



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.*

Praying with our Children: a Prayer Corner for Home

How might we, as parents, help our children enter into prayer? When we think of family prayer, what comes to mind are the common places of prayer in the home: table and bed. The times when we share a meal or prepare for sleep are moments of relaxation and recollection. How natural it can become to express our thanks to God for food prepared and offered and for the completion of another day! The ritual of prayer at these moments is welcomed by even the smallest children and ensures that God's presence is not forgotten. Simply lighting a candle at mealtime and singing or saying our thanks to God attracts and delights even the youngest child. The baptismal sign of belonging to Christ — a small cross traced with your thumb on the child's forehead — can become a nightly blessing

Of course, mealtime and bedtime are not the only times of prayer. Little children love to "be with God" frequently. We can offer them a special prayer corner by preparing a low table or shelf, or even a deep windowsill, with a cloth perhaps the color of the liturgical season, a crucifix of the risen Christ, a statue of the Good Shepherd or the Madonna and Child, and a vigil light or a small vase with a flower from the garden. Simplicity is the best guideline for fostering prayer.

What are the items you would need to set up a prayer area in your home? You may have some or most of the items around your home!

A Table

When choosing furniture that your child will use, look for sturdy, yet easy-to-move pieces. For the youngest child, you will want a low table that is no more than 13 to 15 inches in height. A low table will allow the child to prepare the prayer space, thus taking ownership of his or her environment.

Shelf for Prayer Table Articles

It is good to have a basket or small bookcase or shelving unit near the prayer table, so the child can readily select the appropriate articles and art images when preparing the prayer table.



Prayer Cloths

In the Atrium, the first item we place on our table is a prayer cloth. The children will be familiar with prayer cloths used in the Atrium that represent the colors of our Liturgical Year: purple (or blue), green, red and white. You may find some lovely material to use for your prayer cloth, napkins, scarves, even pillowcases or purchase table runners or large cloth napkins.

Bible

If your family does not have a Bible, you may want to purchase one, but which translation? There are so many to choose from! Rather than purchasing a children's Bible that may paraphrase sacred Scripture, it is preferable that the child hear the same translation that they would hear at Sunday Liturgy.

Bible Stand or Pillow

You may want a stand or small pillow to hold your Bible, which is a further expression of the preciousness of the Bible.

Statue or Sacred Art

Children are attracted to beauty. This includes the art that we place in our environment. Studies show that there are intellectual benefits of stimulating the brain through the fine arts. For younger children, it is recommended that the images be few and carefully selected to reflect the most essential biblical images for Jesus, the Blessed Mother, the Holy Family and the most important New Testament events.

We know the child is particularly drawn to the image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd. A statue of the Good Shepherd is available from our online store:

<https://app.etapestry.com/cart/CatechesisGoodShepherd/default/item.php?ref=628.0.448329795>

A small statue of a Madonna and Child may also be available for the child to place on the prayer table. We would love to see photos of your families' prayer table.

Prayer Cards

A lovely box or basket to hold one-word small prayer cards (approx. 5x7 in.) such as:

- Amen
- Hosanna
- Alleluia

A lovely box or basket to hold medium psalm/prayer phrase cards (approx. 8x10 in.) including among others, cards of:

- Psalm 23:1
- Psalm 23:1-3
- Psalm 23:1-4
- "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you."
- "Blessed are you among women; blessed is the fruit of your womb."

For the older child:

- *Psalm 43:1*
- *Psalm 51:15*
- *Psalm 18:3*
- *Psalm 124:8*
- *Psalm 121:1-2*
- *Psalm 58:10*
- *Psalm 17:8*
- *Psalm 3:5*
- *Psalm 51:10*

One or two small easels to hold pictures or prayer cards.

Small Kneeler or Cushion for a child to rest on in private prayer.

Candle and Candle Tray

In the Atrium, when we read Scripture, we light a candle, to recall that God's Word is a light for us. It is recommended that the candle holder be made of metal, as children enjoy polishing it. We keep a small tray, containing a candle, a candle snuffer or extinguisher and a container for spent matches near our prayer table. The matches should always be in a covered box, accessible only to the adult.