

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd



"Help me discover God by myself."



Let the little
children come
to me...

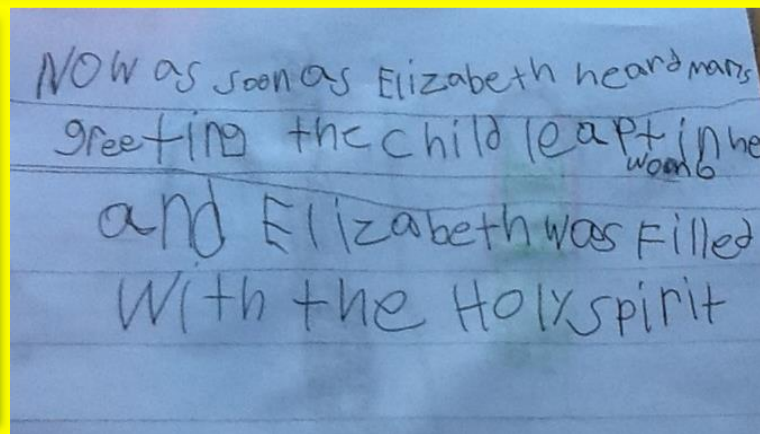
▶ AN INTRODUCTION

PART I

CATECHESIS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD SEEKS TO SERVE THE MYSTERY OF GOD AND THE CHILD.

God and the child have a unique relationship with one another, already in place.

The growth of this relationship should be assisted by the adult, but is directed by the Spirit of God within the child.



NOW as soon as Elizabeth heard Mary
greeting the child leapt in her
womb
and Elizabeth was filled
with the Holy Spirit

History: ROME, 1954

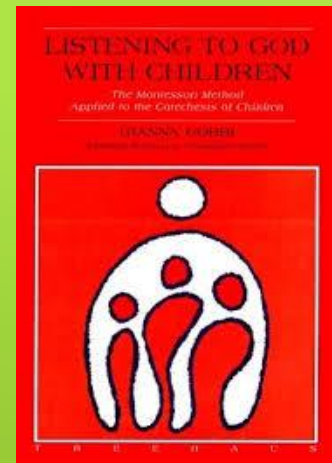


A surprise invitation, unexpected and unasked for, sparked the beginnings of what we know today as "CGS." A friend and neighbor in Rome, Italy, asked Sofia Cavalletti, a Roman Catholic Hebrew Scripture scholar, to help some children prepare for First Communion.

Sofia at first refused, believing she knew nothing about children, but then said Yes. Montessori educator Gianna Gobbi joined Sofia. They collaborated for almost 50 years, until Gianna's death in 2002.

They were surprised by 'holy joy.'

THE METHOD: LISTENING TO GOD WITH CHILDREN



The two sources of 'CGS' are the Holy Bible, and the liturgy of the Church.

The needs and response of the child at their particular stage of development informed the choices of how and when to present the essentials of our Catholic faith.

Dr. Maria Montessori had established the foundations of the method, based on observing children. She said: "Catholics know what to teach. We have to find out 'when' and 'how.'"

The first materials were adopted from those Dr. Montessori made in an experiment in Barcelona, cf. *"The Child in the Church."*

WHY THESE THEMES?



Sofia and Gianna discovered and remind adults to look to the child to see the indicator of a deeply religious life - joy - and then to ask "What does this tell us about the face of God a child needs to see?"

"The child will be our teacher if we know how to observe them."

Joy, and the child's choice to return over and over to certain themes: these were indicators of what themes to keep.

The covenant, a gift offered by God, has its first response in the young child: praise and thanksgiving and joy. The firm foundation laid in the first plane of development allows the relationship to grow as the child's needs and capacities of response in the covenant relationship expand.

