

4/7/20

Dear St. Patrick Atrium Parents and Guardians,

At the beginning of the stay-at-home directives, it all simply felt strange, a bit disorienting, unreal. But suddenly we are in Holy Week, the most important week of the year for us as Christians, and the magnitude of this “fast” from being together in the atrium and in the Mass at St. Patrick is painfully real. What else can we do but search for the gift in it?

One of the gifts in it for our atrium community is simply that it compels us to remember that parents are the “original and irreplaceable” teachers of faith in the child’s life and that the home is “the domestic church.” As a culture we are accustomed to relying perhaps a bit too much on others to teach our children, whether it be academics, or sports, music, etc., but when it comes to religious faith, we are in a very different arena, in which the most impactful “teaching” comes through the family’s life together. Reflecting together on Scripture and praying together is the “highest” moment of family life, just as participating in the Eucharist is the “highest moment” of our shared life as a parish.

As we approach the Triduum, we wanted to offer two possibilities for enriching your family devotions:

- 1) The “motherhouse atrium” in Rome has suggested that parents and their children make a “trptych” (three pieces of cardboard or foam core board taped together so that it stands up on the prayer table). Together the parents and children decide on what images they want to draw, or cut out and paste on the 3 panels, representing, Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday /Easter. The triptych then goes on the family prayer table to accompany the reading of Scripture and prayers for the family prayer time on each of those days.
  
- 2) Each year in the St. Patrick atrium, with the older children (Levels 2 and 3) we do a “Re-enactment of the Last Supper.” This could easily be done by the family, and younger children can also enjoy it. (Not to worry, they will not confuse this “ritual) with the Mass; note how you would introduce it below.)

You will need to decide on 3 places for the re-enactment:

1)a place to gather 2) the dining room table 3) the family prayer table to represent the Mount of Olives where Jesus and his disciples went to pray after the Last Supper.

You will also need a white tablecloth, two candles, a pita bread (or homemade unleavened bread), grape juice, small plates and wine glasses (or regular small glasses).

You will also need a basin, a pitcher of water, and a towel.

Finally, you will need a Bible and (preferably) the exact texts to be read, copied out on cards.

Introduction: We know that at every Mass Father Val consecrates the bread and wine so that they become the Body and Blood of Jesus. Part of the way he consecrates the bread and wine is by reading the words from the Bible that tell us what happened at the Last Supper, just before he was crucified the following day and rose from the dead on the third day. This year we cannot participate in the Mass and receive the Eucharist, but we can remember what happened that

night of the Last Supper and do a kind of play, acting it out to help us think more about what it was like for Jesus and his disciples.

Why had Jesus come to Jerusalem at this time? (because it was the time of the most important Jewish feast: Passover, when they remembered (and still do today!) God's great act of love in freeing them from slavery in Egypt). Passover was celebrated in part in the Temple, and there was only one Temple in the whole of Israel: in Jerusalem.

But the most important part of the celebration was and still is a special meal around the family table, with special foods, readings from Scripture, songs, and prayers.

Jesus was Jewish and so, like all Jews, he wanted to celebrate Passover with his "family", that included his disciples who were like family to him. We know that he chose a special room in a building called the "Cenacle" for this Passover banquet with his family.

We will read from the Bible and act out what that particular Passover might have been like.

[Decide who will be Jesus (the only speaking part other than the Narrator), Peter, and John. Other children or adults can decide which of the other apostles they want to be. They might want to make name tags or even "dress up" like an apostle. It is recommended that an adult be the Narrator.]

Solemn Reading of the Preparation of the Meal: Mark 14:12-16. "Jesus" reads the instruction to Peter and John (verses 13b-15)

Preparation of the Table "Peter" and "John" go to the dining room and prepare the table. When they return, continue read verse 17 : "When evening came, Jesus arrived with his disciples". All go to the dining room and stand at their place at the table.

Festival Candle Lighting: Narrator proclaims that the Jewish Passover always begins with the lighting of candles and a blessing prayer by the mother. (Mother lights the candles and prays: "**Praised are you, Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe, who has sanctified us by your commandments and commanded us to kindle the lights of the Passover holiday.**")

Narrator offers a brief recap of the Exodus event and thus the origin of Passover, recalling the preface to the Ten Commandments: "**I the Lord am your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt**".

[In the atrium celebration our response song is "Let My People Go".]

Narrator announces that there are two hand-washings at the Jewish Passover meal, noting that for the Jews "cleanliness is next to Godliness". \_\_\_\_\_ carries around a small basin of water and a towel so that everyone can wash their hands.

Foot-washing: Narrator announces that at the second hand-washing time, Jesus did something very different. \_\_\_\_\_ does a solemn reading of John 13: 3-15 and "Jesus" washes the feet of each family member (or else the family takes turns washing each other's feet.)

Blessing, breaking, and sharing of the bread: Narrator acknowledges that there has always been a blessing of the bread at the Passover banquet, a blessing that begins with the Hebrew words: **“Baruh atah Adonai..., Blessed are you, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe who brings forth bread from the earth.”** But at the Last Supper, after he had blessed the bread, Jesus went on to say some completely new words

“Jesus” then breaks the bread, gives each person a piece, saying “Take and eat. This is my Body.” Then all eat the bread in silence.

Blessing, pouring, and drinking the wine (After a small amount of grape juice has been poured in each cup, Jesus says the blessing: **“Baruh atah Adonai... Blessed are you, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, creator of the fruit of the vine.”** “Take and drink; this is my Blood.” All drink the juice.

Solemn Reading of Mark 14:26 (“When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.”) Sing songs of praise. Process quietly to the prayer table and end with silence, spontaneous prayers, closing with the Our Father.

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Again, these are only suggestions. The very best prayer celebrations will come from you and your children.

May we all grow and grow closer together in Christ during this unique time,

Rebekah and all the catechists