

Little Women Hospitality Program

In a Nutshell

The Little Women Hospitality Program, developed by Ann Milligan Callaghan, is a Catholic girls' ten-month program which aims to teach young ladies the various aspects of hospitality through classic literature, spiritual insights, the Catholic faith, and hands-on experience. Each month, the girls learn a new skill or "charm" as up-and-coming hostesses, young women, and Catholic mothers. The ten skills are as follows: cooking, cleaning, setting and clearing a table, manners and conversation, preparing a room for a guest, writing correspondence, bringing hospitality to others, sewing and dressing modestly, putting on a tea party, and running a book club. Throughout the lessons, the girls learn the value of work well done.

Using scripture, literature, skill practice and field trip suggestions, the program helps the girls become confident and gracious hostesses. It is filled with wonderful stories, heroes, saints, and practical skills that will enrich the lives of the girls as they learn to grow into women. The girls earn charms on a charm bracelet as they learn new skills. The program makes a great follow-up and supplement to Little Flowers Girls' Club!

Outline of the Program

Each lesson in the Little Women Hospitality Program is designed to cover a month of the school calendar. Each month is clearly laid out and defined for the teacher in the *Teacher's Manual*. The club is encouraged to have each month's meeting at a different location or with a different hostess so that the girls learn various styles of expressing hospitality. At the end of every meeting, each girl receives a Take Home Sheet full of activities that she can do to reinforce her newly learned skills at home. Furthermore, each lesson contains monthly field trip suggestions, a recommended reading list, and a movie recommendation.

September ~ Cooking

October ~ How to Clean a Room

November ~ How to Set and Clear a Table

December ~ Table Manners, Conversation

January ~ Preparing a Room for a Guest

February ~ Correspondence

March ~ Bringing Hospitality to Others

April ~ Sewing and Dressing Modestly

May ~ How to Plan and Prepare for a Party

June ~ Book Club



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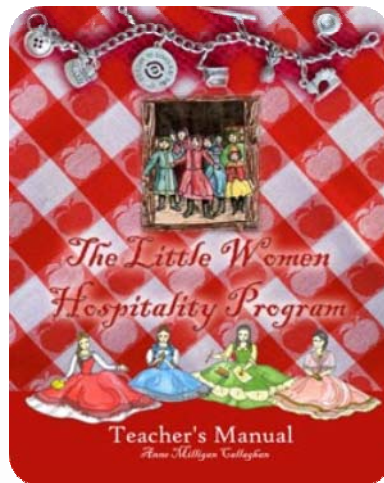
Little Women Hospitality Charms

As each new skill is completed, the Little Women girls are awarded charms to show their progress in learning the gracious ways of Catholic hospitality. The charms are as follows: *Cookie Jar* (Cooking), *Button* (Cleaning), *Spoon* (Setting and Clearing a Table), *Circle of Friends* (Table Manners and Conversation), *Log Cabin* (Preparing a Room for a Guest), *Pencil* (Writing Correspondence), *Pineapple* (Bringing Hospitality to Others), *Sewing Machine* (Sewing and Dressing Modestly), *Teacup* (Planning a Tea Party), and *Book* (Running a Book Club). See our catalog for more information!



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Hospitality: The Skill of How to Set and Clear a Table

"And above all things, have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. Use hospitality one to another, without grudging. As every man hath received the gift, even so, minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." 1 Peter 4:8-10

Holy Inspiration: Christ told us that the least you did to my brothers, you did unto me. Serving at a table is a wonderful form of hospitality as we let others sit and enjoy good conversation, and a time of rest. Pope John Paul II remarked in his letter on families, that to obey was to serve one another. It gives such a gentle meaning to the idea of obedience and service.

The Jews have a beautiful tradition at their Seder meal, the Passover Meal. This is the meal that Moses first celebrated with the Jews on the night they exited from Egypt, the Exodus. At the Seder, an extra place is always set for Elisha, the messenger, who will announce the coming of the Messiah. A table setting for the Jews was very important in the exactness of how it was set, and what each dish meant. Every dish has its own utensil and meat, its own knife. Nothing is to be mixed or blended. Everything has a distinct purpose and symbolism. The table setting and the meal itself were a means to a closer spiritual and family bond.

