



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.

He is Risen!

In my mother's last months of living with dementia, she would get her days and nights mixed up, and she would easily confuse her mornings and afternoons. Some caregivers notice behavioral changes that occur in the late afternoon, with a return to a better routine in the morning. Fading light is often a prompt for this confusion. I have been thinking a lot about my Mom and light this week. There were times when I walked into her home, to find all the blinds and curtains closed, blocking out the natural sunlight that was trying to peak into her living room. When her house was darker, there was more confusion, but when we opened the curtains, the light brought comfort and reassurance. It would orient her to the present moment.

This Lent, we have carried our cross, and with it, the burdens of living in seemingly darkness, in this time of uncertainty with daily changes in our world and changes in our routines at work, at school, and home. We have experienced confusion and insecurity, even allowing moments of fear to enter our hearts. Our days have blended together, and we seek the reassurance of the light. The children know Jesus as the Light who came into the world. The light of the Risen Christ has conquered death and will shine forever. This is the light that Jesus shares with each of us. The Light brings clarity, hope, and allows us to be present in this moment and see the world with eyes of faith.

Now is our time to celebrate the strength of the Light, the light that is stronger than the darkness. In the gospel, early in the morning, the women approached the tomb. The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid!", a few verses later, Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid". Words we hear so often, so we know they must be important for us! Like the women at the tomb who encountered the Risen Christ, may we go forth walking as children of the Light. We pray that the light of Christ, rising in glory, dispel the darkness of our hearts and minds. Alleluia! Alleluia!

- Mary Heinrich, parent page editor

At Home

This week, as the Church and our families prepare for the feast of Easter, spend time at the prayer table, notice with your children the purple cloth, noting that in a few days, we will change the cloth to

white, the color of light. Easter Sunday is the beginning of the *seven* weeks of Easter. We will be celebrating the Light of the Risen Christ for seven weeks!

- Invite your children to look around the house for items that remind one of new life, or the color white, which is the color of the great feast of Easter, the color of Light. Gather your items together and decide as a family which items will be placed on your prayer table as you greet the light of the Risen Christ.
- How will your family mark the great solemnity and importance of the feast of Easter in your home? The Jewish tradition of cleaning for Passover invites us to make our own home even more beautiful to better honor the great feast of Easter. What foods will be prepared? What clothes do we wear to indicate that we are celebrating today?
- Welcome the Light: The children delight in the beauty and warmth of the candle when it is lit. They enjoy the resounding of the “Alleluia.”
- Easter Proclamation: When the candle is lit, what will be proclaimed at your prayer table? Maybe the children could make a prayer card or a special banner can be displayed that reads:
 - Alleluia!
 - He is Risen!
 - The Light of Christ!A video of a simple Celtic Alleluia is available on the Covid-19 page of our website.
- Older children may want to look at the family calendar, to count the seven weeks of Easter.
- The prayers proclaimed in our Easter Liturgies are beautifully sacred, profound, and ancient. We may celebrate these prayers and rituals as a family. To celebrate the Resurrection, you may wish to share in a simple Liturgy of Light celebration as found in *The Good Shepherd and the Child: A Joyful Journey* by Sofia Cavalletti and Gianna Gobbi. The prayers for this celebration, along with a description of the moments of the celebration may be found on the following pages.

The Easter Joy that we have experienced in previous years may seem a bit more elusive this year, but let us be open to how the Risen Lord is calling us to him and drawing us even deeper into his Light and Life.



Family Easter Prayer Celebration

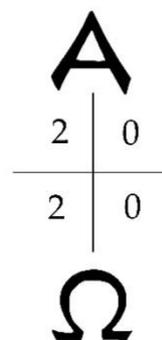
GATHERING

Dear brothers and sisters, on this most sacred night, in which our Lord Jesus Christ passed over from death to life, the Church calls upon her sons and daughters, scattered throughout the world, to come together to watch and pray. If we keep the memorial of the Lord's paschal solemnity in this way, listening to his word and celebrating his mysteries, then we shall have the sure hope of sharing his triumph over death and living with him in God.

