



Ten ways to Create a Sacred Site

Our homes are holy ground. They are the dwelling place of the faithful, where Christians live and love on a daily basis.

If you don't already have one, establish a 'sacred site' in your home: a focal point for gathering and praying with symbols of our Christian faith. Here are some ways to enhance your home's natural 'sacred sites.'

1. Start with a table top

Your sacred site might be as simple as a small table or shelf displaying a bible, a candle or a crucifix.

Your sacred site can be suitably decorated during the year to mark special feast days, seasons and celebrations: a nativity crib at Christmas, a palm on Palm Sunday, photos of deceased loved ones on the anniversary of their deaths, the baptismal candle of your newborn.

Adorn your sacred site with symbols of life from your garden: a green branch, a single hibiscus, a few petals or gum leaves. Involve your children in the task of maintaining the sacred site.

2. Where we 'break bread' as a family

The family dining table is more than a place of physical nourishment. It is where families gather to nourish one another emotionally and spiritually. Our experience at the family dining table has a lot to do with our understanding of the Eucharist.

Mark your dining area with a cross, a painting of the Last Supper or an image of the Holy Family. Some families hold their nightly prayer around the dinner table after the meal.

Add a festive table decoration to mark a liturgical season. A purple table cloth

during Lent; gold or white trimmings for Christmas and Easter; red foliage and a large candle for Pentecost.

3. Quiet prayer nook

Create a quiet prayer haven in a part of the house where traffic is low (e.g., an attic space; a corner of a bedroom). The more inviting the space the better as it will encourage you to come and sit with the Lord regularly. Include a chair or a bean bag, a lamp and a drawer for holding prayer books or a spirituality magazine. Mark this space by displaying a bible and a candle. How about an icon on the wall as a powerful image inviting contemplation.

4. Conversation corner

This sacred space is for precious moments shared with family members and dear friends. It's a place to catch up on each other's lives, discuss difficult decisions, share a burden or revel in a joy; a place to praise one another, pose a challenge, pray together.

To create this sacred space you need: a couple of comfy chairs, a small tabletop for holding coffee cups, a drawer or shelf to hold a prayer book. If your conversation is long distance you will need a phone or skype access. Mark this space with an image of a favourite saint, or a photo of a special person who supports you in faith.

5. A loving passage

Ever thought of the entrance of your home as a sacred site? It's the spot where we kiss each other hello and good bye, the starting point for hospitality, a place of warm handshakes, greetings, farewells. In what way might you mark this sacred site in your home?

6. Sacrament of love & life

The marriage bed crucifix is a beautiful wedding gift for a bride and groom. Adorning the wall above their bedhead it marks the sacred place where their wedding vows will be celebrated and renewed throughout their lives.

Before the crucifix learn to pray together as a couple. Take it down and hold it at times of great joy and suffering during your married life.

As far as possible (yes, we know the pressures of parenting!) try to keep your bedroom a haven for passion and romance, not just a space for the office work or dirty laundry to pile up. Try incense, lamp light, fresh flowers, wedding photos, a splash of luxury. You are a sacrament of the Church! Reverence one another within and beyond the sacred space of your bedroom.

See over the page for four outdoor sacred sites >>>



Create a Sacred Site

(continued)

7. The holiday verandah

The large verandah of one family's holiday home has been a place of fond memories and warm conversations for over thirty years. The family has dramatically marked this sacred site with a large Celtic cross on the wall.

8. A place to sit with Mary

When Ron and Kathy's 19 year old daughter, Deven, died, Ron built a grotto in their backyard in her memory. Devastated by their daughter's untimely death, Ron undertook this labour of love as a way of expressing his grief and his love for his daughter. The grotto, complete with Marian statue, is a place for the family to pray with Deven and entrust her to Mary to whom the family has a great devotion.

9. Dad's turf

Take care not to over-feminize family prayer spaces. They need not be all candles and flowers! The backyard toolshed or workbench is a reflective haven for some men; a holy place where the masculine spirit is rejuvenated. One handyman marks this space with a wood-carving of Joseph the carpenter. A chair in the corner encourages visits from his children who love to chat with their Dad while he works.

10. Easter garden

Children love this one. The Easter Garden is a delightful way to celebrate the risen Jesus. And, as the Easter seasons lasts for seven weeks, there's plenty of time to enjoy it.

To create this sacred site, make a clearing in the garden. Build a 'tomb' out of a few large rocks. Come Easter Sunday roll away the stone, lay a white cloth over the stone, add pots of green, white or coloured foliage.

For a change of routine, hold family prayer time in your Easter garden. On a crisp clear morning or at dusk this is a magical place to spend time with the Lord and one another.

More ways to mark a sacred site

- Holy cards
- A card from a 'soul mate' in faith
- A child's prayer-drawings
- A framed copy of a papal blessing
- A rustic cross made of sticks or rough timber
- 'Easter water'

- Photos of special people who enrich our lives and support us in faith
- Family photo album
- A small nativity scene: a year round reminder of the Word made flesh

Ways to show reverence in a sacred site:

- Prayer
- Praise
- Forgiveness and compassion
- Affection
- Blessing
- Deep listening

What desicrates a sacred site?

- Unkind criticism
- Gossip
- Unchaste behaviour
- Substance abuse
- Verbal or physical aggression
- Excessive or 'junk' viewing of TV, computer games, Internet

Helpful Hint

Television! It is a blessing but it can also intrude upon a family's sacred spaces. Try some house rules. E.g., Establish TV-free zones: no TV during certain hours. Turn it off during meal times. Don't make the television the living room icon (e.g., don't give it the most prominent position; ideally cover it when not in use). Choose programs wisely and discuss the values presented with your children. Avoid mindless 'veging out' in front of TV; it's like junk food to the mind. Establish similar house rules for computer games and internet habits.

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