Instructions for Creating a Holy Space at Home

The challenges of the corona virus, COVID-19, and being quarantined remind us of how much we miss community and gathering in a place set apart for worship. I am encouraging you to set aside a place in your home to be your sacred space and then we can use this place for worship activities during Holy Week.

The first challenge in setting up a sacred place in your home is noise. You want your space to be free from the noise of the television and computers and it needs to be a spot that is accessible to everyone. If your living room is disconnected from where you watch television then it might be an ideal space to set up an Altar/Sacred space. Another good place is at the end of hallways where it can be out of the way yet available to all who live in your household.

Once you have chosen a location, here are some of the items you can use to create your space. Remember, there is no right or wrong way to create your Sacred Space. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

**Cloth:** The preferable choice is a clean white linen or cotton covering as it represents the pureness of Christ. The white immediately reminds us that this is a special place that needs to be taken care of. The white cloth is also reminiscent of the shroud that Jesus body was wrapped in when he was laid in the tomb. If you do not have a white cloth, any color will do. The cloth’s main purpose is to visually set the area apart.

**Bible:** The Bible reminds us that Christ is the Word Incarnate. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. (John 1: 1-4) God talks to his people through God’s word and through the testimony of his Son, Jesus Christ.

**Cross:** Additional options are a sacred statue or picture. The Cross reminds us of the sacrifice of Jesus for our salvation. Statuary and pictures of Christ and/or his saints remind us of the acts of those who have come before us. Please use whatever sacred item you have that reminds you of the love of Christ. It doesn’t need to be ornate, it just needs to have meaning for you and your loved ones. Consider having children draw or paint sacred images for your altar space. Personal additions from children make the space personal for them.

**Candle:** The candle reminds us that light came into the world through Jesus Christ. We are God’s light bearers in the world. God is truth and where the truth of God shines it brings light to the dark injustices of the world; Light to those who have been forgotten and dismissed; Light to those living in the darkness of sin. Lighting our candle when we begin our devotions is a tactile way of inviting the Christ of Light into our space. If you have little ones and your Sacred Space is in a low area, consider using a battery-operated candle.

**Flowers and other items from nature:** These items remind us of God’s glorious creation and how everything is made new through Jesus Christ. These items can help reflect the current church season. Your Lenten Sacred Space should be more muted, but Easter should bring an abundance of growth and
color! Children love to help select and arrange these items. This is a great way to get them involved in setting up and maintaining the space.

**Sacred Objects:** These objects are personal to you. The goal isn’t to make the space cluttered, however the selection of one or two items that will help center your space, set it apart, and guide your worship are appropriate. Again, consider asking children to select items that are sacred and special for them. Ask, “What is something you have that helps you think of God?” or “What is something you have that reminds you that you are loved?”

**Materials for Worship:** By having a copy of the Book of Common Prayer, a hymnal, a devotional, or favorite prayers written on small cards available at or near your space, you will be prepared for moments of worship. These items do not need to be on the surface of the altar, but they should be accessible to you.

Once made, gather the members of your house together to dedicate the Altar/Sacred Space for use. A form for this simple prayer service is found below.

**A prayer to be used to dedicate an Altar/Sacred Space for use**

**Antiphon (said in unison)**

You will bring them in and plant them, O Lord, in the sanctuary you have established.

**Leader:** All your works praise you, O God,

**Response:** And your faithful servants bless you.

*If a cross has just been put in place*

**Leader:** Through the Cross of Jesus,

**Response:** We have been brought near and reconciled to God.

**Leader:** Let us pray.

Blessed are you, O God, ruler of the universe. Your gifts are many, and in wisdom you have made all things to give you glory. Be with us now and bless us as we dedicate our use of this space to your praise and honor. As often as we worship you here, precede us and abide with us. Be known to us in the Word spoken and heard, in fellowship with one another, and in the breaking of bread. Give us joy in all your works, and grant that this space may be a place where your will is done and your name is glorified; through Jesus Christ our Savior, in the power of the Holy Spirit, we pray. *Amen.*

*(From the Rev. Dr. Mike Sowards, Rector of St. James’ Collegeville)*