Your home oratory: A little place for family prayer

Set aside a special place in your home for prayer and holy objects—a small table, the mantle above your fireplace, a corner with shelves and comfortable seating. Different families have different names for this kind of space: home altar, home shrine, celebration table, and so on. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* refers to this home prayer space as a prayer corner or "little oratory." (An oratory is a place of worship not attached to a parish.)

Whatever you call it, use the space as a physical reminder of God's presence in your home, as well as your intention as a family to create "space" for God in your life. You can use the space as the focal point for family prayer time, or as a special place for individuals to retreat for prayer or sacred reading. Some objects you might include in your home shrine:

- books for sacred reading and meditation, such as the Bible, children's religious picture books, lives of the saints, a daily missal, prayer books, and so on;
- icons of Jesus, Mary, the Holy Trinity, or the saints;
- candles;
- a tablecloth or covering in colors appropriate for the liturgical season (green, violet, red, white, rose, etc.);
- a crucifix;
- a blessed prayer shawl;
- holy water;
- flowers;
- seasonal objects, such as a rice bowl for Lent and an Advent wreath during Advent.

When installing these objects in your home oratory, you may wish to bless them using the "Prayer for Placing Objects for

Prayer and Devotion” found in *Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers*.

Talking points: Why keep a home oratory?

The Church has long called the family an *ecclesia domestica*, or “domestic church,” because it is composed of individuals living out their baptism together. It is fitting, then, for this domestic church to set aside a special place for worship, just as a local church does. The *Catechism* recommends this practice: “In a Christian family, this kind of little oratory fosters prayer in common” (*Catechism* #2691).

Learn more

Catechism #2691

Your Little Oratory
Scroll down the page for a wealth of examples of home oratories; click on any picture to go to a full description at the owner’s website. Great for collecting ideas!