

Diocese of Townsville

Catholic  
Education



# Teaching Christian Meditation

Position Statement

## Teaching Christian Meditation to Children and Young People

Be still and know that I am God  
Psalms 46:10

The world teaches children and young people a set of values – but are these values conducive to the making of a better world? Are these values transformative? Western culture invites excitement, not silence; activity, not stillness. Students are therefore often over stimulated and restless. It is vital that education responds to such social challenges by presenting and teaching an alternative way of being.

We want you to consider a new learning and a new imagination for society that locates the teaching of stillness and silence within each person at the heart of education.

When you pray, go to your inner room and pray to God, who is in that secret place.  
Matthew 6:5-6

Meditation is a learning process. It is a process of learning to pay attention, to concentrate, to attend.

John Main



# Prayer for Life

*"Children and young people have a great openness to the presence of God in their lives and a real readiness for prayer. If they are taught when they are young to be still and silent so that their hearts can be opened to the movement of the Spirit, the presence of Jesus, and the embrace of God the Father, they will have a gift which will continue to bring them great blessings throughout their lives."*

Bishop Michael Putney

## Our Catholic Context

*"It is a fundamental task to teach people how to pray and how to learn to do so personally, better and better. Many seek meditation elsewhere because they think that they will not be able to find a spiritual dimension to Christianity. We must show them once again, not only that this spiritual dimension exists, but that it is the source of all things. To this end, we must increase the number of these schools of prayer, for praying together, where it is possible to learn prayer in all its dimensions: as silent listening to God, as a listening that penetrates his word, penetrates his silence, sounds the depths of his action in history and in one's own person."*

Pope Benedict XVI address at a meeting of Bishops in Switzerland November 2006

## The Christian Contemplative Tradition

The Christian contemplative tradition has always identified contemplation as a work of love. Meditation is in this sense a falling in love with God who has fallen in love with us. St Francis de Sales, for example, said that, "the end of love is no other than the union of the lover and the thing loved." In meditation we grow more and more in love with God. We grow closer to God to that point that we are united with God. For children and young people it is appropriate to talk about being present to God and in the stillness and silence we can experience God's presence within us. John Main wrote, "To be in our centre is to be in God" (Moment of Christ, p106). This going into the quiet, still centre of who we are allows children and young people to stop thinking about themselves and to be open to God.

*"Meditation is the gentle and gradual change of direction. The change of heart that comes is to stop thinking of yourself and to be open to God, to the wonder of God, to the glory of God and to the love of God." (Moment of Christ, p 122).*



*Be still and know that I am God...*

## Guidelines for Teaching Christian Meditation

- Recognise that each child is born as a spiritual being
- Be prepared to work with and alongside the child
- Listen to what the child has to offer
- Honour each child's relationship with the divine
- Always try and make the experiences of meditation positive
- Never judge the child's meditation



## The Guiding Principle

"The sublime and glorious reality which we call God, is to be sought first and foremost in the human heart. If we do not find God there, we shall not find God anywhere else. If we do find God there, we can never lose God again; wherever we turn, we shall see God's face."

(Meister Eckhart, The Way of Paradox).

Children and young people, like adults, will find the practice of Christian Meditation a process in which they will feel like they have 'come home'. They will feel as if they have arrived at a place that is familiar, real and comfortable for them.



## An Inclusive Practice

Our experience is that children can meditate, in fact they like to meditate. Christian meditation is one of the most inclusive forms of prayer available to all. Meditation doesn't discriminate against age, gender, intellectual ability or emotional impairments. Students aren't assessed or judged on their meditation. All who meditate are equal.

## Spirituality and Education

A consensus on the meaning of spirituality does not exist. What is clear is that it involves questions of transcendence, mystery, value and universality, and that the quest for spiritual transformation has always been a magnificent aspect of human nature and culture.

### Definition of Spirituality

"Spirituality is the developing relationship of the individual, within community and tradition, to that which is, or is perceived to be, of ultimate concern, ultimate value and ultimate truth."

