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July 2022

## Box 07, Folder 33 - "The Guide" or "The Children's Missal" (E.M.S.)

Edwin Mortimer Standing

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### Recommended Citation

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*Manuscripts, ca. 1921-ca.1966; n.d., Edwin Mortimer Standing. 26.*  
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THE GUIDE --or-- THE CHILDREN'S MISSAL

It is not generally known that Dr. Montessori devised a special Missale dei Bambini, a Children's Missal, for it has never yet been published. Unfortunately the prototype on which she laboured for many months in Barcelona was lost when the <sup>Civil</sup> ~~Communist~~ war broke out in Spain, and Dr. Montessori was obliged to leave the country, literally at an hours notice (in a British battle ship) leaving most of her belongings behind.

Happily, however, she has left us a manuscript--entitled La Guida--which gives a full account of what, in her opinion, a Children's Missal should be. Like everything else to which the Dottoressa turned her hand it bears the stamp of genius, and contains many suggestions of striking originality, the fruit of deep meditation on the problems involved. We have not space here to describe the Children's Missal in detail, but mention, below, some of its salient points.

She begins by noting that both the Daily Missal and the Sunday Missal are fairly bulky books, too big to be conveniently carried in one's pocket like a wallet. Furthermore both books are bound in such a way that their sacred nature is patently visible, and their size is such that it necessitates their being carried by hand. Consequently these books are, for the most part, only carried by persons who are going to Mass, and are put on one side when they return. It would be difficult and conspicuous, for instance, to pay a visit or attend a public meeting ostensibly carrying such a sacred book.

"The practical consequence of all this is more important than you might think, because the Book of the Mass should be the Vade Mecum of every Christian, the inseparable companion of all the Faithful. The wisdom which it contains is a guide to life, and a comfort to everyone who feels the need

to have recourse to it at any moment of the day. The Book of the Mass is the heritage which has been handed down to us by the Fathers of the Church, by the Saints, and by all those strong souls who carried on Christianity and transmitted it to us--who, in our turn from the time of our Baptism, have promised to be faithful to it."

"The Mass, celebrated upon the altar, in the Divine Office, puts before us the sublime contents of the Ordinary and the Propers of the day with a solemnity that conquers the soul, for it is made to inspire our devotion. As St. Augustine said, 'The hymns and sacred canticles penetrate our ears, and from there descend to the heart, proclaiming the truth there.' The Divine Office,<sup>\*</sup> said Pope Sixtus V, <sup>†</sup> "leads the soul to meditate on the most sublime subjects and inflames the heart with devotion"<sup>u</sup>.

"Let us then compare the Church--when she offers to the Faithful the Divine Mysteries--to an incomparable master in the art of arousing interest. If this is so, then everyone should continue in his own soul the work thus commenced, because the eyes which have been opened to the truth wish to re-view it continually. The devotion thus enkindled at the Mass should continue its flame. The Book of Mass, which we carry in our hands, is indeed the Book of the Soul, which studies it in solitude, after having been illuminated at the foot of the altar. The words which we have received in the magnificence of the temple we can re-read anywhere; in the seclusion of our own room, in the silence of the wood where we take our walk, or, there, where we are carrying on our ordinary duties, or in those moments when we suffer from a spiritual aridity, which would be alleviated by the Divine words."

"Here then we have a practical problem--how to prepare for the Faithful, and especially for children, a Book of the Mass which is not only an <sup>u</sup>Opened Book<sup>u</sup>, that is to say intelligible, but also constructed in such form and

dimensions that it will permit of being carried about by the Faithful always and everywhere. >>

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« The book that we have prepared for the children consists exclusively of the text of the Mass, without any additional prayers or introductions--containing in fact only that which the officiating Priest says in his celebration--from the Sign of the Cross at the beginning to the Last Gospel. It also has in it a translation into the vernacular. [Of course, it is quite likely that, when the recommendations of the Ecumenical Council are put into effect, the translation into the vernacular will only be necessary in the Mass of the Faithful--as the Mass of the Catechumens will probably be said by the Priest in the tongue of the people.] This represents the minimum for following the <sup>Mass</sup> Divine Office, and it makes <sup>9</sup> but a small volume. >>

