

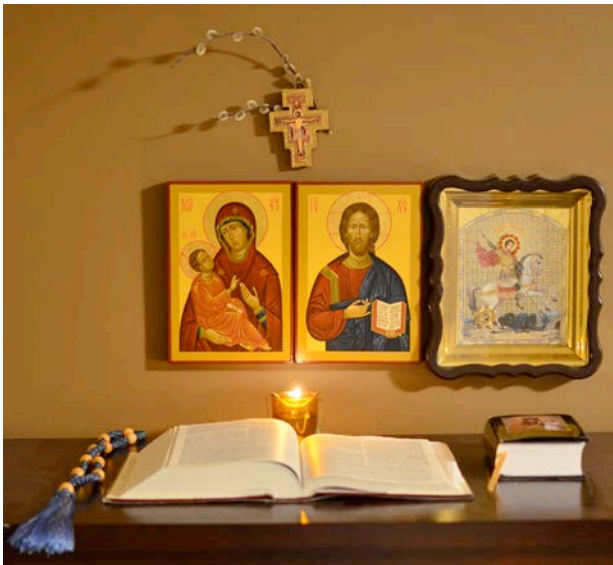
ICON CORNERS

The altar is to a church what an Icon Corner is to a home. The home is our domestic Church. The mother and father are the head of the church, with the children as their congregation.

"The mystery of marriage consecrates the domestic church. (It is interesting to note that the same hymns are sung at a wedding as the bride and groom circle the sacramental table, as at an ordination when the priest-to-be is led around the holy table). A wedding is an ordination for service in the domestic Church. Husband and wife are called to a unique sharing in Christ's priesthood by their holy crowning. Their home is their Church." (Pg. 70 *He Dwells In Our Midst.*)

The parents have an important role to play in leading their church. Their responsibility is to bring themselves and their children closer to God. They are able to accomplish this by learning more about Him and living life as He would choose. It is also their job to bless their children. They are to encourage their children to pray, fast, read about God and the history of His people. They are the first catechists to their children.

The children also have important roles in the domestic Church. They should learn all the lessons that their parents teach them. They can read the scripture passages, light the candles, prepare and participate in the family prayer time. The domestic Church is the basic building block of the larger Church. It is the desire of the larger Church to strengthen the domestic Church because this is its foundation.



What is in an Icon Corner?

The icon corner is a reminder of who we are and serves to provide us with a place to pray. We are children of God. Just as we have photo albums full of family members we should also have pictures of our God and the saints to remind us who we are and who we are to become. The icon corner also provides a place where the family can come together to pray. *The family that prays together, stays together.*

Each icon corner will be set up to reflect the family and their needs. An icon corner can be made up of a single icon or it could include any number of other items:

additional icons, a cross, a bible, a candle or lamp, holy water, holy oil, rushnyk, parents' wedding crowns, (symbol of the marriage commitment), prayer book, incense, prayer beads, etc.

Icons: Every icon corner will be different in the kinds and number of icons present. It would be appropriate to have an icon of Jesus Christ or of the Mother of God or both. Patron saints of each

member of the family may be added. Icons of special feast days or any other icon that has significance to the family may be added.

We do not pray to or honor the icon itself. We look through the icon, like looking through a



window. We pray to the person that is represented. Icons are not life like. They do not show the present reality of humanity, rather they depict the reality of the person having been changed by sharing in God's divine nature.

Shelf: The shelf has a practical purpose. It is where we place the other items. It is the altar of our domestic church.

The Cross: The cross is the symbol of the resurrection. It is the sign of the victory over sin and death.

Bible: This is the Word of God. It should be left open on the shelf to let the Word of God pour out. It is important not just to leave the Bible in the corner. We should take it and read it. This is our opportunity to get to know our God better.

Candle or Lamp: The candle shows us that God is the light of the world. The candle can be lit all the time or just during the time of prayer. It is interesting to watch how the flame of the candle plays with the lighting on the icons.

Holy Water: This is the water that is blessed at the Feast of Jordan. The water can be drunk or sprinkled during time of illness or whenever blessings are needed.

Holy Oil: The Holy Oil may also be used for an anointing during time of illness or when blessings are needed.

Rushnyk: There maybe a rushnyk (an embroidered cloth) draped over the icon or cross. This is to show the honor and respect that we place on the icon. This could be the rushnyk that was used for the parents' wedding. The rushnyk should be taken off during Lent.

Parents' Wedding Crowns: The crowns are a symbol of the consecration of the parents at their wedding. This is only possible when the crowns were woven from myrtle as part of the wedding preparations. If there are no wedding crowns, include some other symbol of the wedding.

Prayer Books: There should also be prayer books that the family uses during their prayer times.

Incense: Just as we use incense in church, we could also have incense present in the domestic Church. We ask that our prayers rise like incense to our God.

Prayer Beads: A set of choctky (Jesus prayer beads) or a rosary.

Where do we put an Icon Corner?

Traditionally the icon corner is placed in a corner, hence the name. Ideally it is placed on the East wall, for the same reason our Churches usually face East, anticipating the second coming of Christ. The best room for the icon corner will depend on the family. You may want it in the kitchen, where the family gathers to eat. It may be in the living room or family room, where the family enjoys each other's company. The icon corner should be part of a family area.



How do we pray with an Icon Corner?

As with every new form of prayer we need guidance to get started. To begin, simply gather at the icon corner to say the usual morning and evening prayers. As we become accustomed to praying in this location the prayers will develop into something that will uniquely suit the family. Scripture readings, petitions, thanksgiving, hymns, traditional and spontaneous prayers could all be included.

Having just established an icon corner in the home, invite the parish priest to bless not only your home but also to bless the family Icon Corner. He may also have some additional prayer suggestions.

Resource List:

There are a number of books that are available on icon corners and praying with icons:

Jim Forest, *Praying with Icons*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1997.

T. Lozynsky (editor), *He Dwells In Our Midst -*

Reflections on Eastern Christianity, St. Sophia Religious Association, 1988.

Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Behold the Beauty of the Lord - Praying with Icons*. Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, Indiana, 1987

Myroslaw Tataryn, *How to Pray with Icons - An Introduction*. Novalis, St. Paul University, Ottawa, Canada, 1998

A Guide for the Domestic Church. Diocese of Newton, Office of Educations Services, West Newton, MA., 1986



*A Project of the Ukrainian Catholic
Women's League of Canada
National Executive*