



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.*

Prophecy of the Names of the Messiah

Before the birth of Jesus, God sent prophets to the people of Israel to help the people in their waiting and to give them clues about who was coming. A prophet is someone who listens deeply for God's voice and then speaks God's messages to the people. The prophet Isaiah gave us the clue that the one to come would be a child called by many names.

The second prophecy we offer the young child (Isaiah 9:5 or 9:6, depending upon your translation), tells of a Baby whose birth we are awaiting. This birth is so special that it has been prepared for ages in advance. Hundreds of years before the birth of this Child, the prophet has given this child names. As we proclaim these names, it allows us time to ponder the mystery of who this Child is, and the children love hearing these powerful and beautiful names, so much so that they will enrich the child's prayer language.

The names that are given to this Child:

**Wonder Counselor,
Mighty God,
Eternal Father,
Prince of Peace.**

This Child will excel in counsel and will be very strong. This Child a father, an eternal father; and his reign will be peaceful, so much so that he will be called the "prince of peace." He will carry all the qualities.

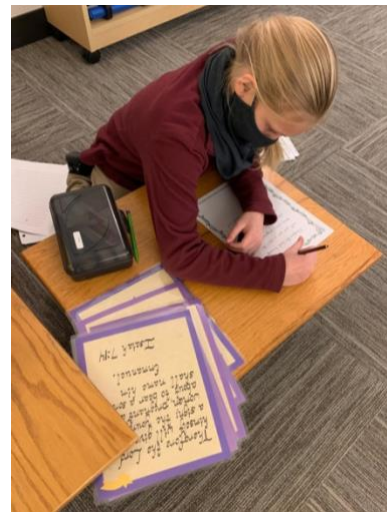
Sofia Cavalletti writes about our time with the children in the atrium while at the prayer table, "We then solemnly read the prophecy from the Bible and briefly reflect on what we have heard. It is very important to realize that these strong images which the prophecies offer need very little if any explanation from us. For example, it is not necessary to explain the meaning of the names for the Messiah in Isaiah 9:6. The young child's sensitivity to language and to mystery lead us simply to solemnly proclaim the prophecy and stir

wonder over: Who is this Child?" – The Good Shepherd and the Child: A Joyful Journey, page 75.

We offer these prophecies beautifully handwritten on large prayer cards which the children will eventually read, copy, and illustrate (or “illuminate”).

Prophecy Cards at Home

Perhaps your family would like to make a prayer card that contain the names of the prophecy. Allow the younger children who are not able to write, to decorate the paper or the border of the card. Display the finished prophecy card on your prayer table. After you light a candle, read the prophecy, consider one question, or point each day:



- These are great names! What person could have such great names?
- I wonder how these names help us recognize this Child.
- I wonder how these names help us welcome this Child.
- How are we called to listen to God’s Voice? How can we do that as a family.
- I wonder what clues we recall about this Child.

While the young child has a hunger for words and precision in language, it is important to also have moments of silence, especially when at the prayer table. It is difficult to filter out all the background noise of our day. Sometimes, as catechists and parents, we like to offer our children feedback on everything they do. It is good to have moments of silence, so that the child can ponder God’s Word, and also consider all that they have done.

The Prophecies were chosen after we observed that certain ones recurred in the children’s conversations. This was particularly the case with the prophecies that contain a name of the Messiah, for example: “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6).

Indeed, we realized that this text enriched the young child’s language of prayer. One little boy, 5 years old, who is standing in front of the crib of the child Jesus says, “I say to him: ‘Hallelujah to the mighty God” (Isaiah 9). This is only one of the many instances when the young child has guided us in our selection of materials.

- Sofia Cavalletti, The Development of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd: Inside the Atria in Rome, page 10