



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 Candle

During the Liturgy of the Light celebration, we prepare our Paschal Candle, our Easter Candle. The Paschal Candle is a remembrance to us that Jesus had died, but he is risen.

The Paschal Candle is to the Easter Season as the Nativity crib is to the Christmas Season. The Church celebrates the Liturgy of the Light during the Easter Vigil Mass; we celebrate it with all ages of children together in the atrium soon after Easter Sunday. In the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd atrium, the young children delight in the light of the Paschal candle and are even more enthralled with the light of their own small candle [which is lit from the Paschal candle and] handed to them. They also readily associate the light of the candle with the light of Christ they have inside them. At first, very young children are mostly just enthralled with their own candle, although they readily respond to the question of where we carry the real light of the risen Christ ("in our heart").

"The Easter Liturgy is especially rich; we select the Liturgy of Light for the smaller children. To celebrate it we first darken all the rooms in the Center so that, as the children arrive, they will experience the disconcerting effect of the lack of light and so the resplendence of light in the Liturgy becomes more impressive and gratifying to them. The children themselves trace the cross, the Alpha and Omega, and the date of the year on the paschal candle; then they light it, carry it in procession, with the rest of the children following behind that single light that enables us to walk forward. Finally, the children light their own candles from the paschal candle, which is symbolic of the risen Christ. The celebration of light develops gradually as the children grow; later we add the passage of the "paschal proclamation" and the renewal of the baptismal promises. The moment when we linger to look at the light that has come all the way to us is often a time of intense contemplation, leaving a vivid memory that the growing children cherish."

- Cavalletti, Sofia. *The Religious Potential of the Child: Experiencing Scripture and Liturgy with Young Children*, p. 102. Liturgy Training Publications.

The Paschal Candle: A candle with a large cross, the letters Alpha and Omega above and below it, and the numerals of the current year; also five inserts of grains of incense. The children prepare the candle and trace the cross, alpha, omega, and numbers, etc. while special invocations accompany each of these actions.

