

# St. Timothy Catholic Church Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Parent Handbook



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*Updated 08/2015*

# **The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd**

*“Help me come closer to God all by myself!”*

## **Frequently Asked Questions:**

- **Who gave us Catechesis of the Good Shepherd? What are its roots?**

In 1954, in Rome, Italy, renowned Hebrew Scripture scholar Sofia Cavalletti observed that the child received the Word of God and essential truths with great joy. Gianna Gobbi collaborated in the discovery of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS). Together, Sofia and Gianna developed the Catechesis, integrating the methods and insights of Maria Montessori using hands-on, developmentally appropriate materials that put the Scriptures and lessons into the hand of the child with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is now practiced in 20 nations throughout the world and has been in the United States for more than 30 years.

- **What is unique about this method?**

The CGS content helps the child “come closer to God, all by myself!” As a team, the child and catechist explore the proclamation of the Scriptures, discuss and personally work with the materials, and encounter mysteries that reveal the Holy Spirit, the interior teacher. The catechist prepares the materials, studies the Scriptures, prays and presents them to the children. The work is then placed in the hands of the child, who works with the materials, draws or writes about the presentation, or sits in silent contemplation. The Holy Spirit, True Teacher, works within the child, nurturing the child’s relationship with God.

- **Why is the prepared environment, which we call the “atrium” necessary?**

Children learn indirectly from the environment. Each atrium is prepared according to the age, development and religious needs of the child. Through the prepared environment, respect for the relationship which already exists between God and the child is developed.

- **What are Practical Life Exercises? Why are they used?**

Practical Life Exercises foster independence, help the child in his/her development, concentration and contemplation, and teach care for the self, others and the environment. These exercises also serve as a foundation for other works found within the atrium.

- **What place does the Bible and Liturgy have in CGS?**

CGS is built on the foundation of the Bible and Liturgy. All presentations are based on the Scriptures. Nothing is added; nothing is removed. The mysteries of God found within Sacred Scripture are proclaimed and embraced by the catechist and child. CGS connects the richness of the Bible with the work of the Liturgy. Moments, gestures and prayers from the Liturgy are isolated and explored. Many presentations bridge the moments, gestures, prayers and holy feasts/seasons of the Liturgical year with the Scriptures that inspired them, with a specific focus on Christmas, Easter and Pentecost.

- **What are the characteristics of giving presentations to the child?**

Presentations can be made either to small groups or to the entire group in the session. The catechist sits with the children and proclaims the Biblical text (we use the New American Bible because it is the translation the children will hear in the readings at Mass). Essential background points may be given. The catechist brings out manipulatives (dioramas or materials), identifies them for the children and moves them appropriately during the solemn reading of the Scripture. The child is invited to do personal work following a presentation.

## **Levels of CGS**

### **Level I**

3-6 year olds experience CGS in Level I. These three years are dedicated to developing the child's loving relationship with Jesus, the Good Shepherd. This is where the child falls in love. Guided by the Holy Spirit, the child is given the opportunity to experience the love and protection of the Good Shepherd while exploring developmentally appropriate aspects of Liturgy and Scripture. At this level, works involve many manipulatives and visual guides.

### **Level II**

6-9 year olds deepen their relationship in Level II. With a new emphasis on writing and reading as the child develops, the works invite the child to experience the nourishment of the True Vine. Prayers, gestures, and parts of the Mass unfold in a visual and contemplative process aiding the child in deepening his or her love and understanding of the Eucharist, the "source and summit of our faith". This level also involves preparation for sacraments (see Sacrament Preparation Requirements).

### **Level III**

God is infinitely generous and has much more to give after the children receive their sacraments. Therefore, Level III provides the opportunity for the child to explore and develop the gifts given to him or her by the Holy Spirit through the sacraments. A journey through the Old Testament, a thorough look into the parts of the Liturgy and an exploration of salvation history and their place in it await the child in Level III.

## **Participation in CGS at St. Timothy's**

### **Attendance**

Regular session attendance will provide the best possibility for the religious potential and religious development of your child. Each week builds upon the last, so please be consistent with your child's attendance. Of course, children should stay home if they are ill.

### **To report an absence: Please call the office at (480) 345-0542.**

Please leave a message with your child's name and normal session time. If your child misses three or more sessions due to reasons other than sickness or emergencies, we may have to revisit the family's current ability to commit to the program. Children who are preparing for sacraments may not have more than three absences.

### **Level I Session Times**

Level I sessions begin with one hour. As the children grow accustomed to the atrium environment, sessions will lengthen in 15 minute intervals until the full session time is complete. Each group of children has different needs, therefore the catechist will determine when the group is ready for the full session time. You will be informed the week before by the catechist of the following week's pick up time. We have found that this better serves the child even though it can be inconvenient. Thank you for understanding.

**Arrival**

Please make sure your child has had a snack before coming to the atrium. Bathroom breaks are a good idea as well.

**Drop-off/Pick-up and Parking**

For the safety of your child, please park in the rear of the Center and walk your child to the atrium door. When you are picking up your child, please do the same. Also make sure to connect with the catechist when dropping off and picking up.

**Sacrament Preparation Requirements**

Children must have completed one year of Catechesis prior to the year of preparation for the reception of a sacrament. If your child has been baptized but never attended any type of religious education and are of the appropriate age to receive a sacrament, they will need to attend CGS this year, and then begin preparation for the sacrament the following year.

Typical ages for Sacrament Preparation are:

First Reconciliation: Second grade

Confirmation and First Eucharist: Third grade

In the atrium, the children are asked to pray about their readiness to receive these sacraments. Upon receiving these sacraments, the child is making a promise of love and commitment to God. We cannot force or rush the timing of the Holy Spirit in His preparation of the children. If you have more questions regarding this method, please see your child's catechist or program director.

Parent and child attendance is required at Sacrament Preparation Meditations or Retreats (see calendar for dates). Parent attendance at Sacrament Preparation Information Meetings is also required.

**Your Child's Session**