The reader may have noticed that in the description of the Children's Missal, just given above, no mention was made of the Propers of the Day. This does not mean that they are to be omitted--far from it--but rather that Montessori has a new idea as to how they are to be placed in the Missal. They are kept at home in a sort of Liturgical file, in which the Propers for any one <sup>Sunday</sup> day, being kept together, can be brought out together. In the little booklet described above, at the place where each Proper comes, there is a blank page (ornamented as described below).

Before the child goes to Mass on Sunday--or probably the day before--he, or she, has to prepare his Missal; e.g., to get it in proper shape for the Mass which is coming. This he does by taking the group of Propers for the Day, from the file, and affixing each on the blank page in its due place in the little book of the Ordinary.

This has a double purpose. First, the one we have mentioned, viz. that the size of the Missal is much reduced, and can be easily carried about, not

only to and from Mass, but kept on one's person as a Vade Mecum, a stimulus to meditation, during the week. The other purpose is a psychological one. Montessori realized that, speaking generally, to attract and hold the child's attention, the more activity one can bring into the process of learning the better. And this is attained here by the child's having to prepare the Missal, through its own self-activity, by first, finding the Propers for the day in the Liturgical file, and secondly fixing them all in their right places.

The consequence of this is that when he does go to Mass everything is ready. There is no need for him to turn hurriedly, this way and that, looking in a flurry for the Propers in a separate part of his Missal, and getting distracted and even losing his place (as many a grown-up person also does!).

Another advantage which derives from this way of doing things, is that during the preparation of his Missal the child is involved in a highly instructive and fascinating research in the Liturgical Year, with its various seasons. To facilitate this work Montessori has devised a strikingly original Calendar, which combines both the secular and the Liturgical Year. (see end of this book next the cover). By means of this calendar the child is able, if he knows its date in the secular year, to find exactly what the next Sunday will be in the Liturgical Year. Thus for instance in the year (1964) if next Sunday will fall on April 19th he will see at once, by comparing the calendars, that it will be The Third Sunday after Easter--and he will look there in the file for the corresponding Propers.

The prayers of the Ordinary are printed very much in the same way as the Mass Cards, which we have described in the "Opened Book", and are printed on one side of the paper only.

En passant it is interesting to note how Montessori came to hit upon

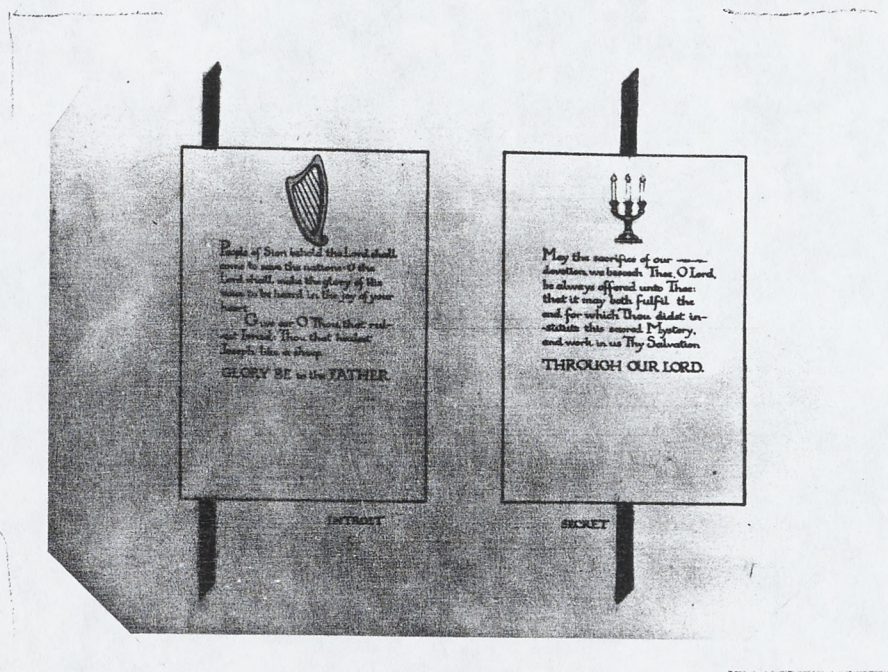
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the idea of not carrying all the Propers for the year at the same time in the Missal. Montessori once told me that, when she was a medical student in Rome, she had to carry to and from the University a number of very bulky medical text books. Her Mother, Renilde Montessori who was very attached to her daughter Maria, hit on the idea of undoing the binding of these big works on Anatomy, Physiology, etc, and taking out only those parts of them that were being dealt with by the lecturers at the time. The Montessoris had no car in those days and this meant a very considerable lightening of Maria's daily burden. And so many years later, remembering this, Montessori made use of the same principles in reducing the bulkiness of the Missal.

