



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 Moral Life and the Elementary Child

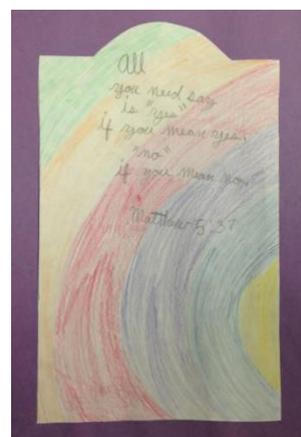
Often when we think about the Moral Life, we focus on knowing right from wrong. However, there is more to morality than simply knowing what is right. True moral formation rests on relationship. When you have fallen deeply in love, you have a great desire to know what is right for the beloved, and you also want to do that right action for their sake. For the youngest children, the Parable of the Good Shepherd assists in this falling in love. The Good Shepherd calls His sheep by name. He lays down His life for them, giving them all of His time, love, and attention. For the elementary child, this understanding of His love expands to include the vastness of time and space into which God has placed innumerable gifts throughout the mineral world, plant world, animal world, and human world. His greatest gift, Jesus, loved the people of His time with an intimate, physical love and continues to do so today through those who are filled with His light, spreading His love in the world.

Moral Teaching through Scripture:

As we prepare to enter into the season of Lent, we take time to look more deeply at our relationship with God and the way we live that relationship every single day. In the Bible, Jesus told both parables about the Kingdom of God and about how to live well in that Kingdom. These parables help us to both fall in love with the Kingdom and hear how best to live out our relationship with God today.



- **Moral Parables:** Parables are "objective" stories which allow us to stand outside of the story and judge the meaning. However, they also offer a "subjective" reading as we know that usually we can see ourselves and God as characters in the story. This second reading helps us to ponder how we are living and how we can choose to live more in line with the way the members of God's Kingdom live.
- **Maxims:** The Maxims are short sayings of Jesus which help us to live well. They are often a short synthesis of the teaching of the parables and are phrased in a way that strikes to the heart. Many Maxims used in the Atrium come from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.



The Virtues

In addition to the Moral Parables and Maxims, the 9-12 year old child is often introduced to the Virtues. Virtues are “love in action” which, through practice, become habits in our lives. They assist us in living that fullness of life which Jesus desires for us. Here are the four Cardinal Virtues,

- **Prudence:** The virtue that pushes us to act wisely by choosing right paths.
- **Justice:** The virtue that pushes us to give to everyone that which is rightfully theirs.
- **Fortitude:** The virtue that pushes us to face any difficulty for a just cause to the point of sacrificing one’s life.
- **Temperance:** The virtue that keeps us from excessive desires and actions.

Pondering the Moral Life with the Elementary Child

Whenever we speak about the moral life with the children in the Atrium, we always ground it in love. God has given us so much. He has surrounded us with all that we need and even more. We are so incredibly blessed. How can we respond to His love? How can we live in a way that brings Him glory?

- Take some time to enjoy the Maxims with your child. Read one or two a day, pondering what Jesus is telling us. Become familiar with these Scriptures; perhaps your child would like to make a set of Maxims for your home.
- Look up a Moral Parable. Read the Scripture objectively, making sure you understand what is happening in the story. Then read it a second time, subjectively, looking for where God and you are in the parable.
- Choose a Moral Parable that you are familiar with and after rereading it make a list of the Maxims which are being lived well in the Parable.
- Learn the definitions for the Cardinal Virtues. Point out examples of the use of these virtues in daily life: “That was a prudent choice,” or “I want to be just in the decision that I make.”
- Analyze a Scripture passage by looking for examples of the use of the Cardinal Virtues.

