



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 Last Supper

The Cenacle:

The Cenacle or Upper Room is the traditional way of referring to the location in which the Last Supper took place in the City of Jerusalem. In the Atrium, children as young as three are introduced, through the Cenacle material, to the feast of Passover as a special celebration in which the Jewish people eat the same foods and pray the same prayers every year. The Last Supper follows this tradition, but during it Jesus prays new prayers that had never been prayed before. While the apostles had never heard these words of Jesus, "This is my Body...This is my Blood," we have! And we even know what they mean,



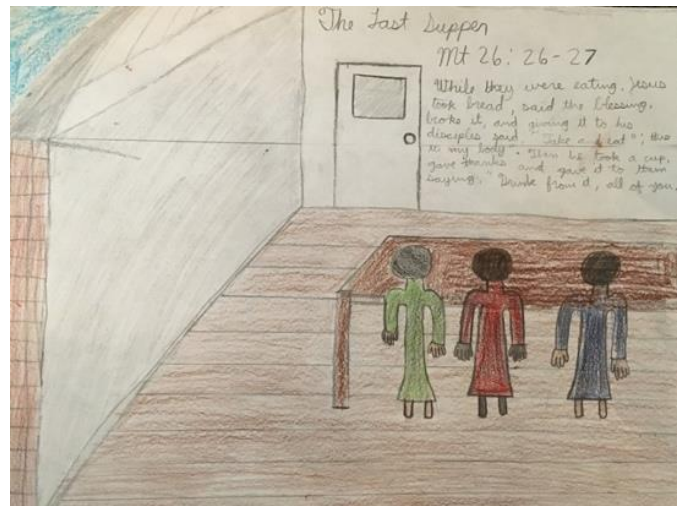
something which took the apostles time (and the help of the Risen Jesus) to understand. He is really, truly present with us when His Body and Blood are with us. What a great gift!

The Eucharist:

The Last Supper was celebrated by Jesus in anticipation of His death and resurrection. Knowing he was about to lay down his life, Jesus gave the apostles, and all of us, the way in which he would remain with all people for all times, under the signs of bread and wine, providing the very best food for his flock. Sofia Cavalletti refers to this moment by saying, "Take this and eat it'...'Take this and drink from it.' We must see in these words the interpretation of what will happen the next day. Calvary will add the visible dimension of the action of self-offering that had been already completed in Jesus...What would we have understood of the significance of Good Friday if Jesus had not given us the interpretation?... With his words at the Last Supper, Jesus makes us

understand that the offering of himself 'for many' is an offering that, before the brutality of the external act on Calvary took place, has been fulfilled in the secrecy of love" (*The History of the Kingdom of God, Part 2, p. 75*).

This linking of the Last Supper and Jesus' death and Resurrection are seen through the Cenacle materials (present in all three Levels of the Atrium) which end with the paten and chalice on the altar table along with the crucifix (symbolizing Jesus' death) and lit candles (showing His Resurrection). This visual synthesis of the Eucharist as the Risen Life of Christ links throughout the 3-12 Atria, amongst many materials.



The Memorial:

Having pondered the great gift given by Jesus at the Last Supper from the age of three, the gift by which He remains with His sheep in a most particular way, the oldest Atrium children have the opportunity to take time to look at this moment in history in a new way through "The Memorial" presentation. This word, "Memorial," has a deep meaning with its roots in the Old Testament. In Exodus 12, the Passover meal is set up as a Memorial, a ritual by which the Jewish people enter back into the moment in which they were freed from the slavery of Egypt, even if they live hundreds or thousands of years after the event. In the "Memorial" presentation for the children, the question is asked, "Were we born too late?" We were not present at the Last Supper or at the death and resurrection of Jesus or at the moment of Pentecost. So, "Were we born too late?" Here are some of the children's responses:

- "At the Passover, Jesus said, 'This is my Body, which will be given up for you and for many. Do this in memory of me,' and at Mass the priest does the same thing. Then the same thing happens with the Blood. It becomes a perpetual memorial."
- "Jesus passed the words He said down to the apostles and then they passed it down to the bishops and priests who preach it to us."
- "After Jesus has ascended to heaven, the apostles pray to the Father to send His Spirit, and they repeat Jesus' words, and they still do."

Pondering the Last Supper in the home:

- What are the gifts you have received today because we live in this moment in history?
- Sometimes time is limiting for us. In what ways has this been true in your life?
- How is the gift of the Mass/Eucharist/liturgy a gift that surpasses the limitations of time?
- In what way could you celebrate more deeply the reality that the Risen Life of Jesus is given to us in the Eucharist, the most particular way in which He remains with us and feeds us today?
- Is there one way in which you and your family could celebrate this gift together more fully each Sunday than you already do?