



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.

The Incarnation and the Elementary Child

The seasons of Advent and Christmas bring the whole Church into a time of focusing on the Messianic Prophecies and Infancy Narratives. The Old Testament Scriptures speak of One who is coming who will be Light, Peace, and God with us. In the New Testament, the passages which speak of the conception, birth, and early years of Jesus help us to see how the same God who shared these promises with the prophets (and, thus, all of Israel as well as us today) has done what He said He would do. The Promised One has come as a tiny, vulnerable baby! Yet today we still have darkness and unrest and at times God seems far away. Could it be that there is another layer to these prophecies? For the elementary child, who has the ability to encounter time in a profound way, pondering one verse of a prophecy can lead to insights not just about Jesus but also about the moment we are still waiting for, Parousia, when God will be "all in all" (1 Corinthians 15:28).

The Prophecy of the Light in the Elementary Atrium

From the age of three, the children have been pondering the messages of the prophets. A prophet has been defined for them as one who listens deeply to God and speaks His message to the people. The children have fallen in love with Isaiah's Prophecy of the Light: "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light" (Isaiah 9:1).



- As the children enter the elementary Atrium, they continue to ponder this prophecy but now they can place these Old Testament words side by side with those in the New Testament as they ponder how beautifully God keeps His promises.
 - In the Annunciation (Luke 1:32) the angel says, "He will be great."
 - The magi were filled with joy as they followed the star "until it came and stopped over the place where the child was" (Matthew 2:9).
 - In the Presentation (Luke 2:32) Simeon says that this child is "a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and glory for your people Israel."



- The children also begin to hear the prophecies in a way that is fitting to their new capacities for self-examination: “What does it mean that Jesus is the Great Light?” and “If He is the Great Light, then who am I?” as well as “How do I live in the light of this truth?”
- Because the elementary child encounters time in a more expansive way, he also begins to think about what this prophecy says about the future. Yes, Jesus is the Great Light, but there is a day yet to come when there will be only Light and no darkness, only joy and no tears, only love and unity with no hatred or division. “What will that day be like?”



Pondering the Incarnation with the Elementary Child

The Scripture passages read during the Advent and Christmas liturgies allow us all to ponder the same truths which appeal to the elementary child in the Atrium.

- In the Second Sunday of Advent we hear the parallels between Isaiah 40:305 and Mark 1:2-3; John is “a voice of one crying out in the desert: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord.’” Who else has helped prepare the pathway for the Lord? How can we help to prepare for the Lord this Advent season? What will it look like when “the glory of the Lord shall be revealed?”
- The Third Sunday of Advent uses the Magnificat, Mary’s song of praise to God, in place of the Responsorial Psalm. Luke 1:46-55 begins, “My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.” Our souls also rejoice in God! If you were to write a prayer of praise, what good gifts would you thank God for? What good works has He accomplished in, through, and around you? As you ponder, perhaps you would like to think also about the day when there will be only goodness and joy surrounding all who are united with Him.
- The Gospel for the Fourth Sunday of Advent comes from Luke 1:26-38. What do you hear about Jesus when you listen to what the angel announced to Mary? What do you discover about Mary? Does learning about one help you to learn about the other? What prophecies to you hear being fulfilled? Mary was asked by God to help Him and she said, “Yes!” with her whole heart. In what way might He be asking you to help Him today? What will your response be?
- There are four different Gospel passages you might hear at the Christmas liturgy; one that we also hear in the Atrium comes from Luke 2. Reading this Scripture can help us to prepare to celebrate the first moment when the long-awaited Great Light was finally able to be seen with human eyes and held with human arms. Let us glorify and praise God for such a great gift! What might this tell us about the moment when we, too, will see God “face to face” (1 Corinthians 13:12).

