



Parent Pages

*Preparing the environment of the Domestic Church**

* The term "Domestic Church" refers to the family, the smallest body of gathered believers in Christ. Though recovered only recently, the term dates back to the first century AD. The Greek word *ecclesiola* referred to "little church." The early Church understood that the home was fertile ground for discipleship, sanctification, and holiness.

The Introduction to the Atrium

"The atrium is a place of prayer, in which work and study spontaneously become meditation, contemplation and prayer" (#3 of The Characteristics of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd).

As a new school year begins, the children are about to be welcomed for the first time or welcomed once again into the Atrium. This is a sacred space, a space for listening to the still, small voice of God (1 Kings 19:12), a space for working with materials that assist in pondering God's Word in Scripture and His action in the liturgy, and a place for responding to God with thanks and praise for His goodness. We often begin the Atrium year with an orientation to the space, looking at what has stayed the same and what has moved, what is familiar, and what has been added. Next, we take time to remember the ways His goodness has been enjoyed in this space in the past. Finally, as we introduce the child to the environment, we present the pace and rhythm of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd in such a way that the child will be comfortable in the space so they can work to know God and love Him more deeply.



While the Atrium is a particular place of encounter with God, there are also many places in our lives that have the potential for opening and enjoying the many gifts from God. We often pass by these places without ever really noticing. How many times have we been gifted with the grandeur of a sunset, the beauty of a delicate leaf just popping out of the soil or a flower resting on a fragile stem, the sweet scent of something baking in the oven, and the joy which comes through a family game night or sing along? Who are the people in our lives who are gift to us? Where have we seen God's presence today? How could we make time and space to recognize, open, and enjoy the gifts of God in our daily life?

Setting Aside Time for God:

There is a longing within each of us for time with God, but often we need to intentionally set aside space and time for Him. Could you begin this new school year, filled with so many important things that beg for our time and attention, by committing to making extra time for God each week as a family?

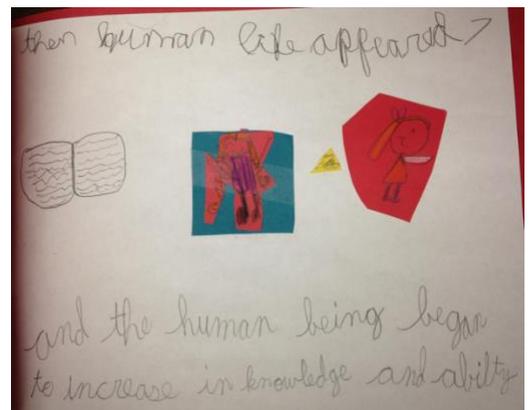
Creation:

- If you could spend one afternoon a month outside enjoying God's gifts in creation, where would you go?
- Is there a park nearby (or your backyard!) where you could spend an hour once a week with your family just being together in nature?
- What gifts of creation do you see each day? A beautiful sunrise? Green plants inside and out? Delicious food to eat? A beloved pet? Stars in the sky?



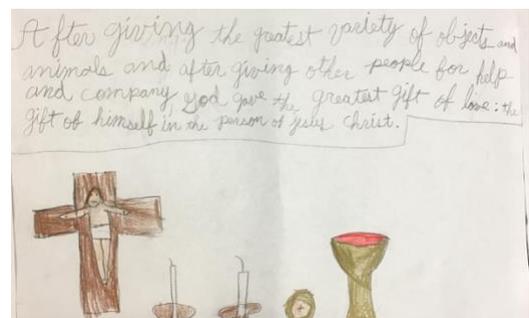
People:

- Who are the people in your life with whom you would like to spend more time?
- Is there someone to whom you would want to write a letter of thanks for the gift they are in your life?
- As you go through your day how many "invisible workers" have made your life easier and more joyful? A garbage collector? The postal worker? A doctor, teacher, or priest?



Jesus:

- Each of the gifts in our life originates from God. What is one gift that we could thank Him for today?
- We prepare ourselves to come to the Atrium and we model quietly, showing how we live well in this space, listening for God and respecting others. Are there similar behaviors which would help your time together with Jesus at Church this week be beautiful as well?
- What is one way you and your family could prepare, together, for honoring Sunday as a day set aside for time with one another and with God?



Longing for Parousia:

In this present moment we can encounter tastes of God's goodness and we can also hope and pray for His Kingdom to come in fullness. Recognizing and enjoying the gifts around us helps us to long for and work for that moment when there will be fullness of beauty, unity, love, and peace. In Parousia, that never-ending moment when God will be "all in all," we will, together, see Him face to face!