



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 Tabernacle

The younger children (ages three to six years old) are introduced to the articles of the Mass through a series of presentations on the Model Altar:

- The Basic Articles
- The Tabernacle and the Word
- The Remaining Articles of the Mass/Eucharist

Typically, during the second year in the atrium, the children are shown a model of a tabernacle (proportionate to the model altar table and ideally with lock and key), a ciborium, and a sanctuary lamp. The vocabulary may be new for this age child, but they love hearing the beautiful words and names of these articles and coming to know and understand the faith language of the church. The aim of these presentations is to assist the children in knowing the name and the use of these articles. When the children come to church, they will be drawn to those items that they are familiar with and be more engaged in what is happening during the liturgy.

The Tabernacle

The catechist points out to the children that Jesus is present in the tabernacle. As they work with the material, the children understand that the tabernacle is a cabinet made of precious materials, and it is always kept locked. The children delight in the lock and key.

The Ciborium

Inside the tabernacle, the child discovers the ciborium. The ciborium is the name of



the sacred vessel that holds the consecrated Host, Jesus. The children note that the ciborium looks like a cup with a cover or a lid.

The Sanctuary Lamp

The sanctuary lamp is near the Tabernacle. It is a light that is kept burning day and night to announce that Jesus, the Good Shepherd, is present.

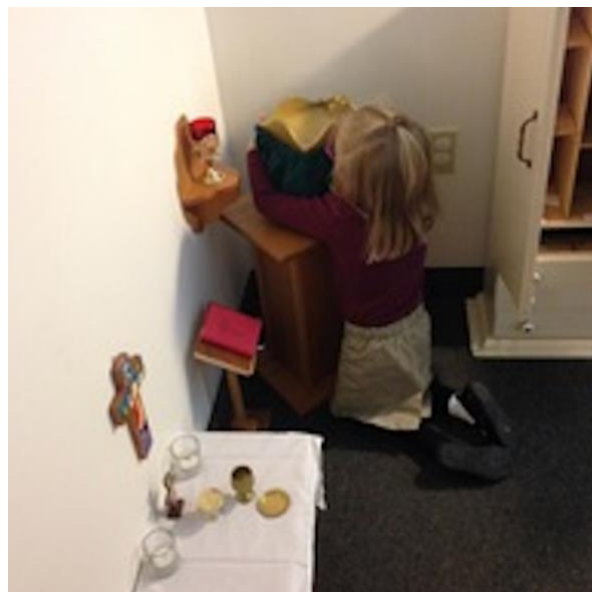
At the end of our time with the materials, we take a moment to pause and pray or simply enjoy the special items about the Body of Christ.



Genuflection and a Special Visit

To help the children with their introduction to the life of the church, it is also fitting for them to see the presentation on the genuflection, which assists in knowing the appropriate posture as they approach the tabernacle. The catechist might demonstrate genuflection, noting the difference in our standing height and our kneeling height; how much smaller we become when we genuflect. When we genuflect, we are expressing with our own bodies that we are very small in relation to God. With the very youngest of the children, the catechist does not explain the gesture, but simply identifies it as a way we greet Him, whom we know is present in the tabernacle, and demonstrate the gesture with solemnity and grace. We let the gesture be a prayer.

After the children have seen and worked with these materials in the atrium, it is appropriate for the catechist to take them to see the actual items in the Church. A priest or deacon may be invited to assist the catechist at the tabernacle or to show where the ciborium and other sacred vessels are kept in the sacristy when not in use. The sacred vessels themselves are not scholastic materials; rather they directly serve the religious life of the child.



This 4-year-old (photo right) has set the model altar and now has her arms around the model tabernacle.