



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.

Purple is for Preparation

Early in our marriage, when it came time to paint our living room, I gathered the necessary supplies needed for the task: the paint, a roller, brushes and a drop cloth. Eager to see my perfectly chosen paint color cover the plain white walls, my enthusiasm was interrupted by my husband and a roll of blue painter's tape, as he meticulously and painstakingly taped off the woodwork, ceiling and window trim. While he worked so carefully and slowly to prepare the space, I became more impatient to see paint on the wall. My husband understood that there was work that needed to be done prior to my brush applying paint to the wall. Related to the season of Lent, the effort we put into these 40 days will make the celebration of Easter a richer and fuller encounter with the Lord. What does this season of preparation mean for our children and families?

Why purple?

In both the Old and New Testament, purple is found to be a rare and valuable color symbolizing royalty, wealth and status. In ancient times, the dye used to create purple was not only very expensive to produce, but it was also labor intensive. It was considered a great luxury. In the Hebrew Scriptures, it was worn by kings, used in curtains and carpets in the tabernacle, adorned the altar in the temple and was repeatedly shown to be a costly linen. In the gospels, the Roman soldiers dress Jesus in a purple robe before he begins his walk to Calvary. Each Lent, we are called as his disciples, to walk with him on this journey. How do we speak of this to the children?

We know that young children are very sensitive to and have a great interest in colors. When they are small, children enjoy identifying their favorite color. They take great delight in finding their favorite color in the clothes they wear, the food they eat and items discovered in their environment. For the very young child, colors help offer shape and identity.

In the Atrium, we speak about purple as the color for waiting and preparing. Through the presentations of the *Liturgical Colors*, and later *The Liturgical Calendar*, the child discovers that the season of Lent is a time of preparation for the great feast of Easter. Through these presentations, along with the solemn changing of the color of the cloth on the prayer table, the children come to participate in the liturgical life of the Church.

How do we prepare as a family?

What work of preparation can we do as a family?
How do we help our children enter this sacred time?

Purple on your table



- The Prayer Table – a small table adorned with a purple cloth, votive candle and a Bible resting on a small pillow. Are there other images that you would add to this sacred space? Allow your children to spend time at the prayer table alone, and gather as a family to offer prayers of thanksgiving.
- The Art Table – offer your children purple paper and/or purple colored pencils on the art shelf.

Reading Scripture

- The Younger Child – during the season of Lent, the younger children will explore the Last Supper. They will also come to know the names of sacred sites in the City of Jerusalem. Talk about the importance of tradition for passing on what is important in your lives. What tradition did Jesus give us at the Last Supper? What did He say?
(Note: Do not make the connection between the Last Supper and the Liturgy, it is important for the child to make that discovery for him or herself).
- The Older Child – the older child revisits the work of the Cenacle, but will also have an opportunity to read the paschal narratives.

In the Atrium, we always talk about the events of Jesus' death in conjunction with the events of Jesus' Rising. It is crucial not to separate the two. Sofia Cavalletti explains in Religious Potential of the Child:

"Death is a common event; many men have had the courage to face death for love of their brothers. What is absolutely new is that, in Jesus, death is followed by renewed and eternal life.... To us it seems appropriate to avoid long accounts of the passion, in order to balance the length of the passion narration with the account of the resurrection."

Sacred Words

- Prayer Cards – simple prayer cards may be placed on your prayer table, choose one of the following words or phrases:

<i>Hosanna</i>	<i>This is my Body</i>	<i>Peace</i>
<i>Amen</i>	<i>This is my Blood</i>	<i>Jesus</i>
- For the young child: you may write the words and invite your child to decorate the card. The older child can select scripture or write a prayer and decorate the card. Parents may want to write their own prayer card. Allow the child to select which card is displayed on the table each day.

Ritual

- Rituals at Home – perhaps there is an activity that you can enjoy together as a family, i.e. spending time away from screens (computer, TV and phone) while enjoying a nature walk. What signs of new life do you observe on your walk? How do you experience the presence of God on your walk?

When we were painting the interior of our house, I was impatient to fill it with color. Let us honor the child's attraction to color, especially the color the Church gives us for preparation, as we move through the remaining days of Lent. As we mark this season of preparation within our families may we pray with the whole Church, in hope and thanksgiving, for the renewed life of Easter.