



Stories of prayer spaces coming into being....

William spends time with his mum seeking to create a prayer space like in the atrium for himself. In the end after much discussion they decide to empty out a part of his cupboard so that this can become his prayer closet. Joyfully he decorates it with pictures on the walls, a small table with a cross, a sacred picture and a bible and cushions on the floor to make a comfy place to sit.

Noah and Harriet having set up their prayer space were looking to add flowers. Unable to find vases they shared how they have used mugs for flowers to decorate their holy space. Noah has his whole family singing Step by step you lead me and Deep down in my heart - his favourite songs from the atrium

In these pictures that come from a CGS catechist friend overseas the mother had late at night gathered some things from around the house to put in a basket to have

ready to make a prayer table with the children in the morning. The children waking first had brought over a table, found a purple pillow case to use as a cloth for the prayer table and gone ahead and set up the table themselves. When the mother came downstairs her daughter's first words were to invite mum to see what they had done and then "Mummy come here and pray with me".



a basket or shelf to hold prayer articles.



a purple pillowcase for a prayer cloth



setting up the prayer table



"I love you, Jesus"

The children will lead us if we let them. Follow their lead and simply create the opportunities and space for them to come into God's presence and He will do the rest. You can see that this does not need to be fancy or too hard. Simple is best.

Something else that you can add to your prayer table or sacred space is a selection of prayer cards.

What is a prayer card?

These are cards that have a verse from Sacred Scripture often from the psalms, or perhaps the words of Jesus, or sometimes they can be words from the Bible that have become a part of the traditional prayers that we say at home or at Mass. You can see in the pictures above that the words Hail Mary have been chosen by this young girl.

For 3-6 year olds

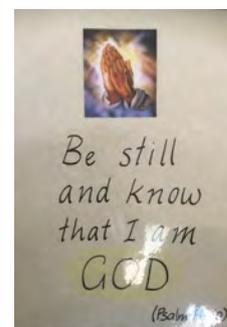
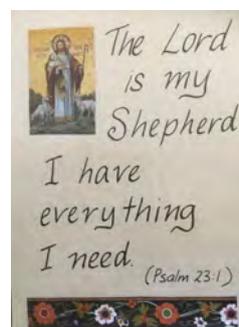
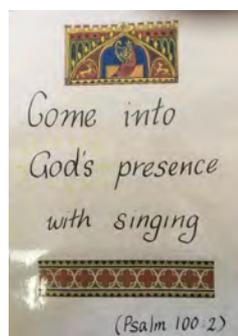
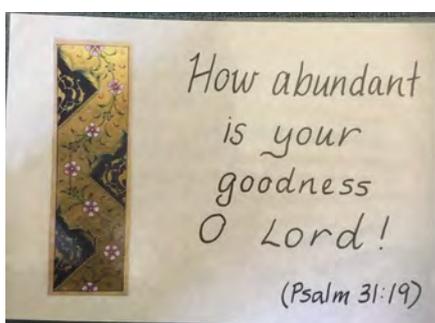
With the littlest ones 3 years plus we begin with simple one word prayer cards or short phrases. These can be traced and decorated by the children. Examples of these prayer cards might be

Hosanna (good for Lent)
Alleluia (best kept for Easter)
Amen
Rejoice
God is good
Praise the Lord

These simple prayer cards are recommended to be around A5 in size so that the younger children can copy and decorate. They can decorate with their own drawings, with pictures or borders that can be pasted to "illuminate" these precious words.



Another type of prayer card comes from the psalms. These are larger and done on A4 paper again allowing space for the children to decorate or illumine the words that they have chosen. Here are some examples.



For the 3-6 year old child it is important to choose words of joy, wonder and thanksgiving. This age child is naturally drawn to this in their prayer. It flows from their spirit in delight.

When a child chooses a prayer card to place on the prayer table it is not just a mere decoration. Rather it is a reflection that comes from their heart expressing something intangible and sometimes even unconscious. This action is in fact prayer.

As well for the younger child, we introduce them to the traditional prayers that we know, which most often come from the Scripture. These prayer cards are slightly larger again. The difference in size helps the young child to categorise these prayers at an unconscious level. These words from the Scriptures also help to build the child's faith vocabulary and prayer language. The children come to these after first having been introduced to small phrases and words that make up these passages. These three are generally offered during Advent but they give you an idea. The first is the words of the angel Gabriel. The second is the words of Elizabeth, the third is the words of Mary herself



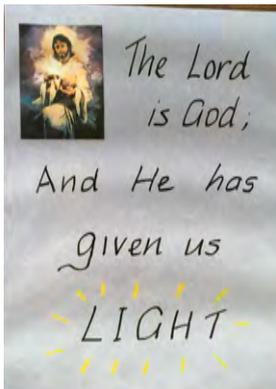
The Our Father can similarly be broken up. Phrases such as Our Father, Your Kingdom Come, Your will be done might be done up on the smallest size prayer cards whilst for the five to six year old a larger prayer card might be made with these words together Our Father in heaven, May your kingdom come and your will be done.

If you regularly pray these prayers at home you might invite your younger children to just choose one line and to decorate it. You can look on the internet for holy pictures and decorative borders as you can see above. Give the children a choice of what to choose and how they might design their prayer card. Simple borders can be drawn or traced. The children may even ask you to write specific words for them that they can then decorate. This comes from their hearts.

