



Parent Page Newsletter

For the parents of children in the CGS Atrium
November 2024

Harmony in the Prepared Environment

In the first months in the atrium, the children are given the opportunity to explore and connect with the prepared atrium environment. The practical life activities and the scriptural and liturgical presentations allow the children to move, interact, and discover the theological announcements of our faith. What is a prepared atrium environment? Consider the colors used in a typical classroom space. Then, ponder the colors of the walls and furniture in an atrium environment. Neutral colors that do not tire the eyes are preferred. Furniture made of natural materials is often used.

In the atrium environment, there is one of each material used for practical life activities, the scriptural or liturgical presentations, so if a child wants to contemplate what he or she has heard in the presentation with the material and another child is using the material, he or she will need to wait for his or her friend to finish. This allows the child to learn patience, respect, and harmony within the prepared environment. In the atrium (and at home), items from nature may be included on the prayer table: a gourd, pinecones, branches, pebbles, etc. They are lovingly placed in a basket on the prayer table in appreciation of and delight in the gifts of God found in nature. The beauty found in nature and now brought to the prayer table, will enable the child to develop a love of God's creation. As the children are able to spend time in nature, they perceive natural harmony found there.

In many Infant/Toddler Atria, and in Montessori environments, there is often an outdoor garden space, where children may work in the soil, plant seeds, and care for the vegetation. Dr. Maria Montessori considered the outdoor environment an extension of the indoor environment. She believed that being in nature and interacting with it is crucial for the child's physical and emotional development, "The land is where our roots are," Dr. Montessori wrote. "The children must be taught to feel and live in harmony with the Earth." In the Atrium, the children hear parables having to do with seeds: The Mustard Seed, The Growing Seed, etc. and also come to know about signs of God in nature.

The United States has experienced a myriad of environmental disasters in recent months. Our children (even if not directly impacted) may now be more conscious of and sensitive about their natural environment. The youngest children may display a need for additional assurance and comfort. We pray for all of those affected by the storms, and ask God to bless them with his love and protection. May the values and attitudes formed in early childhood develop empathy and love for God's creation. As the children spend time outdoors, may they become aware of the miracle, beauty, the power, and grandeur of our world.

*Our help is in the name of the Lord,
who made heaven and earth.
-Psalm 124:8*