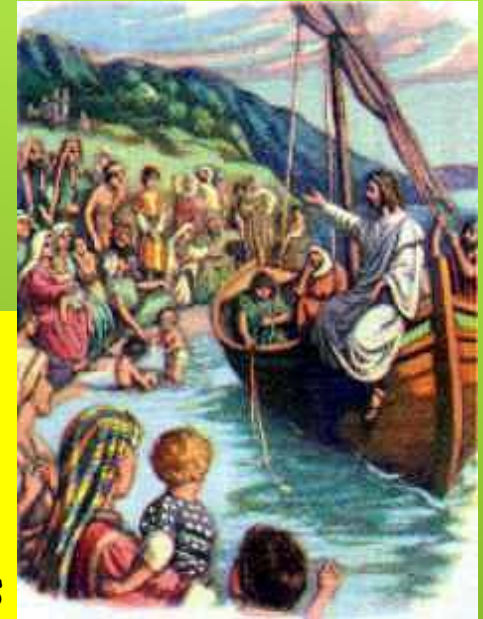
THE PARABLE METHOD: A FAMILIAR ONE

The parable method has a long history in our church. Jesus himself taught in parables.

St. Thomas Aquinas said, "There are two ways of acquiring knowledge: by invention, or finding out, and by discipline, or learning. Invention is the higher mode and discipline stands second."

St. Augustine said, "I am not the teacher. Christ is the teacher."

Montessori discerned that this is the method of liturgy.



▶ THE CHILD, THE ATRIUM, THE ADULT

PART II

THE CHILD, THE ENVIRONMENT, THE ADULT

CGS is a common religious experience involving children and adults in which the religious values of childhood, primarily those values of contemplation and enjoyment of God, are predominant. This experience is shared in a place particularly prepared for the religious life of children called the Atrium.



The Child, the Atrium, the Adult

God and the child have a unique relationship with one another particularly before the age of six.

The growth of this relationship should be assisted by the adult, but is directed by the Spirit of God within the child.

Children need their own place to foster the growth of that relationship.

This spiritual growth is best served through tangible but indirect means.

"If we want to help the child grow near to God, we should, with patience and courage...seek to go always closer to the vital nucleus of things. This requires study and prayer. The child himself will be our teacher if we know how to observe him." Sofia Cavalletti

See the homepage of the National Association for this quote and more opportunities to explore the child, the atrium, the adult...

Level I: age 3-6

Level II: age 6-9

Level III: age 9-12

The Spiral Method

Offer age-appropriate themes for children taken from scripture and our liturgy.

Age level choices are based on Dr. Montessori's observations about the 'planes of development.'

Each three year cycle offers three years of presentations.

Each level builds on the previous one, although accommodations can be made for children entering at any level.

The foundations laid in the earliest years are crucial

THE YOUNGEST CHILD

CGS helps the youngest child fall in love with Jesus, the Light of the World and the Good Shepherd, in a carefully prepared, quiet environment.

Almost like offering spiritual direction for children, this approach helps give an opening for the child to see God's goodness and offer their own responses in work that leads to prayer and contemplation.

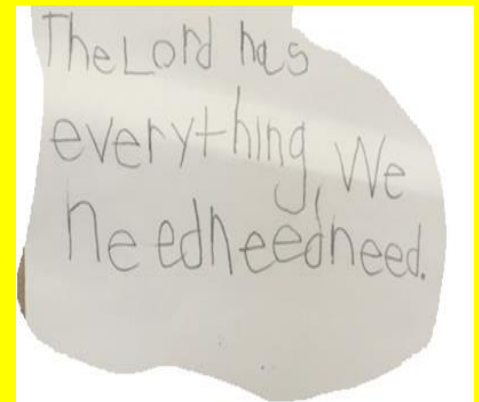


WHO IS THE CHILD? 3-6 YEAR OLD, LEVEL I

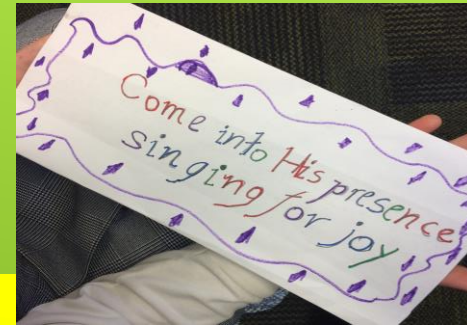
CGS affirms the innate need of the young child to love and be loved, a need that can only fully be met by God. This need of the child is recognized and nurtured in the atrium.

