



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.

Incarnation and Synthesis

The Gift of Advent and Christmas:

Each year the Church provides us with the beautiful seasons of Advent and Christmas in which we pause to enter, once more, into a time of meditation on the great mystery of the Incarnation, the mystery of the Son of God coming into the world, being born of a woman, and fully uniting himself with humanity. From forever this had been God's plan, to reveal himself completely, lovingly, and intimately by living on the earth amongst the humans he had created. All of history can be seen as a time of preparation for this greatest of gifts. Our four weeks of Advent allow us to pause, reflect, and prepare to once again celebrate the great gift of Jesus' birth. This time of pondering the Incarnation allows us all to focus in on some of the great questions of humanity: "Who are you, Lord?" and "Who am I?"

While the Atrium provides a place for this pondering and celebrating of the Incarnation to occur throughout the entire year, the seasons of Advent and Christmas are a particular time of enjoying the gift of the greatness of God in the tininess of the infant Jesus. From the age of three, the children in the Atrium have been introduced to materials which invite work with individual Scripture passages from Luke 1-2 and Matthew 2. Each narrative is introduced individually so the child can focus on one moment at a time: The Annunciation, The Visitation, The Birth of Jesus and the Adoration of the Shepherds, The Birth of Jesus and the Adoration of the Magi, the Presentation in the Temple, and, in the 6–9-year-old Atrium, the Flight into Egypt.

Synthesis as the Work of the 6–12-year-old Child:

Having encountered and enjoyed individual Scripture passages about the beginning of Jesus' life on earth, the elementary child is also interested in and capable of seeing and making connections between the narratives as well as with other themes of the Atrium. The Scriptures of the Advent and Christmas seasons are inexhaustible in their riches and the joy of returning again and again, in new and varied ways, appeals to the "reasoning mind" of the elementary child. As a communal celebration or as an individual work the invitation of such a synthesis is to follow one theme throughout all of the Infancy Narratives, looking for

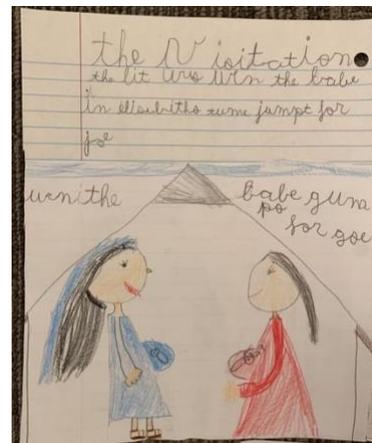


connections which become a “golden thread” tying the great gift of Jesus into the great History of Kingdom of God as well as into each of our own individual histories.

The Theme of Light with 6-9-year-olds:

One year, having laid out the Infancy Narrative materials in chronological order, the children took turns proclaiming the Scriptures and pondering how the Light was growing, spreading, and changing those who encountered Jesus. Here are a few of their thoughts:

- “He gives the light away and gets more light to share.”
- “God would make a path of light for people to come to him.”
- “He gives mercy and grace to us, and we give praise to him.”
- “We can share the light by doing nice things and telling others about God.”
- “When he was visiting us, he brought his light so it could shine in us and bring us to his great light.”
- “After he rose his light was even stronger. Then he was preparing Parousia. He made Parousia as the place where no darkness can go. The people who want the light forever God lets go into his holy place.”



The Visitation:
The light was when the baby in Elizabeth's womb jumped for joy

Which Theme Will You Ponder?

Perhaps this year you and your family have been hearing a particular theme in the prayers and readings of Advent and Christmas. How could this theme become part of your preparations and your celebration of the greatest gift of Jesus? There are so many possibilities! Here are a few themes which may have caught the attention of your heart this year.

- **Light:** Which Scriptures speak of light? What does light tell us about God and how he works? Who recognizes the light, follows it, rejoices in it, and is changed by it?
- **Names:** In the readings and prayers of this season we hear so many different names for Jesus. Which name speaks most deeply to your heart? What does this title tell you about God and about yourself? If he is the “Son of God,” who are you? If he is the “Mighty One,” who are you?
- **Gift:** Jesus is the greatest of all God’s gifts because he is God, himself. How is this theme of gift seen in the Infancy Narratives? Who receives this gift? Are there any gifts which accompany Jesus’ presence? How is the gift of Jesus celebrated and shared?
- **Great and Small:** The infinite God has intimately bound himself to finite humanity in the person of Jesus. Where do you hear the contrast of great and small in the Infancy Narratives? Where else in our lives do we see this? Could the Eucharist be one beautiful example of how God continues reveal his presence in this way?
- **Prayer:** Who was listening for God in the Scriptures of this season? How did they recognize Jesus and respond to his presence? In what ways did they reveal through word and action the prayer of their heart? How do we recognize him and how do we respond? Which of their prayer responses provides me with a model for my prayer?



They all came with love.