



# 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.

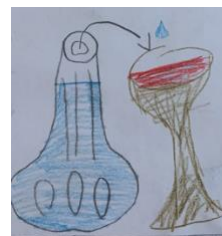
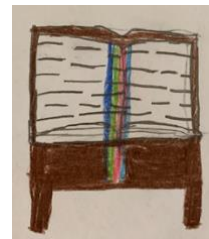
## The Mass and the Elementary Child

At the Last Supper, Jesus anticipated the events of the following days in which he would lay down his life for his sheep and then rise again, triumphant over death. The great gift of his Risen Life is shared with each of us through our baptism and is nurtured and nourished through the gift of the Eucharist. Truly the Eucharist is the greatest of gifts, the Risen Presence of the Good Shepherd in the midst of his flock. Such a great gift calls forth a response from us! We are invited to recognize this gift, receive and enjoy it, and then respond in love and in joy.

### The Gestures of the Mass

The gestures of the Mass visibly show the coming of Jesus and our response, through him, to God.

- **God speaks:** In the Liturgy of the Word we are invited to listen for the voice of the one who calls each of us by name. He was at work long ago, in the time of the Old Testament and we hear of his actions as well as join in the prayer of the psalmists. Then we listen to the wisdom of the early Christian Church and, finally, stand to encounter Jesus in the Gospel.
- **The Preparation of the Gifts:** The sun, soil, and rain have all contributed to the growth of the wheat seeds which have been planted, harvested, and made into bread. Grapes, too, have been transformed by humanity into wine, now brought as gift to God. The priest adds a few drops of water to the wine in the chalice. Can the water which has been united now be separated from the wine? What does this tell us about his union with us?
- **The Gesture of Epiclesis:** The priest calls on God as he asks that the Holy Spirit might be sent to transform the gifts of bread and wine into the true presence of the Good Shepherd. This is the gesture which shows the coming of the gift!
- **The Words of the Last Supper:** We hear the words of Jesus when he shared his desire to remain with his flock always through the gift of his Body and Blood. God's Word is powerful and does what it says. Jesus is with us!



- **The Mystery of Faith:** When we see this great gift of Jesus, hidden under the signs of bread and wine, we proclaim what we believe to be true even as we acknowledge how mysterious it is.
- **The Gesture of Offering or Doxology:** Lifting up the Risen Christ, the priest offers God the Father this greatest gift, with whom we remain united as the drop of water is united with the wine. Through, with, and in Jesus we offer praise and glory to God forever. Amen! This is our response of praise!
- **The Sign of Peace:** Because the Good Shepherd is truly present with us on the altar in this moment, we are able to extend his peace, a peace beyond our imagining, with those around us. But is his peace only for those we see? How can we share his peace with all?
- **Communion:** The Eucharist is a gift given to unite God and man, heaven and earth. As the priest breaks the One Bread and shares the Eucharist with those ready and able to receive, we see that we are united, most perfectly, in Jesus, in the One who is “all in all” in the Eucharist.



### Praying the Mass with the Elementary Child

In the Eucharistic Liturgy we visibly see the great gift from God to man and our response in offering Jesus, and ourselves through him, back to God. Let us become attuned to this great exchange! Participation in the Mass consists, most essentially, in uniting our hearts and minds to the events taking place before and around us. Perhaps one of the follow ideas could help you and your children in this:

- Talk about one gesture before the liturgy and look for it during worship. Discuss as a family what you were picturing or thinking about when this gesture was prayed during the Eucharist.
- Listen for the words of prayer that accompany one gesture. How did this help you to ponder this moment more deeply? What truth did you hear through your watching and listening?
- If the Eucharistic Liturgy is a moment of gift and response as shown in the Epiclesis and Offering, where else in the Mass do you experience gifts being given and responded to?
- How do you see all of creation as part of this exchange between earth and heaven, heaven and earth? How are minerals, plants, animals, and humans part of this worship of God?
- The Eucharist is the Risen Jesus. How do you see that truth expressed in the way we prepare our Church and prepare our hearts for him each time we participate in the liturgy?
- When the priest lifts up the Body and Blood of Jesus in the Offering, what thoughts, words, and actions are we offering, through the Good Shepherd, to the Father?
- As branches on the True Vine, how are we remaining with him and with each other through the Mass? What fruit are we bearing that gives great glory to God through Jesus?