PREPARE THE CANDLE

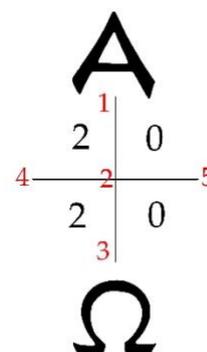
The celebration begins with preparing the Paschal Candle. This candle is a sign and symbol of our Lord Jesus Christ, who died and is risen. Trace the candle symbols with your finger.

- | | |
|--|-----------------|
| 1) Christ yesterday and today | Vertical Bar |
| 2) the Beginning and the End | Horizontal Bar |
| 3) the Alpha | Above cross |
| 4) and the Omega | Below the cross |
| 5) All time belongs to him | 2- Upper left |
| 6) and all the ages | 0 - Upper right |
| 7) To him be glory and power | 2 - Lower left |
| 8) through every age and for ever. Amen. | 0 - Lower right |



In numerical order, point to the place of each of (red) numbers on your cross:

1. By his holy
2. and glorious wounds,
3. may Christ the Lord
4. guard us
5. and protect us. Amen.



LIGHT THE PASCHAL CANDLE

Light the Paschal Candle while saying:

May the light of Christ rising in glory
dispel the darkness of our hearts and minds.

PROCESSION

Process with the Paschal Candle. Three times stop, raise the Paschal Candle for all to see, and sing:

Adult: The Light of Christ. Response: **Thanks be to God**

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Place the Paschal Candle on or near the Prayer Table.

THE EASTER PROCLAMATION: The Exsultet

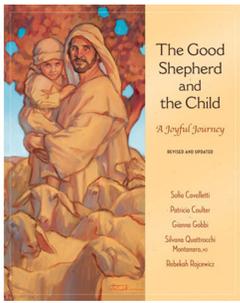
Exult, let them exult, the hosts of heaven, exult, let
Angel ministers of God exult, let the trumpet of
salvation
sound aloud our mighty King's triumph!
Be glad, let earth be glad, as glory floods her, ablaze with
light from her eternal King,
let all corners of the earth be glad, knowing an end
to gloom and darkness. Rejoice, let Mother Church
also rejoice, arrayed with the lightning of his glory,
let this holy building shake with joy,
filled with the mighty voices of the peoples.

PROCLAMATION of the SCRIPTURES - read *one* of the following scriptures: Mathew 28: 1-10,
Mark 16: 1-7, Luke 24: 1-12, John 20: 1, 11-16

PASSING of the LIGHT – the Risen Christ does not keep all the light for himself, but shares the light with us! Each member of the family receives a candle that is lit from the Paschal candle. When all have received a lit candle, you may pray and sing songs. Then the candles are brought, one by one, to the prayer table and placed near the Paschal candle.

CLOSING PRAYER: Let us pray:

May this flame be found still burning by the Morning Star: the one
Morning Star who never sets, Christ your Son, who, coming back from
death's domain,
has shed his peaceful light on humanity,
and lives and reigns for ever and ever. **Amen.**



Joyful Journey was first conceived in response to a specific request from Bishop Marcel Gervais who had been very moved by *The Religious Potential of the Child* but wanted another rendering of the catechesis which would be even more accessible to parents and educators of young children. *Joyful Journey* is meant to be a compliment to and not a substitution for the in-depth exploration of the child's relationship with God and how we can best foster that relationship which is offered in catechist formation courses. Every catechist, every parent, will want this book on his or her shelf, to read and re-read again and again.

The Liturgy of the Light

Resurrection is such a great mystery that a celebration is required if we are to really begin to grasp its meaning! The Church enters the season of Easter with the Liturgy of Light at the Easter Vigil. In the atrium we do this same celebration, though slightly modified so that the children can participate more fully and at a pace that is particularly suited to them. In our religious experience with children in the atrium, we have seen how the quality of celebration should permeate all of catechesis. The Liturgy of the Light is a particularly intense moment of celebration.

What is proclaimed in the Bible is lived in the liturgy. Helping the children to experience this reality (as we found with the Good Shepherd parable and the Mass) offers them an opportunity to enjoy more fully the relationship they have with God and others. This is especially true in the Liturgy of the Light. It is one of their atrium experiences that remains most vivid in the children's memories, even when they become adults.

It's important to understand that the Liturgy of the Light is not a presentation we give to the children, but a celebration we do with them. It is also not a performance which they need to rehearse; rather we only need to briefly orient them to a few aspects of the celebration:

- We would, of course, acknowledge the feast we are about to celebrate and perhaps refer to the liturgical calendar to see that we are now

beginning the seven weeks of Easter with a very special celebration.

