

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS)

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS) is a worldwide Montessori-based method of religious formation for children ages 3-12, where children can grow in their relationship with God through a deep engagement in Scripture and Liturgy.

CGS is based on the belief that God and the child are already in a relationship. They only need the guidance and vocabulary to enable them to give expression to it.

This is done by means of two things: a prepared environment called an **Atrium** and a **trained catechist** whose sources are Scripture and Liturgy. The Atrium contains materials that are handcrafted models of articles used in the Church's worship such as altar, baptism, liturgical colors, etc. The environment also contains materials relating to the Scriptures such as parables, prophecies, geography of Israel and the life of Christ.

The catechist offers presentations to the child using the materials. These presentations are chosen to communicate the essentials of our faith in a manner appropriate to the child's development. The child is then invited to internalize and respond to the presentation by working with the materials themselves.

CGS is divided into three levels.

In **Level 1 for ages 3-6**, the foundational image is Christ the Good Shepherd who loves his sheep and gives all of himself to them. The Good Shepherd knows his sheep and calls them by their name. The child comes to discover who the Shepherd is and who the sheep are. Here is the first moment of the covenant, the moment of gift. Level 1 stays focused on the moment of gift as the children come to a deep enjoyment of it. The enjoyment of the gift of God's own self to the child is the foundation of further religious insight and moral development.

Level 2 is for ages 6-9 and continues the reflection on the moment of gift and begins to awaken in the child their personal responsibility to maintain a relationship with God and their social responsibility in the world. The foundational image is Christ the True Vine and the History of the Kingdom of God. The child begins to discover the vast cosmic history of God's plan of salvation and that they have something to contribute to it. Moral sensitivity/awareness begins here and grows with the presentations of Jesus' Maxims, Moral Parables, and Reconciliation. The child's desire to carry out the requests of the Good Shepherd naturally flow from the relationship of loving trust that was established in the previous level.

Level 3 for ages 9-12 carries the human response further. This group studies the Old Testament in great detail and continues to deepen their understanding of the liturgy. They plan worship services and begin community service. The foundational image is the Plan of God as worked out in the Bible and human history. The child is more aware of the advance of the Kingdom and the response of people, that is, opposition or cooperation. The paradigm of Creation-Redemption-Parousia guides a more thorough exploration of Scripture, particularly the Old Testament.

Throughout all three levels, the child encounters the essentials of the Faith. All three levels include presentations on the Sacraments, the Bible, Geography of the Holy Land, Infancy and Passion Narratives, Prophecies, Parables and Maxims in a manner developmentally appropriate. The presentations increase in detail and sophistication as the child matures.

An interpersonal relationship is always a mystery and all the more so when that relationship is between God and child. We believe that there is a deep bond between God and the child, which produces in the child the desire to draw near to God. The catechist's role is to prepare the environment and to make presentations that call forth the child's response.

For more information on CGS see: www.cgsusa.org

For more information about CGS at St.Maria Goretti contact:
Linda S Hudak at (215) 593-5903 or e-mail: Lshudak@yahoo.com

8/2023