



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.

Baptism and the Elementary Child

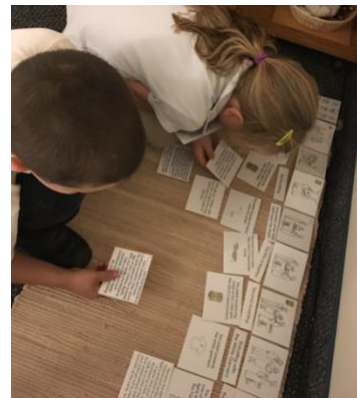


Easter Blessings!! What a gift to celebrate, once more, the day in which death was conquered by Risen Life, darkness was overcome by Eternal Light, and fear was dispelled by Hope, Love, and Truth! As we continue to celebrate this great gift of Jesus' Resurrection, the Easter season is a time, both in the Church and in the Atrium, of particular focus on the great gift of Baptism. Receiving the Sacrament of Baptism marks the moment when the Risen Life and Light of Jesus was placed deep within our individual hearts and souls, shown by being clothed in a white garment which depicted on the outside the new Light filling the soul on the inside. The experience of Light casting out darkness is also illustrated in a particularly beautiful way through the lighting of the baptismal candle from the Paschal or Easter Candle, a visible expression of the invisible gift of His Life and Light within. In the Atrium, the Baptism area is one which is often revisited as the articles and gestures lift up the many gifts given in abundance on one's Baptism day. As the child moves into Level II, the pondering of Baptism includes looking at definitions for these gifts as well as the order in which they are received. Some children enjoy acting out these moments and prayers while others delight in copying and illustrating a book of the Rite of Baptism.

The Rite of Baptism:

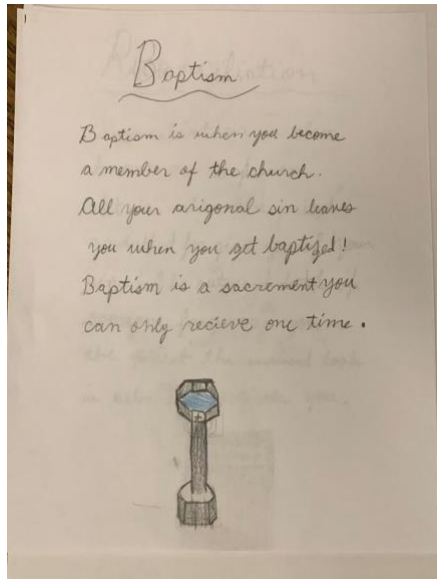
For the lower elementary child, nine most essential moments of the Rite of Baptism are enjoyed:

- Entrusting with the Sign of the Cross
- Listening to the Word of God
- First Anointing (Oil of Catechumens)
- Invocation of the Holy Spirit upon the Water
- Conferring of the Sacrament
- Second Anointing (Holy Chrism)
- Entrusting with the White Garment
- Entrusting with the Light of Christ
- Blessing of the Parents



The older elementary children also enjoy laying out the articles, gestures, and verbal prayers of the Complete Rite of Baptism. Some enjoy doing research on the Sacrament of Baptism, reading more about this great gift and recording their findings.

- After all had received candles in a celebration of Baptism in the Atrium, a five-year-old said, "It's like the path of light for the people who walked in darkness."
- The definition of Baptism from an eight-year-old: "Baptism is a sacrament you can receive as a child, teenager, or an adult. Baptism is when you receive God. When you receive Baptism, you become part of God's family and kingdom."
- A ten-year-old child asked what title she could use when copying the Prayer for the Invocation of the Holy Spirit over the Waters of Baptism. "Invocation" or "Epiclesis" was suggested. She returned later to show she had chosen to title this prayer, "The Great Prayer." Amen!!



Enjoying the great gift of Baptism in the Home:

- Perhaps this month you could take some time to look up when you and your children were baptized and mark those dates on your calendar to celebrate throughout the year.
- If you have articles like your child's white garment or baptismal candle, bring those out to enjoy them together. If you have pictures of your child's celebration of Baptism, they will delight in looking at them with you.
- You might do some research on the Sacrament of Baptism with your children. Look back at the essential moments of the Rite of Baptism listed above. Can you find out the significance of these articles and gestures of Baptism?
- Tell the story of choosing your child's godparents. Maybe you and your child could write a letter thanking his godparents for praying for and supporting him (and you!) through this sacrament.