- We will demonstrate how to come forward at a certain moment in the celebration, when their name is called to receive a lighted candle; then how to carry the candle back to their place in the circle and put it on the floor in front of where they are sitting. With young children it is very important to practice the candle handling before the celebration begins. [Note: When celebrating with a large group of children, it is recommended to use tea candles which are lit and placed in a shallow plastic cup with some sand in the bottom. It is also recommended that the children sit on the floor in a large semi-circle around the prayer table, so that they have their own candle close in front of them and not in their hands, and so that they can see the steady growth of the paschal light as each child gets his or her own candle.]
- If older children are participating in the celebration, then some of the shorter readings and prayers can be given to them to do. In this case they will need time to prepare.
- We will also orient them briefly to the moments of the celebration: that we will be gathering to bless the Paschal Candle and then processing to a darkened room to celebrate the sharing of the light.

The Moments of the Celebration

The Blessing of the Paschal Candle which includes proclaiming the feast, the tracing of the candle symbols, the lighting of the Paschal Candle, an opening prayer, and the reading of a Gospel account of the Resurrection.

The Procession with the Paschal Candle into a darkened room, stopping three times to sing out: "Christ our light; thanks be to God!" and then placing the Paschal Candle on a prayer table. At least two or three verses of the Exultet are sung (perhaps by a guest). Then, if there are older children present, some

additional short Scriptures might be read, such as 1 John 1:5, Isaiah 60:20, Ephesians 5:8, and spoken or sung prayer responses might be offered.

The Sharing of the Light follows, in which we proclaim that the risen Christ does not keep his light all for himself, but shares that light with us! Then each child is called up to receive a candle that is lit from the Paschal Candle. When all the children have received their light there is a time of spontaneous prayers and songs. Then the candles are brought, one by one, back up to the prayer table and placed around the Paschal Candle.

Closing Prayer (the beautiful, closing of the Exultet of the Easter Vigil liturgy: *May this flame be found still burning by the Morning Star: the one Morning Star who never sets, Christ your Son, who, coming back from death's domain, has shed his peaceful light on humanity, and lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.*)

Recessional (Singing!)

Again, the celebration in the atrium closely resembles what is done in the Church with some of the very same actions and words. The tone is very joyful but also “serious” or “solemn.” Children are naturals at solemnity! They know that something as great and mysterious as the Resurrection calls for no less! They are especially struck by:

- the resounding “Alleluia” when the Paschal Candle is lit
- the beauty and warmth of the Paschal light in contrast to the darkness of the room
- the delight to receive a light for oneself and to see the light grow as others also receive it, so that the whole room is filled with light and then at the end to see the many lights clustered around the Paschal Candle (What a beautiful image of the Christian community: a community of light!)

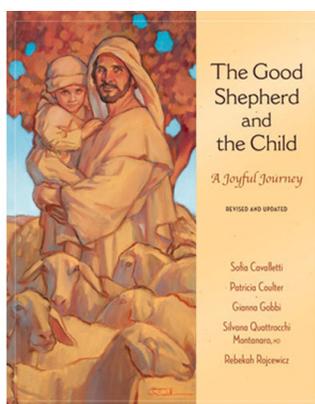
What a richness of signs there are for the children to enjoy!

At Christian Family Montessori School in Mt. Rainier, Maryland, approximately 100 children

(ages three to twelve) celebrate the annual Liturgy of the Light together. The sharing of the light alone takes at least an hour, and silence reigns because the children are so enthralled with their own light as well as the growth of the light around them!

In the cathedral in Chihuahua, Mexico, 400 children celebrated the Liturgy of the Light (without “incident” or mishap). There was only one surprise. At the moment when the Paschal Candle was lighted, all the children began to applaud. This was totally spontaneous and unexpected. The applause was their way of welcoming and greeting the Light, and it lasted for several minutes!

Available for purchase in our eStore



The Good Shepherd and the Child A Joyful Journey



Paschal Candle Set

17 inch 51% beeswax candle. Stand available in brass or silver. Wax numbers - enough for 5 years, cross pieces, alpha and omega symbols. Beautiful image of the Church.