



# 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 Young Child at Home: Room by Room

This month we look to those practical exercises that allow the child to learn and master everyday skills and give the child confidence and gain independence. Studies show that the children who are relaxed and happy learn more easily than those who are feeling anxious or stressed. During the time of the pandemic, we want to be sure to offer the child an opportunity to learn by doing. We know the child needs movement, as this is the way the young child develops. The more active and involved they are, the more likely they are to be engaged and interested. Know that the child may want to repeat an activity often, as this is a way that the child creates him or herself. Let us explore the rooms of a home to see how they might serve the child. The ideas shared here are not comprehensive, but simply a place to begin.

### Practical Life in the Bedroom

Allow the young child to dress herself as much as possible, this may even mean that tops do not match the bottoms and you have two different colored or patterned socks. To assist in the child's independence, it is important that the child has the freedom of choosing their own clothing. As you purchase clothing, do you consider the types of fasteners (snaps, ties, zippers, buttons, or velcro) and if that particular closure will allow your child to dress independently? Where are the child's clothes arranged? Can the child reach the drawers of the dresser or a low rod or hooks to access the clothing? For the youngest child, hooks may be a good option for fall sweaters and jackets. We want to give choices whenever possible but know that too many choices can be confusing. *Two* are sometimes enough of a choice with a toddler.

Maria Montessori wrote about "sensitive periods" in childhood. A sensitive period is a time when a child is especially attracted to and able to learn about something easily. Children have a sensitive period for order from birth through age five. Families may want to consider the young child's love for external order, this order provides a basis for security for the child. It is



difficult to have this sense of order when all your toys live in a toy box. Another option would be a long, low shelf, where every toy can have a place. Looking at your child's bedroom, are there any modifications you would make?

### Laundry Room

To carry a basket of laundry can be heavy work which provides organizing sensory input to the nervous system. Depending upon the age of your child, you may need to use a smaller basket with fewer items in it. The child can make more trips from the laundry to their bedroom.

### Practical Life in the Living Room

Making space for the child in the common areas of the home are important. While some families do not want the child's toys to overtake these common areas, is it possible to have a small basket with a few books or small toys that are on a low shelf or table for the young child? This will allow the child to be a part of the family life. It is also important for the child to learn respect for and how to care for those items found in the living room or family room. When grandparents or others ask about gifting your child with toys, you may want to think about a toy or activity is responding to a developmental stage or is it just to entertain or distract?

### Practical Life in the Kitchen

The young child enjoys using child-sized versions of the family utensils, i.e. pitchers for pouring, plates, glasses, silverware, and other cooking utensils. When the young child assists with food preparation, know that the preparation time and clean up may take a little longer, but these activities are an important part of the child learning appropriate skills for his or her age level and contributing to the life of the family. There are endless examples



of the work of the child in the kitchen. The child can stir pudding, chop cucumbers or spread peanut butter. These activities build skills and offer sensory input. Your child is watching you, smelling food and spices, tasting food, and using their hands to touch.

To clean the kitchen table and the counters requires squeezing a rag or sponge, wiping with large arm movements. Hand washing the dishes provides warm water tactile input. You will need to provide age appropriate support. For the youngest children, providing a pan of warm soapy water for them to play in while you do



the dishes is a wonderful way to spend time together, model an important daily activity for the family, and provide the child with sensory input all at the same time.

## Snacks

Place a small pitcher on the lower shelf in the refrigerator for the young child to be able to pour his or her own beverage. You may also store healthy snacks low in your refrigerator or pantry so your child can help themselves. You will want to have a cloth or sponge nearby for the child to clean up any spills.

If the youngest child wants something and uses only one word, i.e. "Milk" we can pattern for the child a more suitable sentence, i.e., "I would like some milk." But do not ask him/her to repeat the phrase. You want to demonstrate a pattern that the child may later use.



## Practical Life in the Bathroom

A sturdy stool allows the child independence when reaching the sink to wash hands. The child will be further encouraged to wash and wipe hands when there is a towel on a low rod or easily accessible for the child. The act of washing hands for a child is not just to clean them but to feel the water, the soap, the rubbing of hands, the wonder of their hands, watching the water go down the drain, etc. Children (and some adults!) enjoy having their hands in water.

Here are but a few ideas. What ideas do you have for your home? Or outside in the yard? Please send photos of your child(ren) and the holy work they are doing at home to [maryheinrich@cgsusa.org](mailto:maryheinrich@cgsusa.org) Photos submitted may be shared on the CGSUSA Facebook page. Parental Consent form is located on the CGSUSA website. For more information, contact Mary Heinrich at [maryheinrich@cgsusa.org](mailto:maryheinrich@cgsusa.org)