#### The Question of Illustrations

Another point of interest with regard to this Children's Missal is that Montessori would not have any illustrations in it to indicate what the Priest is doing, or his position at the altar while he is doing it, as is so often the case with Missals printed for the use of children. And she gives the following reason for this: "The Missal is not a book which should be illustrated; it should only contain the inspired words; and whole of one's soul should be concentrated on these. Thus the Book itself gives the words whilst before the eyes of the Faithful stands the Divine Theatre where the action is visibly taking place and the Faithful should also remember that they are taking a part in the great Drama. This being so, what would be the use for illustrations?"

The only pictures which Montessori would allow in the Children's Missal are certain symbolical representations. One of these would be a full page picture at the beginning of the Mass of the Catechumens. This would be a Book--opened--to symbolize the fact that the Mass of the Catechumens



If the Proper is a Psalm it is symbolised by a harp,  
 but if it is a prayer of devotion like the Secret it is  
 represented by a burning candle.

is that part of the Mass devoted to the Instruction of the Faithful. There would be a similar symbolic picture at the beginning of the Mass of the Faithful representing the Lamb about to be sacrificed on the Altar to shed His Divine Blood for the Remission of the sins of the whole world.

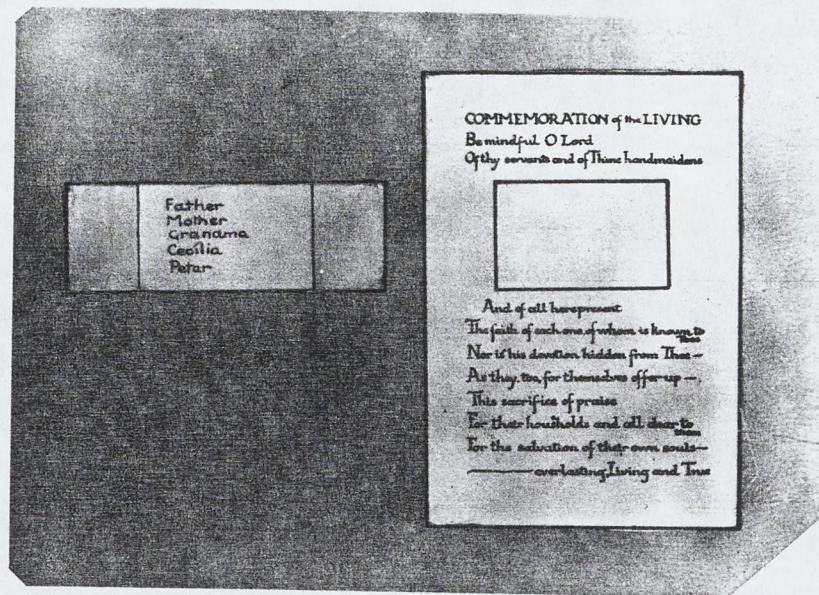
The other illustrations which would be permitted would be shown on the blank pages where the Propers have to be inserted (blank in the sense that there is nothing printed on them). These illustrations would indicate the nature of the Propers to be inserted on the respective pages. Thus, for example, on the page where the Introit is to be inserted there would be a picture representing an ancient procession of worshippers--led by the Priest--entering the portals of a church. Where the Epistle has to go would be a picture of an Apostle reading from the ancient writings on a <sup>parchment</sup> scroll. ~~pergamant roll.~~ At the page where the Gospel has to come there would be a Book; and beside it a lighted thurifer from which incense is rising in honour of the most wonderful book in the world--containing the words of God Himself.

