



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 Word of God



Several weeks ago, a Parent Page entitled the "Enthronement of the Bible in Your Home" was offered as an aid to honoring God's Word with your children. In this time in which physically participating in the Liturgy is not possible, we retain the great gift of encountering the Risen Christ through his Word in the Bible. We are nourished spiritually at the table of God's word and at the table of the Eucharist, it is where we grow in wisdom and holiness. It is in the Word of God that the covenant is proclaimed, and it is in the Eucharist that the covenant is renewed. There are many ways to continue to receive nourishment from God's

Word in this time of fasting from the Eucharist.

Listening to Scripture with Children

When listening to Scripture with children it is important to set the stage for hearing God's Word. After gathering in a space with minimal distractions (possibly at a prayer table), take a few moments for everyone to quiet their bodies and their hearts. Lighting a candle can help to set this moment apart and serve as a reminder that the Bible contains the living Word of God. Once everyone is settled, read the whole Scripture passage you have chosen, slowly. If you are doing this weekly, the Sunday Gospel can be a good place to start, and if you have children who are reading you could have them help look up the passage in their own Bible and either follow along or help proclaim God's Word. When you finish reading, briefly lift up a word or two that might need clarification, particularly for the youngest children. Then, ask your children what they heard and help them to retell the events of the passage. Next, invite them to listen again, focusing on what God might be telling them today. After the second reading of the passage, ponder with your children what God is saying to you. Invite the children to share their thoughts first before sharing your own. If it feels natural, invite a moment of thanking God for the gift of his Word or for the particular truth that you as a family have heard. This could include silence or spontaneous prayer or even a song. Finally, you can brainstorm ways to keep thinking about the Scripture passage through journaling, art expression, etc.

Celebrating a Liturgy of the Word

One way to remain united to the Eucharistic Liturgy in this moment of history would be to celebrate a time of family prayer centered around the Scripture readings for the Mass of the day. During the week, this consists of a reading from the Old or New Testament, a Psalm, and a reading from one of the Gospels. On Sunday an additional Scripture passage is added for a total of three readings in addition to the Psalm. The age of your children should be taken into account when reading Scripture together in the home.

- For a child under the age of six, it might be enough to enjoy only the Gospel together or perhaps the Psalm is one of praise and thanks and just a few verses of it would be a perfect fit.

In your home you could gather as a family and begin with a song. After making the Sign of the Cross together you might take turns reading the Scriptures of the day, remembering to enjoy singing a familiar “Alleluia” before the reading of the Gospel. Perhaps you would want to pause between each reading or at the end of all of the passages to share what stands out to you from God’s Word. Was there a particular word or phrase you heard more clearly than the rest? Was there a theme that seemed woven throughout the readings? Did God’s Word help you to recall something you had been wondering about or struggling with?



After a time of reflecting on God’s Word you could begin to share any petitions you might have for the week, allowing each person a moment to offer a prayer of the heart to God. The Lord’s Prayer of the Our Father would then be a way of gathering your prayers together and perhaps you would like to take a moment to exchange a sign of peace with your family members. After closing with a Sign of the Cross, you could end with another song of praise.

Preparing for the Sunday Celebration of the Eucharist

Beyond this current moment in which we have been called to fast from the Eucharistic celebration of the Liturgy, reading the Sunday Scriptures each week as a family would be a beautiful practice to help anticipate the Lord’s Day festivities on a regular basis. Perhaps on Saturday evening the Gospel for the next day could be read in order to give time to allow God’s Word to be planted and begin to grow in the heart before its proclamation in community the following day. Alternatively, someone might consider reading the Gospel aloud while you are driving to Mass as a family on Sunday morning. Lunch on Sunday might be the perfect time to recall the readings and discuss any insights from them or from the homily. What a great gift we are offered, over and over again, through the Word of God!