As Catholics, the table is now the altar. The meal is the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Each altar is set according to a set of rules called the Rubrics of the Mass. This is the fulfillment of the Seder Meal. Christ came to fulfill the Old Law, not to destroy it. If we learn more about our Jewish roots, we will understand our own faith better. If you watch carefully next time at Mass, you will notice with what precision and love, the priest prepares each part for the meal which becomes Our Lord. Once we have all received Our Lord in Holy Communion and the meal is over, Father takes equal care to wash and clean the table from which this Holy meal came. Let us do the same for our family and friends.

Our Lady's Patronage: As we prepare to serve a meal, we let our hearts prepare to serve Christ through the service of others. This preparation is through the patronage of Our Lady of Grace. Just as grace is the gift of God through Mary that transforms our hearts into those like Christ, we use this skill to transform a table into a truly welcoming place for our guests. Let us keep in mind this service through grace as we practice this skill.

Charm: Spoon

Christ tells us that when we welcome a stranger, we welcome Him.

Literature Example: This month, we will not draw from a particular passage from literature, but from a passage in history. We will learn about a group of women who stood the test of time. Their graceful manner, their hard work and commitment to the service of others helped to "civilize the West". These women are none other than the Harvey Girls. From 1883 until 1968, these noble women housed, fed and brought comfort to the weary traveler. How did they do this? Through their old-fashioned hospitality. In an age when the country was changing, the railroad was expanding from coast to coast, the North and South were surveying the damage from the Civil War, Fred Harvey brought us the Harvey Girl. He knew that weary travelers would be looking for a home-cooked meal served by a pretty face. Good manners and good cooking at a well-dressed table was a site to which most people along the Sante Fe railway were not yet accustomed. Back then, men just cooked over an open fire and ate pretty much anything that came off it. Trains themselves did not have eating cars yet, so the trip along the Sante Fe became long and uncomfortable.

Fred Harvey changed all that through his Harvey House, a chain of restaurants and hotels set up along the Sante Fe train line and run by a group of women who became known as Harvey Girls. In a time when Thomas Edison was lighting up the country with his inventions, Fred Harvey and his Harvey Girls were bringing warmth, refinement and stability to the rough West through their dining rooms and examples. These young ladies executed perfect etiquette, set a beautiful table and brought back a sense of femininity and graciousness to a rapidly changing world. Each Harvey Girl was required to be educated and committed. They signed a contract promising to remain a Harvey Girl for at least six months. In exchange, they became independent, well trained and had a chance to travel the country. As they brought food to the table, they also brought to the new communities in which they settled fine literature, churches, choirs, plays and other things associated with an educated and refined person. The Harvey Girls brought hospitality to others in many ways, but first, through the table. A properly set table can attract anyone to relax and enjoy. This is such a simple way to bring others pleasure and comfort in this busy world of today

There are many books about Fred Harvey and the Harvey Girls, including a book called The Harvey House Cookbook which includes many of their world famous recipes and also a great website with links to see the actual Harvey Houses in different states (www.harveyhouses.net), but today we will watch a segment from the movie of the name "The Harvey Girls". The scene which you will see is when the girls learn to properly set a table. **(Hostess: Put on movie to set part and view that scene only- the girls will want to watch the whole thing!)**

Discussion: Ask the girls how they liked this scene. Do they see an importance to setting a table properly? Do they remember a time of going to a fancy restaurant or someone's home and walking in to see a beautiful table? How did that welcome them?

Talk a little about how a table setting is like a well wrapped package, even if the gift itself is not huge, the wrapping is memorable. Some people may not be great cooks but can still have a simple meal well presented, making the guest feel very special.

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The Lesson

Notes to Hostess: You may want to look up table settings in a good etiquette book like Emily Post, Amy Vanderbilt or Miss Manners to brush up your own knowledge of formal table setting. Any library would have a copy to look at and use as a reference.

1. Have a copy of *The Harvey Girls* set to the scene near the beginning, right after they get off the train and are all going into the Harvey House. The scene is actually a song in which they teach the girls how to prepare their uniforms and the tables. Judy Garland is in uniform. "The Harvey system, I must say, primarily pertains to perfection in the way we meet the train, perfection in the dining room, perfection in the Harvey uniform...." NOTE: If you can't find the movie, give the lesson without. Do read the history of the Harvey Girls, perhaps have a picture from the internet to show the girls what a Harvey girl looked like.
2. Look at demonstration to prepare what you will need.
3. Write out a sample menu for the girls to view. It must have all the courses of a formal dinner for the girls to be able to put out the various utensils and dishes of such a meal (bread, soup, salad, entrée, dessert, wine/champagne, coffee). The menu is a reference in setting the table. I suggest using paper bowls, small dessert plates for butter plates, salad plates and dinner plates. Paper may be easier so your good dishes do not get damaged, but use what you would like to use. (Your group may have purchased paper items, check with coordinator.)

