

All About the Atrium

A newsletter for parents of children in the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Atrium

Gestures of the Eucharist

The gestures of the Eucharist are among the richest liturgical signs. They speak to us through movement, telling us what is really happening in the Mass. Prayer words often accompany these gestures, but the movement itself is a powerful language. Young children are naturally very attracted to movement. They need to be given the opportunity to focus on these rich liturgical movements and learn to “read them,” even before going on to meditate on the prayer words.

- Sofia Cavalletti, The Good Shepherd and the Child: A Joyful Journey, p 69

Preparation of the Chalice

The Preparation of the Chalice (which can sometimes go almost unnoticed by adults during the Mass, in part because the accompanying prayer is usually prayed by the priest in silence) captures the attention of young children and invites them and us into a very great mystery of the Eucharist. Why does the priest pour so much wine in the chalice and then just a few drops of water? What does this mean?

We would first show the children how the cruets are prepared with (real) wine and with water. They enjoy the color and smell of wine, and the physical satisfaction of being able to do this task themselves. Then we gather to see what the priest does with the prepared cruets during Mass.

- Sofia Cavalletti, The Good Shepherd and the Child: A Joyful Journey, p 71

Cruets are made of crystal. One contains water and the other wine, which will be consecrated during the celebration of the Mass or Holy Eucharist.



Mass or Holy Eucharist with your Children

Begin your preparation at home.

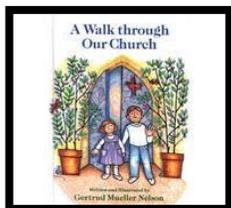
- Pray as a family. Use the language and prayers that the children will hear at Mass, even if it is as simple as “Amen” or “Alleluia.” With the older children, pray *The Our Father; Holy, Holy, Holy; or Glory to God.*
- As you pray at home, model how to make the Sign of the Cross, how to hold your hands when at prayer, how to bow your head, how to genuflect, etc.
- Read the Gospel aloud before you go to Church. When you speak about going to Mass, do so with joy!

Sit in the front

- Small children will become easily bored if they are unable to see what is happening during liturgy. Sit as close to the front as possible so that you can share with your child what is going on during liturgy.
- Hold your little ones up so that they can see the gestures, vessels and colors.

Do not be in a hurry to leave after Mass.

- Our Churches are beautiful environments that are great opportunities to teach children about our faith. Take your child for a close-up look after Mass:
 - Statues – who is depicted? Name them, “This is a statue of _____.”
 - Stained Glass Windows – “Who [what] do you see?” or “What colors do you see?”
 - Font – “This is the font that holds holy water. We remember our baptism at the font.”
 - Altar – “This is the altar table on which the bread and wine are made holy.”
 - Candles – “The candles are placed on (or near) the altar as a sign of the light of the Risen Christ.”
- This is also a great way to share with your child how to behave in Church. For example: We do not play near the candles, but we may come closer to look at the candles.



A Walk Through Our Church by Gertrud Mueller Nelson

This book is a reverent, child-led tour of an empty church, giving names to its furnishings. Perfect for ages 5 and up. Written and illustrated by author and artist Gertrud Mueller Nelson. Gertrud told CGSUSA this month, “Children learn so much from touching, tasting, seeing, smelling! Watch them go through a department store, running their hands along the merchandise as you hurry along, begging them not to touch! But there is a way to touch with reverence. There needs to be a way to look up close at what you have only seen from a distance. There are gestures to learn, and reverently perform: the sign of the cross with holy water, a genuflection, a bow from the waist. The Book of the Gospels we only listen to. But it has weight and profound beauty to hold. We want to light a candle together, drop a coin in the poor box

and hear it clatter, kneel on the kneeler where we ask for forgiveness. Water, oil, fire, bread, wine, words, gestures, song, color: these are exactly the tactile things that we learn from, if, in fact we are allowed to touch and approach them with reverence. These are exactly the things the church uses in our sacramental lives. All of them are simple and all of them play some role in our so-called ordinary lives. There are adults in RCIA and even seasoned churchgoers who have no idea about the oils, the meaning of holy water, why we genuflect or kneel. This is a book to take all of us in the parish family around the church, becoming familiar with the use and meaning of the core symbols of our faith. This is a book of signs and gestures to sharpen our senses and observations and to make us feel warmly and fully at home in this, the house of the people of God.”

To purchase this lovely book for your family, visit our website: <http://www.cgsusa.org/products/a-walk-through-our-church/>