

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

What is the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd? CGS is a Montessori -based Catholic faith formation program 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. Our work as adults is to provide a place for the child and God to come together



The Atrium – A Prepared Environment

The atrium (or prepared environment) is one of the important elements that helps the relationship between God and the child to flourish. After a theme has been presented, the child is free to choose an activity that will make possible the inner dialogue with the Holy Spirit.

In traditional classroom, primary relationship thought to be between the teacher and the child. Montessori noted a third important, but often silent partner in education: the environment. She discovered that environment doesn't have to remain invisible partner, but rather can be intentionally shaped. The environment itself is a teacher; in fact, the children learn more from interaction with environment than from direct instruction from a teacher.

If our aim is to help children enjoy relationship with God we must ask, "What kind of environment can we create that will respect and cultivate the child's needs and capacities at this level of their development, especially in terms of their spiritual development?" We will then want to prepare a place where the children can live what the First letter of John proclaims:

"What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we looked upon and touched with our hands concerns the Word of life—for the life was made visible; we have seen it and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was made visible to us—what we have seen and heard we proclaim now to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; for our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We are writing this so that our joy may be complete." | John 1:1-4

Why is it called “Atrium” anyway? The word “atrium” actually means “portico, or porch entrance to a large house.” The Atrium was a term given to this space by Maria Montessori. It was chosen because in the ancient church, the atrium was a gathering space between the Church Proper and the street. It was the place where the catechumens, those preparing for initiation to the Church, would receive instruction. The Atrium has a similar purpose for our children, as it is a place to help them enter into full, conscious and active participation in the liturgical and communal life of the Church.



In this picture you notice the child working with the Liturgical Colors.

She is setting the chasubles in the order of our Liturgical year.

Purple for before the great feast. (Preparation)

White is for the celebration.

Green for Ordinary Time and red is for the feast of Great Love—Pentecost.

In the picture to the right the child has set the Model Altar.

The beautiful Altar cloth.

The candles—they remind us of Jesus’ words, “I am the Light of th World.”

The Crucifix that reminds us that Jesus died but He rose on the third day!

The paten—which holds the bread that becomes Jesus.

The chalice—which holds the wine that becomes Jesus.

Many times after the child has set the model altar they will respond in song or prayer thanking God for His goodness.





At the beginning of the year in the Level 3 atrium the children are reintroduced to Salvation history through works which focus on the History of the Kingdom of God.

The work which this child is working on is called the Gift Strip which moves the child into pondering and wondering about the great abundance of gifts God has given to us.

The picture to the right is a presentation on the Holy Bible. The bible compared to a library of many books and in a particular order.

This book which is such a great gift to us! It is compared to a pearl necklace. 1 necklace made of many precious and beautiful pearls.





After working with the Bible Cabinet the child to the left began writing a chart of the bible writing all the books in order.

Planning Communal Prayer is a process which builds many skills.

In Level 3 the children begin to take on a leadership role in planning communal prayer. After selecting a Gospel they work together to decide what message Jesus is communicating in that passage. Then, articulating this as the theme of their prayer, they use a concordance to find a psalm and a passage from the Old Testament which refers to this theme. Prayers of petition and songs as well as opening and closing prayers come next. Finally, the children assign roles and practice leading each portion of their planned prayer before inviting the community to join them in the communal celebration.

The children with the assistance of an adult prepare the Communal Prayer celebration for the next Atrium session which the theme will be "saints".

