



# 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.

## Grace and Courtesy

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Grace and Courtesy is the expression used to describe being gracious, respectful, and good-mannered. These exercises help the children become respected and respectful members of a community, and to function as contributing members of a group.

Grace and Courtesy lessons are an important part of the prepared environment and essential to how the child learns to live in the prepared environment and in the world. Maria Montessori introduced the children to exercises in grace and courtesy in response to the child's need for order. Grace and Courtesy offers the child the vocabulary, the movement, and steps needed to gain a better sense of their environment and how to live in the world.

### Modeling Grace and Courtesy

In the level one atrium, grace and courtesy lessons are usually role-played by the catechist and an assistant. Each of the grace and courtesy lessons isolates a specific behavior the catechist wishes to share.

- The catechist states or defines the specific behavior.
- This may be followed by a preview of the behavior.
- Next, the catechist (and another adult) roleplays the lesson.
- The child will have an opportunity to share what he or she observed.
- Afterward, the child will have the opportunity to repeat the lesson.

### Grace and Courtesy in the Level One Atrium

For the younger child (ages 3-6 years old) grace and courtesy may include:

- How to interrupt someone
- What to say or do when one's work is being disturbed by someone
- How to ask for assistance
- How to ask a peer to watch or participate in his or her work
- How to greet someone

### Grace and Courtesy in the Level Two and Level Three Atrium

For the older child (ages 6-9 years old), it is especially important for them to know what to do in a situation and for the catechist to offer them the tools so that they can make good choices. The older

child longs for independence, but they need the skills for independence. The older child is a social child, and they have a need to be in a community, to belong to a group or club outside the family. The older child needs help with:

- communication
- recognizing limits
- recognize those situations that have exceptions

Grace and courtesy will meet the need of the child who asks, “help us think about it by ourselves.”



*A group of children, ages 6-9 years old, in the Level II Atrium, work with the Synthesis of the Mass materials.*

For the older children (ages 6-12 years old), there is a need to be social and to work on group projects. Grace and courtesy will allow the child to know how to work on and build a team for a project. For example, the children may discuss:

- Who is good at research?
- Who is good at drawing?
- Who will be the spokesperson?

They also need to know how to have good communications skills, such as:

- How do we speak to one another?
- How to find the real problem?
- How to listen to the others point of view.
- Help them recognize compromise means having most of our needs met.
- How to speak to emotions.
- How to speak to someone who is angry.
- How to say that they are angry.

Just like family life, the children know that our life together in the atrium may include conflict and making peace with one another.