The child:

- needs time to wonder about reality, including the mystery of life and death
- is in a sensitive period for expansion of vocabulary
- needs to slow down and experience unplugged, hands on time
- has an 'Absorbent Mind' and will make part of themselves what they experience in these years
- desires to do it by themselves, need to be introduced to 'how'



WE PREPARE A PLACE: THE ATRIUM



The prepared environment is key to this method. It is a place of listening, and of work that leads to prayer.

We call this place the atrium, a term that referred to the place in the ancient church where catechumens prepared for baptism.



THE ATRIUM: A PLACE TO WORK

There are hands-on materials relating to the presentations with which the child can work; other handworks are also offered.

More time is given for a child's personal work than for time in the presentation. This allows the child time to work, to make 'their own' what has been given.



THE CATECHIST OFFERS THE GIFT: CHRIST IS THE INNER TEACHER

"My sheep know Me and I know my sheep..."



THE ADULT: THE LEVEL I CATECHIST

- prepares the environment, the materials, and themselves
- makes presentations that "call forth" the child's response rather than simply "pour in" information
- helps the child prepare to make good choices of work then 'gets out of the way' to allow the child to work with what has been offered.
- observes the child with love and the desire to serve well as a matchmaker for God and the child
- is formed with a 90 hour course certified by the National Association of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd in collaboration with the International Consiglio



THE ADULT: THE ASSISTANT



- is a certified catechist or has taken assistants' training

- helps child to find work or to become calm enough to work or listen

- reads Scripture text from booklet while child uses related materials

- assists the child to care of the environment and care of self

- helps with care of the environment before and after atrium time

- offers catechist her observations of the children

Part III

The Kerygma



CATECHESIS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD LEVEL I

The kerygma

Sourced in the Bible and Liturgy, the particular presentations given at each level of the catechesis answer to the developmental capacities and the face of God the child looks for.

There is a three year cycle of presentations. As in the Montessori children's house, children ages 3 through Kindergarten participate in CGS Level I.

Presentations are not lectionary based, but they are given with respect to the liturgical season.

SUMMARY:

52 presentations over 3 year cycle

Fall Ordinary Time: Orientation to life in the atrium
Practical Life (ongoing)
Prayer table, Enthronement of Bible in Prayer Corner
Prayer cards (continues during year)
Nomenclature for life in the church (Model altar, 4 moments
Biblical Geography (3)

Advent/Christmas: Prophecies (5)

Infancy Narratives (5)

Winter Ordinary Time: Parables of the Kingdom (5)

Lent:

Good Shepherd:

John 10; Luke 15; 2 Eucharistic Presence,

Ps. 23:1,1-3

Paschal Narratives (Last Supper, City of Jerusalem)

Easter

Baptism (4 moments)

Empty Tomb

Anytime:

Gestures of Eucharist (5)

Celebrations:

Advent

Christmas/Epiphany

Lent

Easter: Liturgy of the Light

Pentecost

“All time belongs to
Him and all the
seasons.”

Blessing of Paschal candle



LEVEL I: TWO MAIN THEMES



Jesus, the Good Shepherd



Jesus, the Light of the world

“RICH FOOD, AND NOT TOO MUCH OF IT”... 3 YEARS OF PRESENTATIONS

Sampling

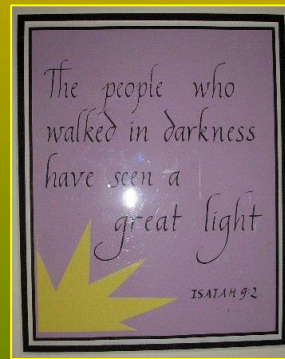
Mass works

Incarnation

Kingdom Parables &
Good Shepherd

Paschal
Narratives

Baptism &
Prayer



THE GOOD SHEPHERD

LEVEL I:

TO FALL IN LOVE WITH GOD

Jesus the Good Shepherd reveals the absolute and unconditional love of God.