Each of the places in the Missal where a Proper has to go is marked by a colored ribbon, a special color for each Proper, so that when the child has prepared his Missal for Mass these ribbons visibly indicate what is to come and where--much as it is with the priest who, before he begins to say his Mass, places the guiding ribbons in the places required by Ordo for that particular Mass.

#### The Diptychs

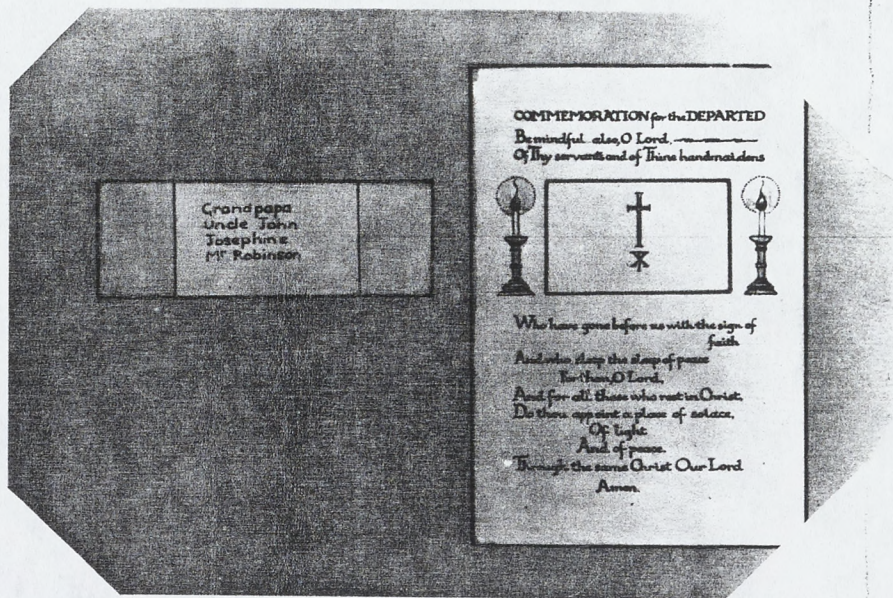
Before leaving this subject we might draw attention to another charming detail. In addition to the blank pages where the Propers are to be inserted there are two other blank pages. These occur in the Prayers for the Living and the Prayers for the Dead. The idea is that the child--before he goes to





Before he goes to Mass the child writes down on slip the names of those persons he particularly wishes to pray for at the Mass , as was done in ancient times on the dytpichs .

dytpichs



He does the same for those of his departed relatives  
and friends .

Mass, as part of the preparation of his Missal--writes down, on one of the forms kept in the file for this purpose, the names of those for whom he specially wishes to pray. Thus, on the form for the Living he might write: "Daddy, Mummy, John and Mary, Uncle Joe and Miss Sanderson". Similarly on the form for the Dead he might write: "Grandpa, Aunt Jane, Uncle John". The two forms on which these names are written are inserted, in the same way as the Propers at the corresponding places in the Missal. (See P. )

On one occasion in giving a lecture on her Children's Missal Dr. Montessori pointed out that the idea of writing down the names of those persons--living and dead--to be specially remembered during the Mass is no novelty. In fact, it is a return to the ancient custom in the Early Church of writing down the names for those to be specially prayed for by the congregation on the Diptych--stone tablets, overlaid with wax, and used by the Priest for this very purpose.

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Footnote

Should any reader be interested in finding out further details with regard to the Children's Missal, with a view to helping on its publication, --which would involve more expense than an ordinary book--he or she is invited to communicate with Mr. Donald Demarest, c/o the Publishers of this book.

