All About the Atrium

A newsletter for parents of children in the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Atrium

The Birth of Jesus and the Adoration of the Shepherds
In the second chapter of Luke’s gospel, we hear the story of the birth of Jesus. The children, even though they may be familiar with this account, look forward to its proclamation in the Atrium each year. The children are drawn to this story, as they hear how the great and the small are placed side by side. We read about a tiny baby being welcomed by angels. You may choose to read this account aloud to your family found in the Gospel of Luke, Chapter 2, verses 1-20 as part of the Blessing of the Nativity or Creche.

The Blessing of the Nativity or Creche
Some families display their Nativity throughout the entire Advent and Christmas Season. Other families wait until Christmas morning to place the figure of the baby Jesus in the manger. Whatever your family tradition, you may want to bless your Nativity with the following prayer or similar words and a reading from the Gospel of Luke:

Opening Prayer
Lord, throughout the Christmas Season we will look upon these images of sheep and shepherds, of Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus. We gather to bless this crèche, which reminds us of how you came to us as a small child. As Jesus reminds us, unless we become like little children we cannot enter the kingdom of God. Awaken within our hearts the way of the child so that we may enter the Christmas Season full of joy.

Word of God
Read Luke, Chapter 2, verses 1-20 from your family bible or the Little Gospels.

Litany for the Child in Each of Us:
For a greater sense of wonder. Hear our prayer.
For a greater sense of curiosity. Hear our prayer.
For a greater sense of joy. Hear our prayer.
For a greater sense of contemplation. Hear our prayer.
For a greater appreciation for the small. Hear our prayer.
For a greater appreciation for the beautiful. Hear our prayer.
For a greater appreciation for what is essential. Hear our prayer.

Blessing
Let us now bless our crèche. Let it remind us to be more like the Christ Child. May the crèche in our home help us to recall the Gift You are to us, Jesus, and the gift we are to one another. We ask this in your Holy Name.
Amen.

Song
Sing your favorite Christmas song.

The Blessing of the Presents
While we know our focus this season is upon the greatest gift given: the gift of Jesus; we acknowledge our love for our family and friends with an exchange of presents. Before the bows and wrapping paper are torn, take a moment to offer a prayer of thanksgiving for all the gifts your family has received this year:

Let us pause to enjoy the beauty of our Christmas Tree and the gifts that surround it. (Allow for a moment of silence)
We are all gifts to one another. Each one of us is unique and special in His sight.
Let us be reminded of the gifts that each person here brings to our family. (Allow time so that the gifts of each person are affirmed.)
God, we thank you for all the blessings you have given to us, especially the gift of Your Son, Jesus.
We ask your blessing upon our family as we share our love for one another in the exchange of presents.

Gifts Shared
A great gift for the child in your life is a set of the Little Gospels – the Scripture books used in the Atrium. This set of five books includes a rigid, clothbound slipcase with foil stamping and five hardcover books with foil stamping on the front and back cover. Each 32-page book is 4 3/4 x 6 1/2 and fits perfectly in the hands of a child. Included in this set: The Annunciation of the Angel to Mary, The Visitation of Mary to Elizabeth, The Birth of Jesus and the Adoration of the Shepherds, The Presentation in the Temple, and The Adoration of the Magi. Our publisher, Liturgy Training Publications (LTP), has offered us a special sale on these little treasures. We are so pleased to share this sale with you! http://www.cgsusa.org/products/little-gospels-infancy-narratives-set.