

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 Good Shepherd

Soon we will hear the parable of The Good Shepherd proclaimed at Sunday liturgy. The Fourth Sunday of the Easter Season is lovingly referred to as "Good Shepherd Sunday." While this parable will be a familiar one for your child, it is important to note that the entire parable is offered to the child progressively over the course of a three year time period. The youngest child receives just the following passages: John 10: 3(b) -5, 10(b) -11, 14 -16.

"The sheep hear his voice, as he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has driven out all his own, he walks ahead of them, and the sheep follow him, because they recognize his voice. But they will not follow a stranger; they will run away from him, because they do not recognize the voice of strangers. I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd. A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and I know mine and mine know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I will lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. These also I must lead, and they will hear my voice, and there will be one flock, one shepherd."

Read the parable of the Good Shepherd with your child

This can become your evening prayer, reading a few verses each night. Your child may offer his or her own observation about the parable. You may wonder together: When do we hear the voice of the Good Shepherd?

Make your own Prayer Card

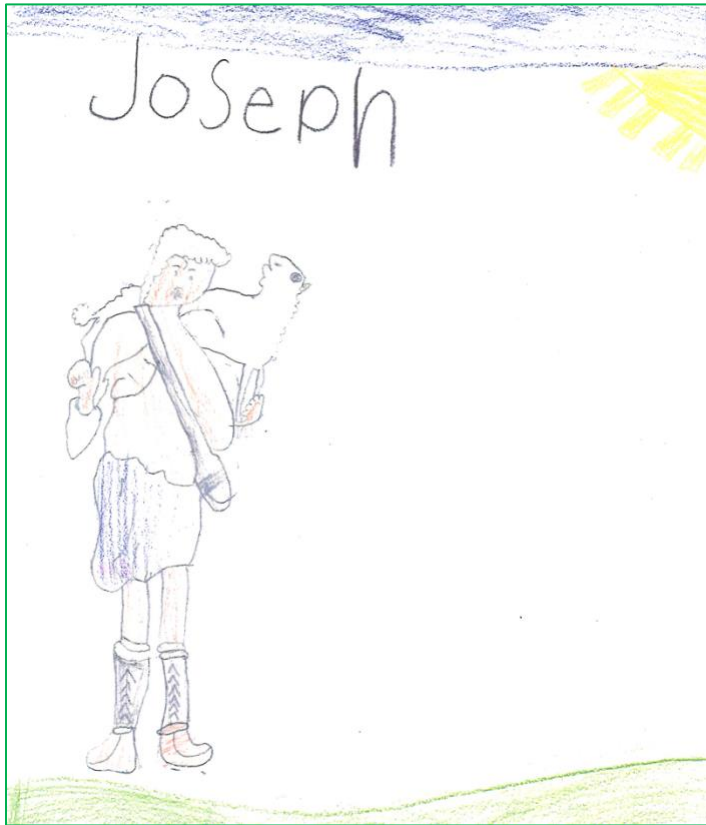
Choose a verse or even one word from the parable that your child would like to write on a prayer card. The card may be displayed on your family prayer table or a prayer space in your child's room.

- [How to make a Prayer Cards –a guide for Parents](#)
- [How to set up a Home Prayer Table](#)



Illustrate the parable

Remember we want to focus on the PROCESS of creating art, rather than the PRODUCT itself. This means that we want our children to explore and experiment with different types of paper and mediums, rather than being concerned that the finished product looks a certain way. Consider establishing an [ART SHELF](#) for your children this summer. To begin, gather colored pencils, different colored paper, tracing paper, or whatever you have at home. Do not worry if you are unable to find an abundance of paper at home, or if it needs to be used for schoolwork. One catechist recalls that her father would bring home blueprints from work and she was able to use the 'clean' side as her art paper. Another noted that when she visited her grandparents, they did not have drawing paper, so she would use the border of the church bulletin for her drawings. Another alternate may be the inside of a cereal box. Our young artists will enjoy using all types of supplies to express what is in their hearts.



Upon hearing the parable of the Good Shepherd, the seven year old child sat quietly and responded, "He is not the good Shepherd, he is the GREAT Shepherd!"

Joseph, age six, said, "Jesus says 'I am the Good Shepherd. The sheep follow where I go. They will never go with a stranger. They know me by heart.'"

A word about parables

When we are in the Atrium with the children, we announce the parable, meditate with the children and wonder with them about the words of Jesus. We allow the child to work with the materials as part of their own meditation, as well as time for silence, prayer or song. The most difficult thing for us to do as adults is to simply stop and be still. We do not want to put ourselves between the Word of God and the child. In parables, we let the scripture do the teaching. We do not tell the children how to interpret parables or offer definitions of the parable, as no one formula or definition speaks to everyone at the same time.