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.

The City of Jerusalem

Sofia Cavalletti and Gianna Gobbi understood the importance of knowing about the Holy land in order to grasp the message of the Bible. There is no history without its geography. This is why we find ourselves returning to the city of Jerusalem and discovering those places and events that lift up the Paschal Mystery in Sacred Scriptures. We read on page 80 of The Good Shepherd and the Child: A Joyful Journey:

The City of Jerusalem in which we offer a raised-surface map of Jerusalem with moveable pieces of the sites of the paschal events. The very brief narrative that accompanies the naming of the sites underscores the realness (or historical reality) of the Passion, Death, and Resurrection and the unity of the events. In a sense, all of these episodes are really one event: the greatest mystery of love!

Biblical Geography allows the child to participate more deeply in the liturgy, and will draw their attention to listen more closely to the locations heard in the Scriptures, especially during Holy Week when we will be journeying to these sacred places.

It is important to note: When we speak to the children, we are careful to hold the death and resurrection of Jesus together. We never speak about one without the other. They are one mystery.

Some of the locations that we hear in Scripture include or may discover in the links on this page:
The Pools: There are two pools of water in the city of Jerusalem, that were places where Jesus performed healings, the Pool of Siloam and the Sheep’s Pool.

The Temple: The Temple, located on the Temple Mount, is the most beautiful place and the highest point of the city. The temple covers a large portion of the upper city. Jesus often taught in the temple and it is where the Jews worshipped the God.

The Cenacle, or Upper Room: Jesus came to Jerusalem to share a special meal, the Passover Feast, with his disciples. This was a special meal with special words of love were spoken for the first time. Jesus took bread, blessed it, and broke it. Giving it to his disciples, he said, "Take it; this is my body." Then, he gave them the cup of wine and said, "This is my blood."

The Garden: After the special meal with special words, Jesus and his friends went out to the Mount of Olives. It's also called the Garden of Gethsemane. That night, people came and arrested Jesus and took him away from the garden. The next day, Jesus was sentenced to death.

The Cross: Jesus was crucified on a cross in Golgotha. It is also called Calvary. It is here where the Good Shepherd laid down his life for the sheep. After he died, his friends placed his body in a garden tomb. They rolled a big rock in front of the tomb.

The Empty Tomb: On the third day, women came to care for Jesus’ body according to their customs. They brought oils and spices. But the rock had been rolled away from the tomb, and Jesus’ body was not in the tomb. Jesus was Risen. We light a candle next to the tomb. This light reminds us of Jesus’ light which is stronger than death.

Cavalleti writes, “With regard to the events of the passion, we restrict ourselves to indicating the location of the Cenacle, the house of Caiaphas, The Tower of Antonia, the Temple, the Garden of Olives, Calvary and the tomb of the resurrection. We concentrate on the Last Supper, the death
and resurrection, and the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Religious Potential of the Child, p 114)

**AT HOME**

Music is can be an important part of the life of the family, particularly when it comes to prayer. In fact, we can think of music as an “indirect aid to prayer,” helping to expand the children’s prayer language, nurturing their capacity to respond more fully to God within, nurturing the experience of the home a place of prayer and celebration. For this most Holy Week there are two words that can be our song:

**Hosanna**

The word “hosanna” is from the Hebrew word “Hoshana” which means “to save, rescue” or “savior.” The word ‘Hosanna’ can be found in both the Old Testament (Psalm 118) and in the New Testament (Mark 11:9, and Matthew 21:9) It is a shout of praise or adoration. This was the word used to greet Jesus when he entered Jerusalem triumphantly. The children can make a Hosanna prayer card for your prayer table. A Hosanna song, “Blessings to the King” can be on our Covid-19 page.

**Alleluia**

Alleluia is an English interjection derived from a Hebrew phrase meaning “praise God” or “praise the Lord.” For both Jews and Christians, the term is often used as a joyful expression of praise and thanksgiving to God. We sing this song in many ways, often to “greet” the Gospel! There are many ways of singing it. Ask the children if they have a favorite.

Other resources that may be at home or can be found online:

**Bible Atlas**

The older children are interested in making discoveries about geography and even seeing photos of those places today. A Children’s Bible Atlas would make a nice addition to an Easter Basket. Or the Biblical Geography books are available at CGSUSA.
A beautiful book full of color pictures and descriptions highlighting the City of Jerusalem. 22 pages. Perfect for the your home.
Created by CGSUSA member and catechist, Julie Baltuska

Model of the City of Jerusalem

The Holyland Model of Jerusalem is a 1:50 scale-model of the city of Jerusalem in the late Second Temple Period.

Read about and click on photos of the model: https://madainproject.com/holyland_model_of_jerusalem

To watch a YouTube video about the model: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aIBLd5ILsqw