



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 Mystery of the Kingdom of God

The Kingdom of God:

The mystery of the Kingdom of God is one of the greatest mysteries of our faith. It was such an important part of what Jesus wanted to communicate during His time on earth that there are over forty parables about the Kingdom in the Gospels. When Pope St. John Paul II gave the Catholic Church the Luminous Mysteries, he summed up the majority of Jesus' ministry in the mystery he entitled "The Proclamation of the Kingdom of God." In honor of the greatness of this mystery, and the depth of joy that the children take in pondering it, the season of Ordinary Time between Christmas and Lent, in both the 3-6 year old and 6-9 year old Atria, is often spent in pondering the parables of the Kingdom of God.



The Mustard Seed and the Precious Pearl:

While there are five Kingdom Parables which are given special attention in the Atrium (the Mustard Seed, the Leaven, the Growing Seed, the Precious Pearl and the Hidden Treasure), only two have a physical material and individual presentations throughout all of the levels of the Atrium. In looking closely at these parables (the Mustard Seed and the Precious Pearl) two themes emerge which reveal Jesus' most essential teaching regarding the Kingdom of God. In the words of Sofia, "The mystery of the reign of God is the mystery of life itself: the mystery of a marvelous energy at work that causes growth and transformation, a movement from the 'lesser' to the 'more.' And this mystery carries within it all that is most beautiful and precious" (*The Religious Potential of the Child 6-12 Years Old*, p. 2).

The Children's Response:

As the elementary children ponder in the Atrium they share some of the fruits of their conversation with God both through their verbal responses and also through their artwork. At times the depth of their love for parables of the Mustard Seed or the Pearl come up in unexpected contexts. This fits with the way their minds are moving towards synthesizing the information they have received and have pondered. Here are a few examples:

- Three 1st grade children were pondering the Parable of the Found Coin. In thinking about the parable, one child said the parable reminded him of the Parable of the Precious Pearl. He said the coins were like the Kingdom of God. When asked if we can lose just part of the Kingdom he responded, "Yes," and another child added, "That's what happens when we sin. We lose a coin." They continued, saying, "So we are the woman and the lamp we light to help find the coin is Jesus. He is the light. The broom the woman sweeps with is the Holy Spirit."
- A group of 9–12-year-old children were discussing the Precious Pearl. They said, "Maybe the oyster being opened is the death of Jesus and the Pearl is the forgiveness of sins." "Maybe the oyster is like the gates being opened and Heaven is the Pearl." "The bit of sand that starts the Pearl is our sin and the layers over it making the Pearl more valuable is each celebration of Confession."
- A group of 6–9-year-olds were asked "What is the Kingdom of God?" They said, "Parousia." "Heaven." "Church, because Jesus lives there." "Our hearts, because Jesus lives there!" "The stars and the planets and everything He made!" "It's like a Mustard Seed, a Treasure buried in a field, a Pearl."



In this image the child has drawn a man digging for a treasure while also providing water for his sheep. There is an image of the Easter candle at the top between hearts of love and a windmill. The candle in yellow just above the buried chest shows a synthesis of the Paschal Candle and the Empty Tomb wrapped into this image of the Hidden Treasure.

Our Response:

How might we answer the question, "What is the Kingdom of God?"

- What brings growth and transformation in our lives?
- What is most precious to us?
- In what way are we part of the Kingdom of God?
- How is the Kingdom part of us?
- How might the Holy Bible and the Sacraments, particularly the Eucharist, help us to ponder the Kingdom of God?