship of the church by learning religious language and modelling each session on the Eucharist, with a Preparation (meeting and greeting), Ministry of the Word (listening to and responding to a bible story), Communion (sharing food and drink) and a Blessing and Dismissal (saying goodbye).
References:

The Religious Potential of the Child - Sofia Cavalletti 1992 LTP