Things Hostess Needs: *The Harvey Girls* movie, place settings for table including napkins, silverware, dishes and glasses, centerpiece (use anything you have), candlesticks, salt & pepper, menu.

Demonstration of Skill: Have a formal place setting laid out, and explain it. This, of course, is for very formal company, or feasts not often practiced anymore. It is still a skill that each lady should know if she is able to present hospitality under all circumstances, especially in helping families on formal occasions such as holidays. Ask the girls to practice setting the table but always leave your one setting as a reference.

- * **Teach the first rule to remember easily:** The first item used for the meal will be on the outside. So one must know what will be served to know what silverware, dishes and glasses are needed and where to place them. Prepare a menu including salad, soup and a first course followed by dinner and dessert. Also, include bread and butter as part of the meal. Wine and champagne will be served as well as coffee/tea. Tell them to look at the menu to see what will be necessary to set the table and explain it.

- * **The Basics** - The forks always go to the left of the plate in order of how they will be used. The knife and spoons will be placed to the right of the plate, with blade facing in towards the plate, followed by any spoons that will be used for the meal. The teaspoon is placed next to the knife, and the soup spoon, next to that. Note the drawing on page 47 for guidance on the setting. The napkin is best placed to the left of the fork. (When it is placed under the fork, it is awkward for the user to get to, without upsetting all the forks. Sometimes it is placed on the plate but this also is awkward.) The dessert spoon and fork are placed above the plate between the butter plate and glasses.
- * **Glasses** - the water glass goes above the knife followed in descending order: water, champagne, wine, and although coffee is next, this is placed directly to the right of the spoons. Often coffee is not served until after the meal and the cups are placed at that time.
- * **Plates** - For formal dinners, charger plates are placed in the center of the place setting upon which all other plates will be placed. Nowadays, in home settings, many do not own these, so teach it either way. *A very important rule for plates: all dishes are always to be served on a plate. This goes for soup bowls, dessert bowls and parfait glasses. Never bring in soup without a plate under it. This goes for informal settings as well. Many people don't know this. Next rule: the bread and butter plate is to be placed to the left of the forks, but, unless you are the Queen of England and have an eighty-foot table, this may not be practical. In this case, place it in the center above, just to the left of the water glass and place the butter knife across it. (Teach them where it should go, but then show them where most people put it because of lack of space.)
- * **Once the table is set, there are things that should be in place immediately before guests are seated.** A pat of butter should be placed on each butter plate. Water is to fill the water glasses being careful not to spill on the tablecloth. Salt and pepper should be placed at either end of the table in the center. Some sort of low centerpiece is to be placed in the center so as not to obstruct conversation across the table.

Practice of Skill: Leave one place setting as a reference and ask each girl to set additional place settings until all settings are done. If there are more girls than settings, remove some, and rotate girls from watchers to setters, until all girls have practiced.

Then show what goes in the middle and how it is arranged. Candles, salt & pepper, butter, if bread will be served, are all placed in the center. Butter can either be placed on a central plate already sliced, or pieces of butter can be placed ahead of time for guests on their individual butter plates.

Do not forget a centerpiece which often brings the most beauty to the table, but

do not place anything that would obstruct the view of the person across the table. Many hostesses get a magnificent centerpiece with beautiful gladiolas, but it is not very inviting, because you can't talk with the person across the table since the flowers are blocking them. Once this is done, the girls can move onto service. Have some girls sit as if at the meal, while you show everyone how to bring in a plate and set it down, and then, how to remove it when done. Remind the girls that you know when someone is done by how they lay their silverware across the plate. The knife and fork should be placed together across the top right of the plate to signal "done."