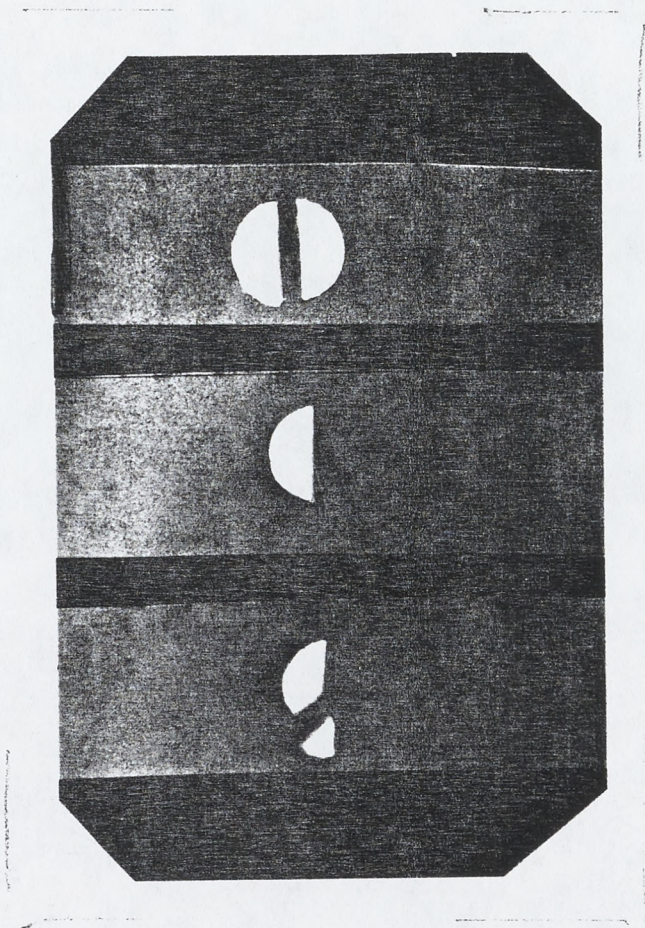
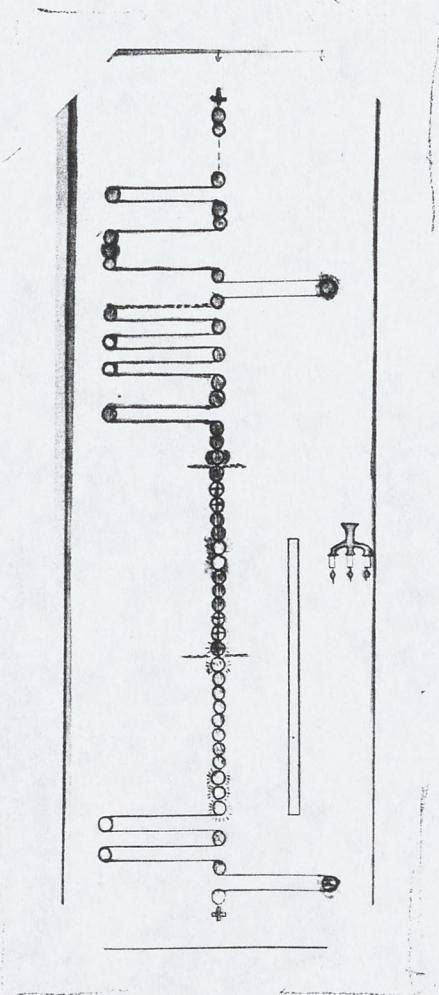


Diagram cards showing the breaking of the Host  
which precedes the Pax Domine sit semper Vobiscum . "

*Antiphona  
dim New Photo  
(over 9 sets)*

X



Each dot represents one of the prayers of the Mass with its position at the centre of the altar or on the Epistle or the Gospel side .It is clearly and strikingly seen that during the canon of the Mass there is no movement from side to side of the altar .

