



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 Prophets and the Elementary Child

Prophets are those who listen deeply for God and share His message with the people. The Prophecies of the Light (Isaiah 9:1) and of the Names (Isaiah 9:5) reveal God's message of hope, communicated through the prophet Isaiah. From the earliest of ages, the Atrium children have fallen in love with these beautiful words, among many, which have helped them ponder the identity of the One who is to come.



The Synthesis of the Prophecies

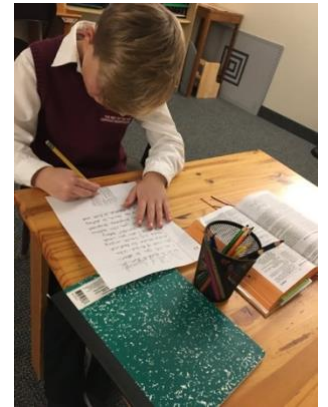
Prophecies and the prophets who were invited by God to speak for Him in this particular way continue to resonate with the children of the elementary age. Because their horizons have broadened and they are thus able to ponder the entire History of Salvation, they begin to hear the words of the prophets as pointing beyond the coming of Jesus in history to His coming today and His coming, in fullness, at Parousia. By taking time to look again at some of the most essential prophecies from the Level I Atrium the Level II and III children begin to discover themes and layers of truth which reveal the unity of God's plan. Working together, as is appropriate to their developmental stage, the elementary children contribute to and learn from their companions.

For example, one small group of children pondered Isaiah 7:14: "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign; the young woman, pregnant and about to bear a son, shall name him Emmanuel." In their illustration (which, because of their lengthy discussion, took them almost an hour to begin) is seen the synthesize of the "past," "present," and "future" fulfillment of this prophecy. They have drawn Mary, Joseph, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit surrounded by angels at the top of the picture. At the bottom is depicted the Eucharist on the altar in the midst of the people. The children heard "Emmanuel," meaning "God with us," and placed "Emmanuel" on the altar, "with" His people. Heaven and earth, past, present, and future, united in one beautiful moment.



The Call or Vocation of the Prophets

For the oldest Atrium children (9-12yos), a new focus arises as we ponder the way in which God has invited prophets to work with Him in bringing about His plan. There are four "Calls" from Scripture which appeal to the children of this age: **Isaiah 6:1-8, Jeremiah 1:4-10, Amos 7:14-15, and Ezekiel 2:8-3:4**. As we enjoy these Scriptures together it is beautiful to hear the children comparing and contrasting the different ways God called the prophets. As one 9yo said, "It's the same but not the same every time." Is that not the nature of God? Unchanging, yet meeting each of us in a unique, personal, individual way that affirms His intimate knowledge of our hearts and souls? Pondering the responses of the Prophets provides an example for how each of us might also respond when God asks for our help, inviting our collaboration in the ongoing work of salvation.



Thoughts from the children (9/10yos) during a discussion of the Call of Isaiah (6:1-8)

- "The longer [the train] is, the greater the king is, so the train must be like a mile long for God!"
- "The seraphim are covering their eyes like people do at Mass, when they are going to their inner room." (This is a reference to a Maxim of Jesus from Matthew 6:6.)
- "Touching his lips [with the ember] was like his first Confession." "No! His First Communion!"
- "[When he says, 'Here I am,' he's saying,] 'I'll do whatever you want' because he doesn't have sin anymore so now he can't ever really die."
- "God chooses ordinary people and does really great things with them."
- Catechist: "Has God called you? Has He called you like this?"
 - "No! He speaks to us in prayer."
 - "He tells me to love my mom and my dad and my sister."
 - "He just calls you in your soul."
 - "He calls you by name."
 - "He calls you in the Sacraments."

Catechist: "When? Where?"

- "At church." "Every second." "Every moment."



Can you distinguish which of these illustrations came from pondering each prophet's call to serve God in this way?

