



Parent Page Newsletter

For the parents of children in the CGS Atrium
September 2024

HELPING CHILDREN TO PRAY

In chapter 15 of *Nurturing the Whole Child: Montessori Principles Applied to the Catechesis of Children*, Gianna Gobbi writes:

“If we want to assist the child in his or her religious experience, an important area to which we must attend is that of prayer. Prayer is, first of all, listening to God. It is the particular key that opens up the mystery of God’s relationship with God’s creature. It is a key that not only belongs to God, but that is also given to all God’s creatures regardless of denomination, class, or race, one that is offered in every moment, place, and circumstance. As Christians we pray through the mediation of Jesus Christ. Our prayer is both a preparation and a vehicle for arriving at the greatest prayer of thanksgiving: the Eucharist.”

She goes on to tell the story of an old, humble man, who was sitting in the last pew of an empty church. One wondered if he was waiting for someone. When he was approached and asked what he was waiting for, he gazed at the tabernacle and said, “I look at him, and he looks at me.” The prayer of the child is of this same quality. Allowing time and space for the child to sit with and love God.

She writes about how the prayer of the child is different than the prayer of the adult. The child’s prayer is very brief, with single word responses, such as “Jesus”, “Light”, or “Amen” that is often followed by periods of silence. The prayer of the young child is often prayers of praise and thanksgiving rather than prayers of petition. Their prayer is often phrases of thanking God for the gifts in their life: the light, their family, pizza, to be one of his sheep, etc.

How do we begin prayer at home? If you have not done so, create a simple prayer space at home: on a coffee table, the top of a dresser or shelf, or an empty box. Cover with a simple cloth, pillowcase or whatever you have at home. A small pillow to hold a Bible, an image of Jesus or Mary holding the baby Jesus. Is there something lovely growing in your yard or found on a nature walk that can be included on your prayer table? Allow your children to be a part of creating this sacred space in your home. If you already have a prayer table, invite your children to walk through the house, etc. to see if there is anything they have collected or would like to add to the family table.



Select a time when your children are not too tired, to gather at the prayer table. Turn the lights down low. Sit on the floor with the children and ask them what they see on the table, or name the items they see on the prayer table. Light a candle and read a line of scripture: perhaps a blessing prayer, such as Matthew 11:25 or Luke 1:46-49. Allow for a period of silence. Sing a song. Remind the children that anytime during the day, they can come to the family prayer table to spend time with Jesus, the Good Shepherd. Make this a regular, daily habit, in the morning, or after supper, to spend time with Jesus as a family and for your children to see the entire family formed in this habit.

The child’s greatest need and capacity is for relationship, and the **celebration** of that relationship. The young child has a tremendous capacity for prayer. Do not fear these spaces of silence in your prayer. Remember as the psalmist says: *Silence is praise to you, O God!* (Psalm 65:1). These moments are also times for the child to be in union with God.