The relationship with God is personal, each one is 'called by name.'

The first response to God's love is wonder and delight, trust and joy.



John 6; John 10

EUCCHARISTIC PRESENCE OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

The Bible and liturgy come together.

The sheep are gathered around the altar, and the Good Shepherd is present, giving all of Himself, His body and His blood.

Sofia and Gianna searched for a long time for the link that would allow the child the same affective engagement with the Mass as with the Good Shepherd in the Scriptures. Once they discovered it, they said the children knew it all along as revealed in their drawings.



ESSENTIALITY....SIMPLICITY

The materials are not 'teachers' aides,' but are a help for the child to do independent work related to a Bible or Liturgy presentation. Through freely chosen work with the materials, work that can lead to prayerful encounter with Christ, the most essential truths of the Christian faith are absorbed in the way most appropriate to the 3 to 6 year old child.



Time is of the essence!

Once the orientation period to the atrium has been accomplished, it is ideal to give two hours for the atrium session. This allows for the two hour 'work cycle' discovered by Dr. Montessori.



NURTURING GREATER PARTICIPATION IN THE LITURGY OF THE CHURCH...

"What's that?"

A small altar with tiny replicas of the same articles we use at Mass. A model tabernacle, sanctuary lamp and ciborium.

A 'gesture' table and materials so that the child can ponder key gestures of the Mass

A baptism corner to ponder the signs of baptism

In the three year cycle, the liturgical colors and wooden puzzle liturgical calendar are introduced.



PRAYER WORDS THAT HELP US PRAY

Prayer is natural to the young child. It needs to be nurtured.

The vocabulary of prayer grows with words drawn from the Bible and the Liturgy, such as Amen, Alleluia, Our Father, Hail Mary.

The atrium is a place of work and prayer.

Particular moments in an atrium session are particularly devoted to prayerful response and prayerful celebration.

Parent letters and parish events can encourage and educate for ritual and spontaneous family prayer.



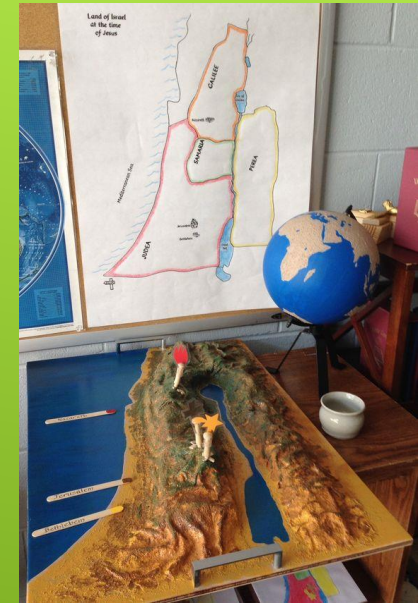
BIBLICAL GEOGRAPHY

"Where is it?"

The young child is interested in maps and 'spatial' orientation.

The children are shown that Jesus lived in a specific place and at a specific time on this earth