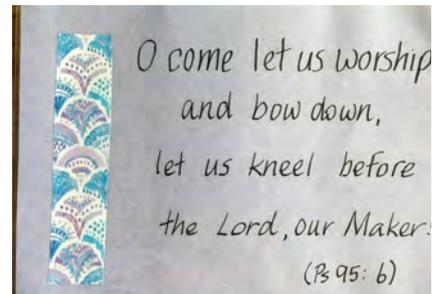
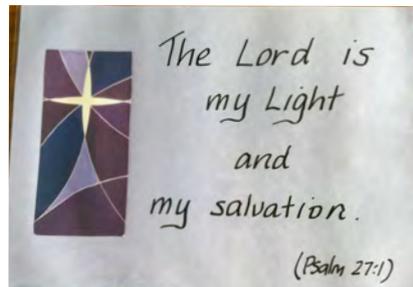
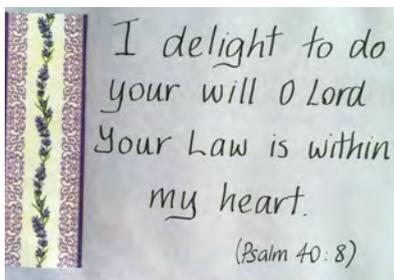
What about for the older children

Even they will enjoy engaging in all that we have shared above if they have not done anything like this before.

However for the older child there are new themes. They are interested in the whole universe and what makes it work. They connect deeply with the plan of God and are now in a moral sensitive period and can begin to reflect on the mercy of God. They are aware of others and their needs and can cry out to God for help not just for themselves but for others as well.



The psalms again are a great source of prayer and promise and conversation with God. They express our thoughts but also help us to discover God's voice speaking to us. If your children can read they have an almost limitless selection of verses they could choose from. Here are a selection of psalms that would suit the 6-9 child and some samples from our Lenten psalm cards at the atrium. Note the colour purple helps to distinguish this set of cards for this time.



Here is a list of recommended psalms for 6-9 year olds.

Psalm 23:1-4 and 1-6,

Psalm verses of praise for God's Word & all creation (e.g. Ps. 16:11; Ps. 19:1; Ps. 89:11; Ps. 33:6; Ps. 113:1-4; Ps. 119:105)

Psalm verses asking for God's protection and help as well as forgiveness and reconciliation (e.g. Ps. 43:1, Ps. 51:15, Ps. 18:3, Ps. 124:8, Ps. 51:10, Ps. 27:1)

Also added to the 6-9 list would be

Prayers of the Church such as:

The Our Father, The Hail Mary, the Glory Be

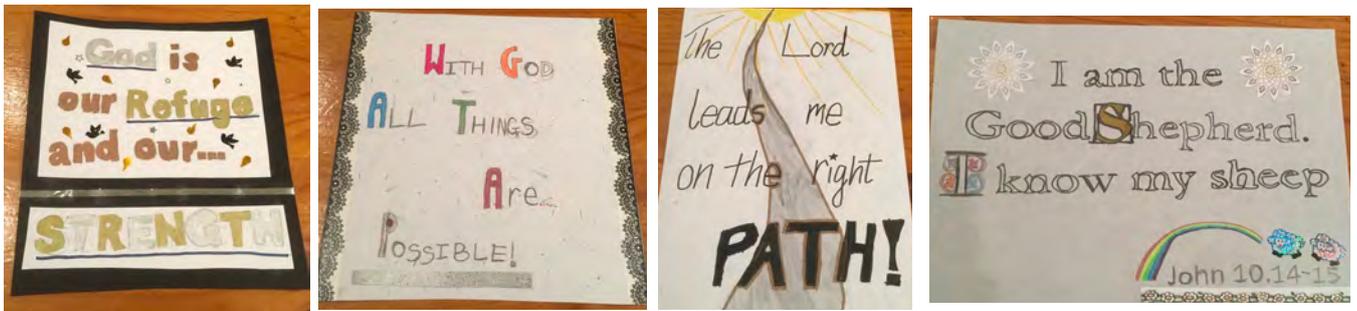
Prayers of the Incarnation such as:

The Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55), Simeon's Prayer (Luke 1:29-32),

Zechariah's Canticle (Luke 1:68-79),

The younger child at this level may be happy to copy something but really they prefer to create their own. The same can be said of the 9-12 child and the older they get the more art mediums we can offer them with which to create prayer cards that they may want to add to their prayer table in the home.

Here are some examples of some done by the children themselves



You can see that they are interested in different types and styles of lettering. Illuminated lettering is a way of highlighting particular words that stand out for them. Learning to use a calligraphy pen is a gift that we can offer them. They become much more adept at adding their own personal illustrations and so create beautiful works. Water colour techniques, dot painting and other forms of fine art can all enhance their ability and their interest in preparing prayer cards for the family prayer space. This is an activity that might be chosen by a child for their own personal reflective time but it might be a family activity as well. Maybe by sharing with your children some of the children's prayer cards below they might get inspired to do something themselves.



Here are some extra suggested psalm verses for 9-12 year olds

Psalm 4:6b, Psalm 3:5, Psalm 8:1, Psalm 117:1, Psalm 34:8, Psalm 67:1, Psalm 95:6, Psalm 97:1a, Psalm 104:14, Psalm 100 any verses.

Finally some prayer cards Sent to me from an atrium in Melbourne and a way of doing the Our Father from an atrium in Arizona.



