

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

Faith Formation Option for Children

St. Joseph Church—2023-2024



I am the Good Shepherd. I know My sheep And they know Me.

The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS) methodology is a hands-on Montessori approach to religious formation that is rich in prayer, liturgical and scriptural content and is specifically designed to meet the age appropriate developmental stages of the child.

The Atria where the children meet are unique environments furnished and filled with materials specifically designed for the child. In addition to the physical environment, the atmosphere or “Way of the Atrium” is quiet, prayerful and retreat-like, using controlled movements and hushed voices. This special space nurtures their spiritual growth and relationship with God.

The Home is also an Atrium - a place where the child first learns who God is and how to live the gift of life that God has given him or her. Recommended practices for the family and home which will enhance the children’s formation experience in the atrium include:

- Preparing a Home Prayer Table/Corner*
- ♦ *Creating space for Quiet Time and Wonder*
- ♦ *Regularly participating in Mass*

Parents and catechists will partner together on this year’s journey!

The goal of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is to nurture the child’s relationship with God and prepare them for full participation in liturgy through:

- ✦ *the use of manipulative materials*
- ✦ *prayer and songs*
- ✦ *listening to the Bible with the children*
- ✦ *giving them time to work and thus meditate with materials*

For more information on the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd at St. Joseph Church, please contact Anne Pulsifer at cgsstjoseph@comcast.net/ 484-431-5156.

Parent Responsibilities

Monitor email: Important information will be communicated via email. Parent Letters will be sent home



periodically with information on what’s happening in the Atrium. Please read these letters to help understand what your child is doing and what you can do to enhance your child’s experience!

Pray with your children:

When encouraged, freeform

prayers of praise and thanksgiving come naturally for the children. The following traditional prayers are also



important to know:

- ✦ *Sign of the Cross*
- ✦ *Hail Mary*
- ✦ *Our Father*
- ✦ *Glory Be*
- ✦ *Prayers of the Mass*

Attend Mass with your children: This will make real what is presented in the atrium, make them comfortable and familiar with the liturgy, and strengthen both their and your relationship with our Lord!



Schedule of CGS Offerings

The goal of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is to provide both a special environment and the time for the children and the adults with them to experience a deeply personal, prayerful and spiritual encounter with the Lord. As such, children enrolled in CGS meet for two hour sessions on a weekly basis.

CGS Level I is for children who are ages 3-5 in the fall (i.e. pre-K through K) and is offered twice:

9:00am-11:00am Tuesdays

8:45am-10:35am Sundays

CGS Level II is for children in grades 1 thru 3 and is offered:

4:30pm-6:20pm Tuesdays*

CGS Level III is for children in grades 4 thru 6 and is offered:

6:25pm-8:10pm Tuesdays*,**

** Family gathering space to be available.*

*** Will combine with Level II on occasion for celebrations.*

CGS First Eucharist Preparation

Level II Children preparing for First Holy Communion also participate in a 5-part Meditation Series with a parent/guardian, as well as a multi-day retreat which includes First Reconciliation and White Garment Service, and concludes with the celebration of First Holy Communion.



CGS Content Overview

Each year, all levels of children explore and expand their understanding of the following themes according to their developmental age to help them grow in relationship with their Loving God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit; along with their understanding of Scripture and Liturgy.
(Level I: 3-6 year-olds; Level II: 6-9 year-olds; Level III: 9-12 year-olds)

➤ **Parables:** The parables of the Good Shepherd (and later the True Vine) nurture the child to grow in an appreciation for the unconditional love and protection of the Good Shepherd and the deeply rooted relationship Jesus has with us. The parables of the Kingdom further the children's understanding of the beauty, value, and strength of God's Kingdom, deepening their desire to become participating members of the Kingdom of God.



➤ **Moral Formation:** The Good Shepherd and Kingdom parables provide the foundation for moral formation that comes as a natural response to God's love. Communion invites us to be united to the love of the Good Shepherd and the care of all those around us.



In Levels II and III: The Moral Parables as well as the Moral Maxims (the Commandments given to us by Jesus) help us to nurture and deepen our moral life in Christ. Further study of the History of Salvation from Creation, to Redemption and Parousia allows for reflection on our personal role in fulfilling God's plan.

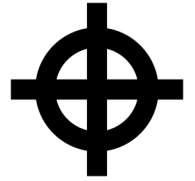
➤ **Gestures, Prayers and Liturgical Signs:** Our materials on the Mass help the children to learn and understand not only the names and preparation of the vessels and articles used during the Mass and other sacraments, but also the meaning behind the symbols, prayers and gestures of the priest and people.



➤ **Liturgical Seasons:** We explore the Liturgical Seasons of the Church and the colors used to represent the seasons and feast days. During Advent and Christmas, we will reflect on the words of the prophets who foresaw the coming of the Messiah and read from scripture the Infancy Narratives. During Lent we focus on the events surrounding Jesus' death and resurrection, with particular focus on the Last Supper and institution of the Mass. Easter is the season to reflect on the Light of the Risen Christ we each receive through the gifts of Baptism. We end our year with a special Pentecost Celebration to celebrate the gifts of the Holy Spirit.



➤ **Additionally, in the Level III atrium:** We enter into the History of Salvation more deeply, exploring the "Plan of God" in much greater detail through extensive study of the Old Testament as well as archeological and historical material concerning the evolution of civilizations in the Middle East and Europe.



The child is introduced to key moments and figures in the history of Israel in particular and is aided in identifying common threads that run throughout this history.

The child is also invited to reflect more substantially on his/her own role in the Plan of God, discerning which particular gifts they possess and how to put these at the service of God's Reign in anticipation of the Parousia.

The prophets continue to be lifted up as those who have a special call in listening for and discerning God's Plan and announcing it to the world. As such, they are models for the 9-12 year old child as s/he embraces this state of listening and discerning as well.

The Typical CGS Atrium Session

Each week in the Atrium, time is dedicated to:

- ✦ Catechist guided individual or small group presentations/meditations
- ✦ Personal "work time", when the children work independently or in a group for personal reflection, exploration and wonder – a time to develop a personal relationship with our loving Father.
- ✦ Communal Prayer time that includes song, formal prayers, silent prayer, personal intentions, praise and thanksgiving.

