



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 Dove and Flame as Symbols of the Holy Spirit

We find in religious artwork and in the prayers of the Church a variety of images representing the Holy Spirit. These images or symbols come to us through the Holy Bible. In the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd atrium, the youngest children are introduced to the Holy Spirit. At the age of three the children work with the land of Israel map that flags Nazareth with a symbol of the Holy Spirit (symbolized as a dove or a flame) because it was through "the power of the Holy Spirit" that Jesus was conceived in Mary's womb. The children recognize that Mary became the Mother of Jesus because she received and welcomed the gift of the Holy Spirit in her life.

The Dove

The dove is a common symbol of the Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament, the dove was a sign of the end of the flood waters in the book of Genesis. When Jesus was baptized, the heavens were opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in the form of a dove (Mt 3:16; Mk 1:10; Lk 3:22; Jn 1:32). In many well-known pieces of Christian art, the dove is traditionally used to suggest the Holy Spirit. The artist Fra Angelico dedicated his work exclusively to religious subjects and often depicted the dove in his images of the Annunciation to Mary.

The Flame

The flame is used in the Gospel of Luke, on the day of Pentecost when a tongue of fire came to rest over the head of each of the disciples and they were filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:3-4). Some catechists use the dove for the Infancy Narratives material because young children have a kinship with animals. They relate to animals. And that's what they will see in religious art for the Annunciation. It's another key to them. The children are not confused by there being the flame for one presentation (Pentecost) and the dove for another (The Annunciation) and Nazareth.

In the atrium, as the children grow up, they become acquainted with the presence of the Holy Spirit in the church. the presence of the Holy Spirit in the wind of Pentecost and in the elements or gifts given at Baptism. given at Baptism.



Children's pasting of the symbols of the Three Cities. This child also colored the regions.