



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.

Sacramental Preparation

Preparation for the Sacraments actually began before your child was even presented at church for Baptism. It has been fostered by every prayer spoken, nourished at every meal shared, told in every Bible story proclaimed, found in every act of forgiveness, every act of charity and love shared, and every liturgy attended. These acts of faith all help children form a relationship with Jesus and with the church.

The steps that began in the life of your family was the beginning of a life-long experience, of countless opportunities for grace, which are celebrated throughout your child's lifetime. That is why we can say that the preparation that began for your child for the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist are not complete, and it will never truly be concluded. That is because each of us, children and adults, continue to grow in our understanding of the mystery of the Eucharist and in our own relationship with God.

All of the child's atrium experience in the Level I and Level II atria is an "indirect" preparation for the child's "most particular" encounter with Christ in the Eucharist. Themes which have special significance in the child's indirect preparation for the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist are:

In the Level I Atrium

- The Good Shepherd
- Eucharistic Presence of the Good Shepherd
- The Found Sheep
- The Cenacle
- The Gifts of Baptism
- The Altar
- The Gestures of the Eucharist

In the Level II Atrium

- The History of the Kingdom of God: Its Vastness and Unity (Fettuccia and Blue Strip), and The Gifts
- The Eucharistic Presence of the Good Shepherd in its cosmic dimensions
- Expanded Gestures of the Eucharist
- The Mystery of Faith
- The Origin of the Eucharist
- The Synthesis of the Eucharist
- The Breaking of the Bread and The Sign of Peace
- The Moral Parables
- Sacrament of Reconciliation card material

This preparation truly begins the moment a child enters the atrium. In a prepared environment with special material for the children to explore, the experience of the atrium each week becomes a special opportunity for the child to encounter the mysteries of our faith through the help of his catechist, and especially the great Catechist—the Holy Spirit.

To Lead Through the Mysteries

God is a mystery, but not like a mystery that needs to be solved or a math problem that needs to be worked out. When we speak of mystery, we think of something that is partially hidden and partially revealed. The Mystery of God is something that makes us feel so incredibly very close to God, yet it is impossible to fully explain or describe.

Your child may have not experienced the direct or immediate preparation for the Sacraments as you or the parish community had planned, but there is a great gift waiting for your child as they return to the atrium, in the form of Mystagogy (mis-tuh-goh-jee). The term “mystagogy,” is from the Greek words meaning “to lead through the mysteries.” Sofia Cavalletti (along with Gianna Gobbi, are the founders of The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd) refers to mystagogy as “the method for approaching the Mystery.”

Mystagogy is a period of accompaniment, as the children discover what it means to fully participate in the sacramental mysteries of the Church. They come to know that every time they gather to celebrate the sacraments, they enter deeply into the mysterious love of God. They will come to know that the Eucharist is the moment when they will fully experience this divine mystery.

At Home

Sacraments are moments and means of encountering God through Christ. The work of

preparation does not belong to your Church Community alone, but is shared by the family, including your child, and the Holy Spirit. In this time remaining before your child is to celebrate the sacraments, you may ask yourself, 'What can I or should I be doing at home right now?' The answer will be as varied as there are children and families preparing. So, you will want to reflect for your own families' situation as to what this preparation may look like during this time of isolation and distance from our parish community. It may consist of ritual experience & expression, prayer, reading Sacred Scripture, Liturgical Formation, and reflection. Rest in knowing that some of those elements will occur prior to your child's celebration of the sacrament, but much of it will occur following the actual celebration of the sacrament for the first time. What is important for our child prior to the sacramental celebration is to have a **desire to receive communion** and to **know and recognize the bread and wine as the Body and Blood of Christ**.

You may want to consider the following as you continue to explore the Mystery of God with your child at home:

- Describe to your child the day of his/her baptism and why that was such an important and wonderful day for you.
- Tell your child how you chose his/her baptismal name and also how you happened to choose their godparents.
- When does your family pray together? At meals and bedtime? How do you speak together about your faith?
- Have you shared memories about your own First Eucharist?
- Does your child know the Our Father or Lord's Prayer? It is a prayer that is prayed at liturgy. What about other prayers from your life at church?
- Your child may enjoy illustrating or writing some of the responses from liturgy: The Holy, Holy, The Memorial Acclamation, The Amen, The Our Father, or The Lamb of God. Older children do enjoy copying and can copy the entire rite of the Mass/Eucharist as a form of prayer. The work of copying is the process that slows one down and enables one to reflect more on the meaning of the words.



The people
of
God
are called
to listen to
the Word.

The work of copying is the process that slows one down and enables one to reflect more on the meaning of the words.



By the mystery
of the mingling
of this water &
wine, may we
come to share
in the divinity
of Christ who
humbled himself
to share in
our humanity.