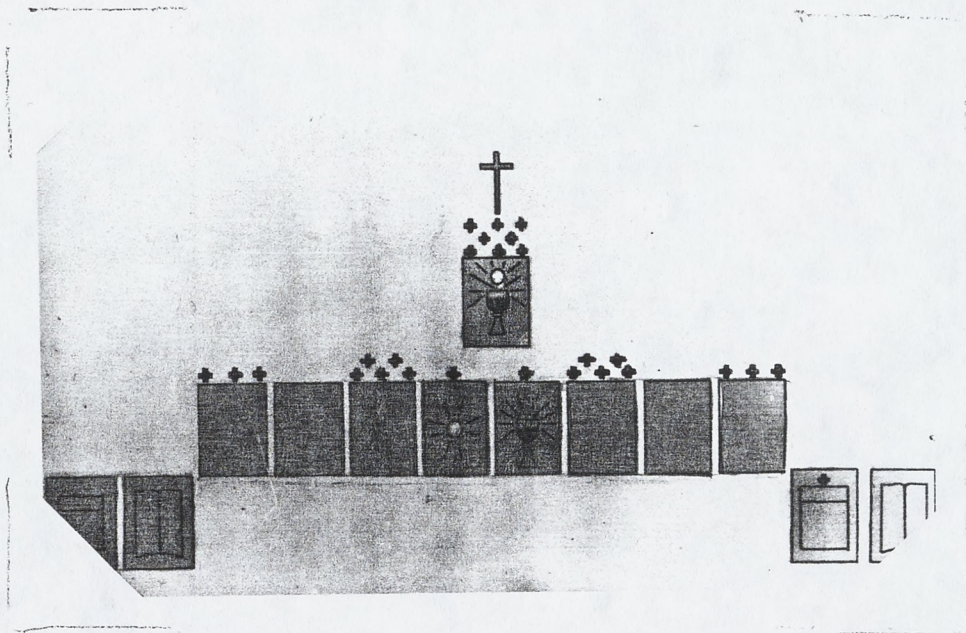
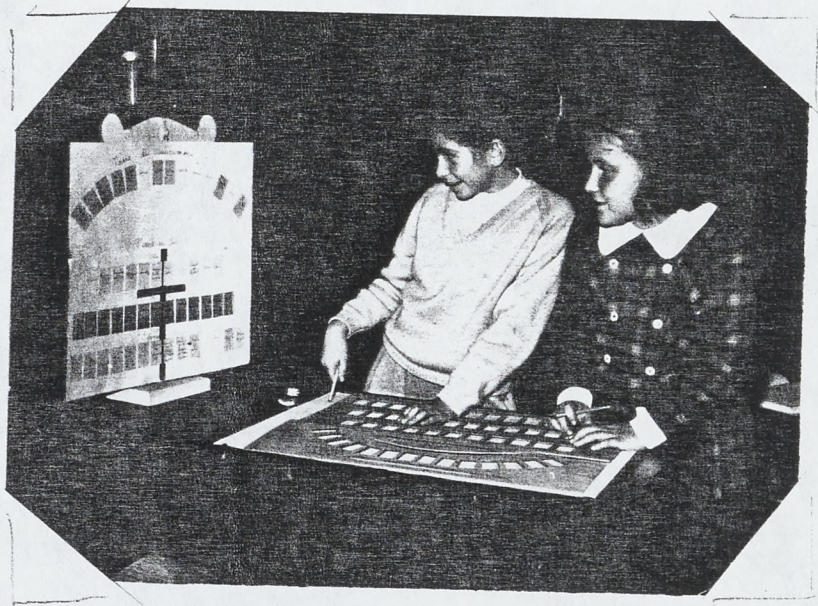


Diagram of the Prayer Cards of the Consecration showing the unexpected symmetry which reveals itself . The prayer card at the top is the Little Elevation, which is placed above the two Consecrations. The Dptychs = for the living and for the dead - are seen on the bottom line .

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Checking their work with  
Mass Cards from  
Key Diagram  
(Rome)