

All About the Atrium

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

THE CENACLE

cen•a•cle (sɛn ə kəl)

n. 1. The room where the Last Supper took place

The word “Cenacle” comes from “cena” which means “to eat” or “dinner.”

The Latin word *Cenaculum* was used in the Vulgate Bible for the “upper room” where the Last Supper was held.

Jesus celebrated the Last Supper with the twelve apostles. The Last Supper was celebrated in the “cenacle” or upper room of a house. Each year in the atrium, typically in the season of Lent, the children are presented the Cenacle.

The Presentation of the Last Supper

As we well know, the Last Supper is foundational to the Paschal Mystery, to the mystery of Christ Himself, as well as to the mystery of the Eucharistic presence. Therefore, because it is among the greatest mysteries of our faith, it should be offered to young children. Yet, the question is how? How do we remain at the level of essentiality with children as young as three? Again, we follow the rule of beginning with only the most essential announcement and allowing the truth to expand as the child grows.

Initially, our focus is simply on this particular moment in Jesus’ life, just before he died and rose.

What did he do? What did he say in that upstairs room in the Cenacle? We **introduce the reading of the text** by acknowledging the liturgical time of Lent that we are in, preparing to celebrate the greatest feast when Jesus died but was risen. Just before that happened, Jesus had come once again to Jerusalem. It was the Jewish feast of Passover, which included a special meal with one’s family. Jesus wanted to celebrate that feast with those most like family to him: his disciples, and so he chose a special place and sent two of his disciples there to get things ready for the Passover meal.

- Sofia Cavalletti, *The Good Shepherd and the Child: A Joyful Journey* p 81

The materials are a wooden box representing the Cenacle, a long wooden table covered by a white cloth, three-dimensional figures of Jesus and 12 apostles, a small paten holding a clay model of bread, and a small chalice. Each item is put in place slowly at the right time in the narrative. Great emphasis is placed on Jesus' simple words: "**Take and eat. This is my body.**" "**Take and drink. This is my blood.**"

Are young children capable of grasping and enjoying the significance of Eucharist, or is it perhaps too great a mystery of them? Would it be better to wait to introduce them to it until a more mature age? Regrettably, this was our opinion at one time, until the children taught us differently. The young child gravitates toward what is simplest and most essential, and also deepest. It is we adults who tend to complicate things. There is nothing simpler or more essential in its greatness than the Eucharist, and the young child is well equipped to perceive and enjoy the gift it is.

- Sofia Cavalletti, *The Good Shepherd and the Child: A Joyful Journey*, p. 63

*Share with us how your family prepares to receive the great gift of the Eucharist OR how your family prepares for going to Church. Send your response to maryandkurt12@gmail.com. Responses will be shared on CGSUSA.org and one family will be chosen randomly to receive a copy of *The Little Gospels: The Last Supper*.*

The Last Supper