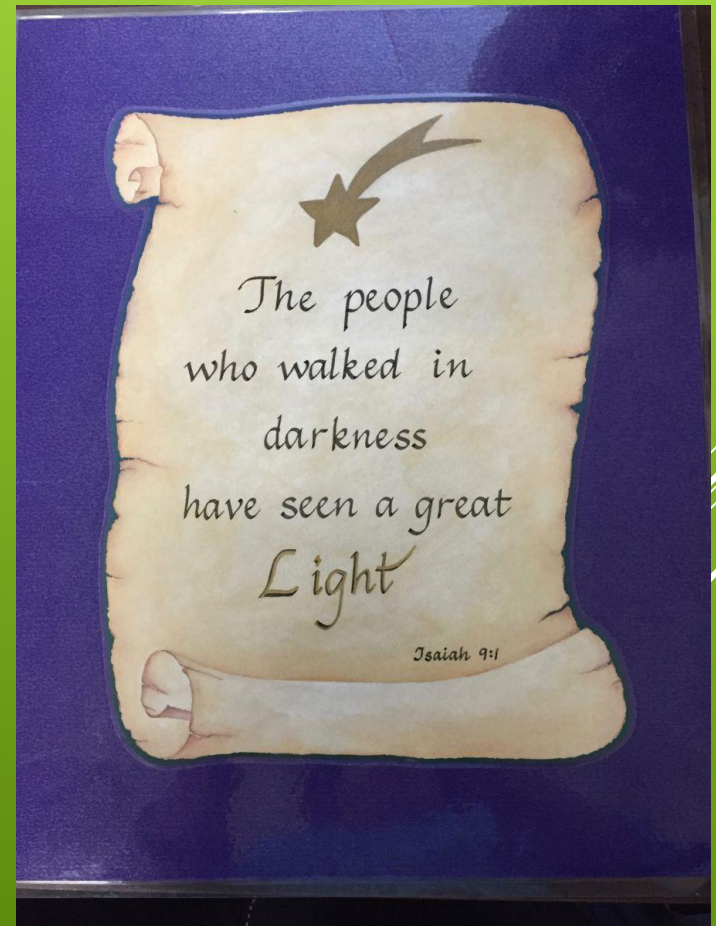
Jesus is real!!!



Messianic Prophecies

Preparation is an important part of any celebration.

Advent and Lent are key times of preparation. The prophets, who listened to the word of God and shared God's word with the people, accompany us in Advent.



CELEBRATION

Each session in the atrium is a celebration of the mystery of the love of God and the child.



There is a time at the of the session, after the children restore materials and clean up, for communal prayer at the prayer table. This includes songs, psalms, spontaneous prayer- and silence.



PRACTICAL LIFE IN THE ATRIUM

Practical life assists the life in the atrium.

This includes lessons in grace and courtesy, to assist community life in the atrium; lessons in control of movement, which include many lessons from 'making silence' to pouring exercises; care of self, including how to choose and set up one's work; and care of the environment.

These lessons answer to the child's desire "Help me to do it by myself."



The children 'make silence' and don't just 'keep quiet'!

And much more...

To find out more about the themes and presentations given throughout the atrium year, we invite you to explore the readings listed in the brief bibliography at the end of this presentation.

Each theme synchronizes with the liturgical season in which it is given.

We hope you can visit an atrium soon.

We pray for more to be called to adult formation to prepare to serve the *Mystery of God* and the child.

COME AND SEE!



► COLLABORATORS

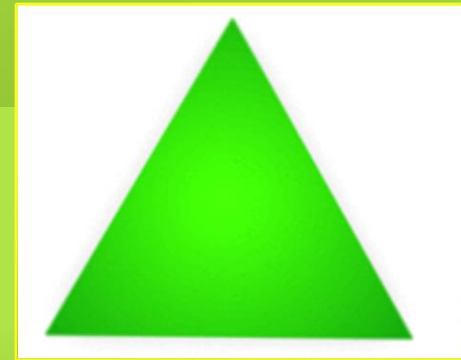
PART IV



TRIANGLES OF COLLABORATION

The parents at home,
the catechist in the atrium,
and the parish community at Mass----

We are called to embrace the particular service
each can give to the *Mystery of God* and the child.



God's plan and presence runs like a golden thread through all of history, and God constantly seeks servants and collaborators to bring that plan to life.

Sofia and Gianna collaborated for almost 50 years in their work with children and in formation of adults. Their faith, and their love for the Church, found a path of service of God in their love for God and the Mystery of the love of God and the child.