SERVICE & REMOVAL: Make certain the girls learn the rule: On to the left, off to the right. This is the main rule of serving and clearing a table at a meal. When the meal is served, you place the meal onto the left of the person. When the meal is over, a server quietly takes the plate off to the right. A server should never stack plates. Simply take one plate off to the right, transfer to the left hand, go to the next person and remove another plate. Bring these to the kitchen before taking anything else from the table. Always serve and remove from ladies first.

Once all has been removed from the table, attend to the center. Remove anything having to do with dinner such as salt and pepper and butter (not the centerpiece or candles). Take off the butter and the rolls and any food remaining which has to do with the main meal. All that should remain after clearing are the lit candles, the centerpiece, napkins, glasses and those pieces of silverware needed to finish the meal. Everything else goes, quietly and discreetly. A server should never make clearing the table, the event. The conversation should be the event. If you are not certain if someone is finished, wait until they're done talking and quietly ask, "Excuse me, are you finished?"

Remember we are serving others to help foster hospitality, making others welcome. In many cases, it may be to help out our parents with guests. Try to focus on the job and not on the conversation, as it is not necessarily our business.

Next, bring in the dessert! That's what we've all been waiting for, right? Place the plate down to the left of each guest. Have someone go around with coffee cups with saucers and place to the right of the guests. Another girl can quietly place a sugar and creamer at each end of the table. Finally, a girl can quietly go around with a coffee server asking each guest if they would care for some. It's done. The final clearing can occur once the guests have left the table.

Showing the final step: show a very informal setting with just a fork, knife, glass and napkin that would be used for a weeknight dinner. Remind the girls that the basic rules remain the same, no matter how many pieces or courses are served.

Fun Games: (If time allows)

1. Using paper plates and cups, etc. so nothing good gets broken, have a separate table set up or team off for each side of the table and have the girls race to see who can set the table the quickest. Make teams for ease of time. Take points off for incorrect placement.
2. Another fun relay using plastic plates would be to line the girls up in two teams each with a plastic plate. Set a distance ahead that they need to walk to with the plate on their head, and return from, without the plate falling off. The plate gets handed to the next girl, etc. The first team to complete the relay wins. To make it more challenging, add in, carrying a spoon with something on it, while having the plate on their head. We have also added a plastic cup on top the plate while carrying the spoon with something in it. It can be done and is so much fun for the girls. Don't forget to take pictures!

Conclusion: Once everyone has had a turn at serving and removing, ask the girls if they have any questions. Talk about occasions for using this skill, and focus the girls on the simpler idea, that this can be used at home every night. We do not have to wait for a special occasion nor do we have to set a formal place setting with good china. Manners and service can always be used to help another at our own home or at another's. Pray a closing prayer that we can use our new skill to help others.

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Take Home:

- * Practice setting the table at home for a week and clearing the spots for everyone when done.
- * Ask your mother if you can use her good china to set a nice table for two, for your mom and dad, and volunteer to serve a "date night" for them. Don't forget the candles and a centerpiece. What a treat that would be for them! You could do the dishes when you aren't serving, so they could enjoy a relaxing evening. Depending on the time of year, maybe you can gather some wildflowers for your centerpiece.
- * Get some friends together to play restaurant. Make some menus using some cookbooks and set the tables. Some can be the customers, and some be the servers. Plan ahead and ask your mom if you can serve some real food.
- * Plan a night to have popcorn and watch *The Harvey Girls* with Judy Garland.
- * If a major holiday or formal party is taking place, ask your mom if you can help set the table and serve. Remember to be extra careful when handling your mom's good china and crystal and never stack the dishes.

FIELD TRIPS:

1. Go to tea at a formal tea house and notice how the table is set, and how the food is served.
2. Go to a department store, in the china department, and arrange for someone to show you how to properly set a place setting. Browse through the china, crystal and fine silver. Have everyone pick out their favorite pattern and write it down. If the store has sample pictures of the patterns, have the girls take one and put it in their binders. They can see if their taste stayed the same when it is time to buy their china when they get married.
3. Offer to serve or help with a charity dinner. The pro-life movement usually has many occasions when servers are needed.

Recommended Reading: A good etiquette book; *The Harvey House Cookbook*; there are even now a set of Harvey Girl paper dolls.

Movies: *The Harvey Girls* with Judy Garland (Excellent and funny about the historical

Fred Harvey houses that civilized the West with hospitality, white tablecloths and meticulous dining rooms, and well-mannered girls.)

