



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.

Gestures of the Eucharist

In chapter four of *The Religious Potential of the Child (3-6)* Sofia Cavalletti stresses the unity of the Bible and the Liturgy. She says that,

"The Bible without the Liturgy is deprived of its most intense moment of life; while the Liturgy without the Bible would be based on a void."

So, in the atrium we listen to and ponder God's Word, and we "make visible" and consider the meaning of liturgical signs (the Eucharistic bread and wine, the light of the Risen Christ, the waters of Baptism, holy oils, etc. We also look at the most essential gestures that are done during the Mass, because gestures are a language unto themselves, even without the accompanying prayer words. Our aim in these liturgical presentations is to assist the child in being a fuller participant in the Mass, from the youngest to the oldest children.

In the atrium during these weeks of Easter, following our celebration of the Liturgy of the Light, the presentation of the Empty Tomb, and the liturgical signs of Baptism, we spend some weeks focusing on the Gestures of Eucharist. Throughout the year, the children have pondered the gift of the Eucharist indirectly through the Advent and Christmas Word about the mystery of the Incarnation: Who is this Child who comes as the Great Light to be "joy for all people?" Then, we have listened to those shortest kingdom parables, like The Mustard Seed and the Precious Pearl and have fallen in love with the mystery of the Kingdom of God in which we know he wants us to fully participate. And then, early in Lent we have gone right to the heart of the mystery of Christ through the parables of the Good Shepherd and Found Sheep. We know that his most important message in the Good Shepherd parable is found in the line: "I am the Good Shepherd; the Good Shepherd gives his life for the sheep." And we know too that the reason he came is so that we might



have “life to the full.”

When we then move to the Eucharistic Presence of the Good Shepherd, we have entered the heart of what Liturgy most is: the most particular way we meet Jesus, the Good Shepherd, in which he gives himself to us completely as Bread and Wine and in which we gladly receive Him, express our thanks and praise, and re-commit ourselves to keeping His commandment to “Love one another as (He) has loved us.”

The gestures “speak” this truth through movement. Therefore, looking at each of the most important gestures and pondering their meaning is an excellent way to prepare ourselves to enter more fully in the Mass. We have missed this full participation in the Mass during this COVID “stay-at-home” time, but hopefully when that gift returns, our hearts will be even more ready to celebrate it.

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*Rebekah has translated many of the writings of Sofia Cavalletti and Gianna Gobbi and is the editor and principal author of *Baptism is a Beginning*. She is one of the authors of *The Good Shepherd and the Child A Joyful Journey* and had just completed *Life on the Vine: The Joyful Journey Continues* which will be published next spring.*

Please enjoy information about gestures that follows taken directly from this resource, *The Good Shepherd and the Child a Joyful Journey*.

The Epiclesis

The epiclesis (or imposition of the hands) is presented to the youngest children. Having prepared a small table with a white cloth and models of the chalice and paten (not miniature as at the model altar, but regular-sized, and with a paper host), we acknowledge that when we go to Mass we hear special words but also we see the priest doing special movements that are called “gestures”. These gestures tell us something very important. We want to look closely at one of these gestures now and see what it is saying. [Note: it is not necessary to name the gesture at this point.]



We invite the children to watch, and then we slowly and silently demonstrate the gesture. It is important with young children to somewhat exaggerate the movement of the gesture so they will “see” more clearly what the gesture really means in the Mass. We look upward as we hold our arms upward with palms extended downward, and then we slowly bring our

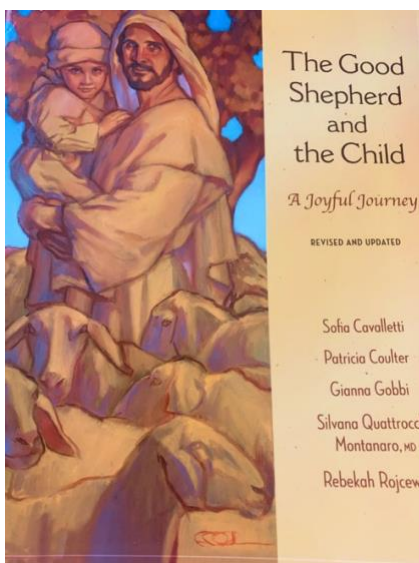
arms and hands downward, stopping just over the paten and chalice. The meditation that follows with the children includes the wonder questions:

- Where did my gesture begin? (upward, towards Whom? Who or what do we think of as being up? (God, heaven)
- How did my gesture move? (downward, down to earth where we are, down to the bread and wine)
- I wonder what this means? I can give you a clue: the priest is asking God to send down a gift to the bread and wine. I wonder what gift God would give that we can't even see? [Note; it's not important that the children can immediately name the Holy Spirit. What's important is that they "see" the theology of gift. The first movement is God's giving; this is the basis of the covenant relationship: God first gives and then we respond. Later, with the presentation of the response gesture of offering, and still later with the return to the gesture of epiclesis to add and meditate on the prayer words of the gesture, the children will readily come to recognize the gift God sends that we can't even see as the Holy Spirit.]

As with all presentations of gestures, the children are given the opportunity to do the gesture themselves, both in the moment of the presentation and later in their individual work.

For your family bookshelf: [The Good Shepherd and the Child A Joyful Journey](#)

So many of these resources we offer in the *Parent Pages* come from [this book](#), and we encourage parents to have a copy on their bookshelf to use during the summer months with their child / children. There are FOUR additional gestures that are described in this book.



[Joyful Journey](#) was first conceived in response to a specific request from Bishop Marcel Gervais who wanted a rendering of the catechesis which would be accessible to parents and educators of young children.

[Joyful Journey](#) is meant to compliment to and not be a substitute for the in-depth exploration of the child's relationship with God and how we can best foster that relationship which is offered in catechist formation courses. Every parent will want this book on his or her shelf, to read and re-read again and again.

[Please visit our online store to see all the resources available for assisting parents in their role as witnesses for the faith.](#)