One grown-up atrium child remembers that it was Gianna who brought the child to the word of God and Sofia who brought the word of God to the child.

COLLABORATORS

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WHO WILL ANSWER TO THE CALL?



What about your parish?

You or someone you know may desire to know more about CGS.

We have catechists who welcome parents to 'come and see' an atrium and some atria that welcome registrations for children's sessions.

Books and other resources are available from our National website.

Someone may be called to participate in a formation course- for one's own adult faith formation, or to prepare to serve in an atrium. In this region, we have opportunities for catechist and assistant formation.

Formation opportunities are listed on the courses for adults section of the National Association website. Some are local. Some are once monthly, some are intensive. Level I is the beginning course. It is approximately 90 hours long. It has the character of a retreat, and offers practical preparation along with theological background.

Formation courses are certified by the National Association of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd.

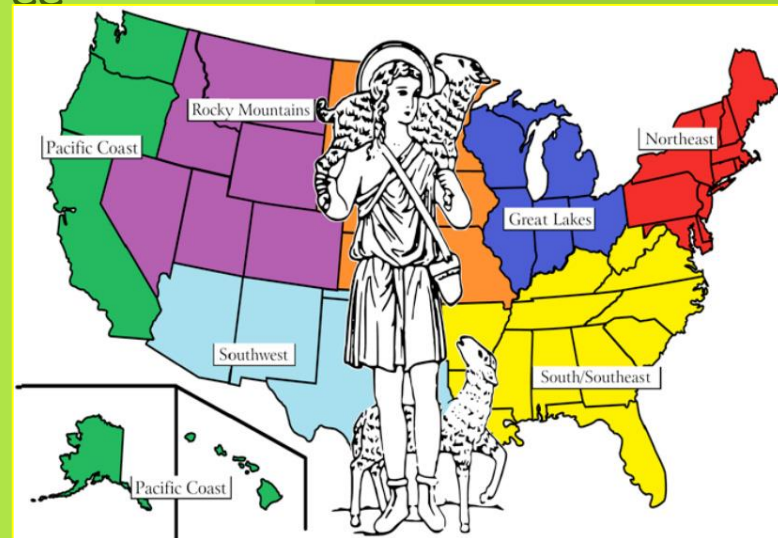
SEEK AND YOU SHALL FIND!

Perhaps you have a child or more than one who is between the age of 3 and Kindergarten?

At St. Genevieve Parish, we offer three atrium sessions each week: two on Sunday and one on Tuesday morning.

Register for CGS through our PREP program. CGS is open to all parish children, whether heading for or in parish, private, public or homeschool. No other Catholic school religion program repeats what CGS offers.

Contact Trish Coady
stgensprep@gmail.com to register your child, or your interest in adult formation to assist in an atrium session.



SIMPLE BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ▶ Cavalletti, Sofia: Religious Potential of the Child (ages 3-6)
- ▶ Cavalletti et al.: The Good Shepherd and the Child: a Joyful Journey
- ▶ Gobbi, Gianna-Listening to God with Children
- ▶ Montessori, Maria: various sources, particularly E.M. Standing, editor- Montessori The Child in the Church
- ▶ Gilbert, Barbara, 1999, ppt for Guild of the Good Shepherd (New England) www.cgsma.org
- ▶ Various photos gifted and googled.

Image of Mary from statue of "Virgo Potens" at Rue de Bac in France. Companion statue to the medal of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception (aka the miraculous medal).

All books available on www.cgsusa.org

Go to www.cgsusa.org for further reading and resources!

MARY,
CHILD OF GOD,
MOTHER OF JESUS,
MOTHER OF THE
CHURCH,
QUEEN,
QUINTESSENTIAL
SERVANT AND
COLLABORATOR OF
THE GOOD
SHEPHERD,
BE MY MOTHER
NOW.

PRAY FOR US.

