

Maria Montessori: Religion and Education

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Dr. Maria Montessori (1870-1952)

- ★ Italian Physician
- ★ Most known for “self guided”
educational approach and theories
- ★ Initially studied disadvantaged children
- ★ Estimated 4,500 Montessori schools
across the US

“The development of the senses indeed precedes that of superior intellectual activity and the child between three and seven years is in the period of formation.”
-Maria Montessori, *The Montessori Method*

What is the Montessori Method?

- ★ Based on belief that children have absorbent minds that learn better through interaction with environment more so than teacher instruction
 - Availability of all toys or materials
- ★ Children have freedom to guide their own learning
 - Teachers are there to help or reinforce
- ★ Classrooms separated into 4 sections to help development
 - Practical Life
 - Development of Language
 - Sensorial Development
 - Early Preparation of Mathematical Mind

Connection to Religion

- ★ Became more religious as she worked with children
 - Saw the “creative presence of God” in them
- ★ Roots in Catholicism
 - Emphasis on helping the poor/disadvantaged
 - “Children’s Church” → adapted environment to fit smallness of child
- ★ Religious experience is more substantial in developing intellect within the child
 - Learn to make distinctions between small actions
 - Experiencing the presence of God at a young age increases understanding
- ★ Sensitive period for religion
 - Capable of understanding difference between humanity and God
- ★ Children are not blank slates in need of fulfillment or born with sin

Are all Montessori Schools Catholic?

- ★ Montessori halted religious education as a part of her teaching method
 - Mussolini's separation of church and state
 - Unable to apply concepts to other religions
- ★ Most do not have any religious affiliation
 - Universal application of basic fundamentals
- ★ Many catholic schools utilize Montessori Method in their children programs
 - To help teach liturgy, daycare systems, preschools

Works Cited

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