



Thanksgiving Celebration

Celebrating in the Domestic Church

in the Spirit of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

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.

Thanksgiving is a chance for families to gather together, to celebrate, to feast, and to enjoy being with one another. It is a meaningful time to reflect on our blessings and remember how God has been a generous gift giver in our lives. Sofia Cavalletti, co-founder of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd once said, "What is celebration? It seems to me that it is an action upon which time and space is concentrated." Isn't this what our family traditions and rituals do for us? These traditions can then be



held in our hearts and remembered forever. Many families have special traditions they use to show gratitude to God and each other.

Children who have spent time in the atrium delight in the gifts of God and this gives rise to praise and Thanksgiving to God. As a family, this can be nurtured in simple, organic ways. As preparation to give thanks and praise to God we suggest three simple and easy opportunities to recognize God's gifts and celebrate them:

- **Preparing the Meal** Let the children help prepare the meal, seeing all the good and abundant gifts we will place on our dinner table. Perhaps, you can make bread together. We have attached two simple bread recipes, (one is gluten-free) We have also attached a Story of Bread that was first published in our 1994 Spring Newsletter found in the first compilation of our CGSUSA Journals. This story can help us look deeply into the gift of Bread in our lives.
- **Go for a Family Walk** looking at all the gifts of creation that surround us and naming them together.
- **Preparing a Cornucopia** These horned shaped baskets are often seen during Thanksgiving and are also known as a "horn of plenty." They are a sign of abundance and nourishment. Most often this container is overflowing with produce, flowers, or nuts but the children could be invited to prepare one out of paper and cardboard and fill it with gifts of creation and their favorite things they are thankful for and then place it on the family prayer table or as a centerpiece for the dinner table.





Let us come
before Him with
Thanksgiving.

Psalm 95:2

Sing and make music to the Lord in your hearts, always thanking God the Father for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Thanksgiving Day Prayer Table Preparation

Invite the children to prepare the prayer table for the celebration. They may choose a green or white cloth, a Bible, perhaps a large pillar candle, and other items they might light to place on the table. They could also prepare a small vase of flowers or plants. Perhaps they would enjoy preparing a prayer card. Some suggestions could be Grateful! Thank you, God! An older child may choose to copy a Psalm listed on the next page or perhaps "Praise the LORD. Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever" Psalm 106:1 They may also prepare and place a cornucopia of the families favorite gifts to be placed on the table.

Thanksgiving Liturgy Preparation

Invite the children to consider if there will be a procession. If so, what will be carried? Are there rhythm instruments that can be used for the procession? Then the children can choose how the celebration will happen, what scripture(s) will be announced? What prayers of the church will be said, the Our Father? The Glory Be? A Litany of Thanksgiving? Children may enjoy taking an increasingly active role in planning prayer services incorporating more elements from the traditions of Liturgy of the Hours of the Daily Office as they grow older. Remember to keep it short if there are very young children. Since this day would include a grace before the meal, perhaps the children could prepare that prayer and maybe include a prayer for after the meal.

A Call to Prayer

Someone could prepare an opening prayer, or the following could be used:

Almighty and gracious Father, we give you thanks for the fruits of the earth in their season and for thee labors of those who harvest them. Make us, we beseech thee, faithful stewards of thy great bounty, for the provision of our necessities and the relief of all who are in need to the glory of thy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

(p. 246, Book of Common Prayer)

Or

Father all-powerful, your gifts of love are countless and your goodness infinite; as we come before you on Thanksgiving Day with gratitude for your kindness, open our hearts to have concern for every man, woman, and child, so that we may share your gifts in loving service. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

(The Roman Missal Third Edition for the United States Thanksgiving Day)

Possible Psalms

Psalm 8, 40, 92, 95, 100, 103, 113, 117, 118, 138, 145, 147, 150. Or possibly the “Canticle of the Three Children found in the Book of Daniel: Daniel 3:57-88, 56

Choose a Reading from Scripture

And now, bless the God of all, who has done wondrous things on earth, who fosters people’s growth from their mother’s womb, and fashions them according to his will! May he grant you joy of heart and may peace abide among you; May his goodness toward us endure in Israel to deliver us in our days. Sirach 50: 22-24

As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Colossians 3:12-17

As Jesus continued his journey to Jerusalem, he traveled through Samaria and Galilee. As he was entering a village, ten persons with leprosy met him. They stood at a distance from him and raised their voices, saying, “Jesus, Master! Have pity on us!” And when he saw them, he said, “Go show yourselves to the priests.” As they were going, they were cleansed. And one of them, realizing he had been healed, returned, glorifying God in a loud voice; and he fell at the feet of Jesus and thanked him. He was a Samaritan. Jesus said in reply, “Ten were cleansed, were they not? Where are the other nine? Has none but this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?” Then he said to him, “Stand up and go; your faith has saved you.” Luke 17:11 -19

Pray in Silence, Prayers of Thanksgiving, Prayers of Petition, the Our Father

Your family may have your own tradition for communal prayer. For this feast, some prayer of Thanksgiving would be most appropriate. The children could write or lead it.

Closing Prayer or Blessing

Someone can prepare a closing prayer or blessing or use one of the following:

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace."

Or

Lord, bless my family and children. Give them hearts that follow after you.

Possible Songs

Thank you, Lord, (A favorite in the Atrium)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=njsdfxK9FcQ>

Now Thank we all our God (Traditional)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5GvSMerBDUc>

All Good Gifts around us (Godspell- Broadway recording)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R4yZ15iqSM4>