



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 Paschal Mystery and the Elementary Child

From the earliest moments in the Atrium the image of the Good Shepherd has been present. As the young child receives the Parable of the Good Shepherd during Lent of his first year in the Atrium, he hears Jesus say: "I am the good shepherd. A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11). The Good Shepherd pours Himself out in love, in time, in attention, in care, giving all that He has for His sheep. One aspect of the many ways Jesus gave of Himself, a most visible and memorable way, was when He gave up His life by accepting death on the cross. And why? As one four-year-old said, in answering her question "But why? Why did He have to die?" "I know! So He could be risen."

The City of Jerusalem:

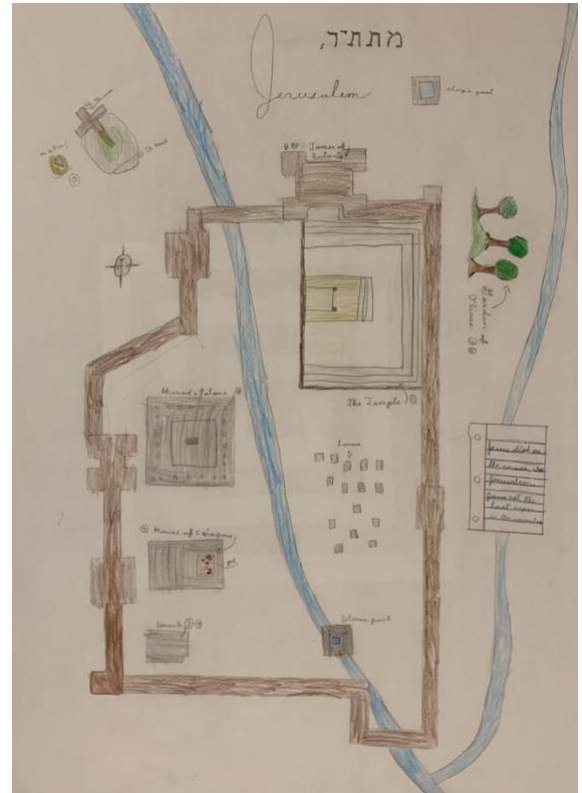
The City of Jerusalem material is presented in order to provide a concrete way of encountering, recalling, and pondering the great gift of love which Jesus so visibly and physically gave during the last week of His life on earth. As the children grow into the elementary ages, the narrative expands to include Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, His Ascension, and the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. However, the truth that each step of His journey was taken out of His great love for us remains at the center.



- Jesus enters the city on Palm Sunday (Lk 19:29-38, 45a).
- He eats the Last Supper at the Cenacle (Lk 22:7-13 and Mk 14:17, 22-24, 26).
- While praying in the Garden of Olives, Jesus is arrested (Lk 22:39-46, Mt 26:47-56).
- Jesus is brought before Caiaphas, the High Priest (Mt 26:57-58).
- He is sent to Pontius Pilate who finds Jesus has done nothing wrong (Jn 18:28-37, Mt 27:12-14).
- Jesus is sent to King Herod as He is from Galilee (Lk 23:2-12).
- Herod sends Jesus back to Pilate at the Praetorium (Jn 19:4-16).
- Condemned to death, Jesus takes up His cross and carries it to Mount Calvary where He is crucified (Lk 23:33-46, Mk 15:39, Mt 27:33-56). Jesus' friends place His body into the tomb, seal it with a large rock, and go home to observe the Sabbath day of rest.
- Early on the morning after the Sabbath women come to the tomb, find the stone rolled away and a man announcing that Jesus, who had died, is now risen (Mt 28:1-8, Jn 20:3-9)!

- Forty days later, after spending time with the apostles and others, teaching them and helping them understand this new risen life He had shared with them, Jesus, at the Mount of Olives, ascends into heaven, promising a great gift (Acts 1:4-12).
- Fifty days after the Resurrection, the apostles, praying and waiting again at the Cenacle, receive the great gift of the Holy Spirit who surrounds, fills, and strengthens them to share the Good News of Jesus with all (Acts 2:1-11).

Perhaps this Lent, as we approach Holy Week, you and your children could make a map of the City of Jerusalem, drawing the places where these important events took place. As you work, you could recall choose one or more of the moments listed above to look up and read from the Bible. As you read, keep in mind that the places He went, the difficulties and suffering that occurred, were all part of His making visible and concrete His great love. Whenever we speak about the sufferings and death of Christ, we always hold this challenging truth together with the incredible joy of the Resurrection. Jesus died and He is risen!



The Triduum

The most sacred week of the year is upon us. Perhaps this year you will be able to enter into prayer with your church community. Perhaps this will be another year of traveling this week intimately with your family. In either case, there are some beautiful ways to mark the Triduum in your home.

- **Holy Thursday** (Place a White Prayer Cloth on the prayer table in the evening.)
 - Today is the day Jesus gave us the Eucharist and gave the apostles the gift of ordination so that they (and others) might bring Jesus to us in the Eucharist right up until today.
 - In the Gospel for today we hear about another gesture of Jesus on the night of the Last Supper. Read John 13:3-7. Think about what Jesus' gesture might have been saying. What would we be saying if we were to wash each other's feet?
- **Good Friday** (Place a Red Prayer Cloth on the prayer table.)
 - "He said, 'It is finished.' And bowing his head, he handed over the spirit" (John 19:30).
 - Take time in silence today, drawing this moment, showing what Jesus might have been thinking about on this day when He "handed over the spirit" and laid down His life.
- **Holy Saturday** (Place a White Prayer Cloth on the prayer table in the evening.)
 - "Do not be afraid!" "He has been raised from the dead!" (Matthew 28:5, 6)
 - How could you and your family celebrate this greatest of feasts? Could you plan a time of prayer to help begin this season of great joy? What Scripture verses and songs could help you to celebrate and enjoy the great gift of Jesus' Risen Life which we share?