(A Wright, Spiritual Pedagogy, 1998 p88)

Catholic Education allows and invites students to "sojourn in a 'now' that is informed by wisdom from the past and directed by desires for a good future". A Catholic education believes in challenging students to make authentic and compelling life choices based on inner beliefs and universal Gospel values.

A UNESCO report on education points out the importance of this position. "It is thus education's noble task to encourage each and every one, acting in accordance with their traditions and convictions and paying full respect to pluralism, to life their minds, hearts and spirits to the plane of the universal and, in some measure, to transcend themselves. It is no exaggeration on the part of this UNESCO Commission to say that the survival of humanity depends thereon." (Delors et al 1998)



*"Help your students not to suffocate but rather to nourish their innate amazement in the face of creation and to reflect on it in order to grasp its perfection. To educate to this attitude, it is indispensable that the child be led to a real and profound interior silence which is the first requisite for listening."*

Pope John Paul II, 6 December 1984

## Acknowledge

Children do come ready equipped for their spiritual journey; they have awareness and openness, which all too often can get pushed aside as the child grows older. When teaching Christian Meditation, words are not everything. By allowing communication through stillness, silence and the senses, we can trust in God to do the work of God and talk to children in the silence.

## Our Commitment to Teaching Christian Meditation

### The Catholic Education Office will:

- Offer professional support for schools in understanding the principles of Christian Meditation through school based and TCEO based in-service
- Offer retreat experiences for teachers and school officers – an introductory program allowing for those beginning Christian Meditation
- Offer retreat experiences for teachers and school officers - an advanced 'school' experience for those who wish to extend their understanding
- Continue to support APREs and Principals in the implementation of Christian Meditation in all schools
- Offer Christian Meditation experience and some understanding to all beginning teachers

### The Principal will:

- In-service all staff at appropriate intervals on the Diocesan Position Statement on Christian Meditation
- Work with administration teams to facilitate the practice of Christian Meditation within the school structures
- Ensure parents are well informed about the policy and practice eg: at enrolment, parent-teacher nights
- Allocate appropriate resources and training within schools to allow for Christian Meditation in classrooms, school retreats and camps
- With the school administration team, model the importance of this practice in staff prayer
- Provide opportune times in the school day to accommodate Christian Meditation

### The Teacher will:

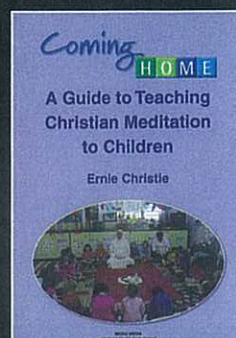
- Familiarise him/herself with the Diocesan Position Statement on Christian Meditation
- Take up the opportunities for in-service in the understanding of the practice and the experience of Christian Meditation at school and TCEO, when these are offered.
- Work actively with colleagues to establish sound Christian Meditation practices within the school
- Lead the experience of Christian Meditation with children and young people in classrooms (not restricted to Religious Education classrooms) on a regular basis
- Take up opportunities to deepen the children's/young people's experience of meditation at camps and retreats

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This document acknowledges the work of Fr Laurence Freeman OSB. Extracts have also been adapted from the book, 'Coming Home: A Guide to Teaching Christian Meditation to Children' by Ernie Christie. We also acknowledge the work and support of the World Community for Christian Meditation.



## Resources

World Community for Christian Meditation  
[www.wccm.org](http://www.wccm.org)

Coming Home: A Guide to Teaching Christian Meditation  
[www.cominghome.org.au](http://www.cominghome.org.au)



## Contact Us

Townsville Catholic Education Office

Telephone: 07 4773 0900

Facsimile: 07 4773 0901

Email: [enquiries@tsv.catholic.edu.au](mailto:enquiries@tsv.catholic.edu.au)

Web: [www.tsv.catholic.edu.au](http://www.tsv.catholic.edu.au)