



# Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS) is a Montessori approach to faith formation with children (ages 3-12) that began in Rome over 50 years ago. In 1954, Sofia Cavalletti, a Biblical scholar, and her co-worker, Gianna Gobbi, a trained Montessorian, began to develop this approach to the religious formation of children. It is rooted in the Bible, the liturgy of the Church, and the educational principles of Maria Montessori. Maria Montessori was a devout Catholic who believed faith formation has an essential role in the development of the child.

- Schedule for 2017-2018 (Space is limited to 12 children per class):
  - Sundays (October – April):
    - Level 1 (ages 3-5) 8:00 – 9:00 AM & 9:30 – 10:30 AM
    - Level 2 (grades 1-3) 9:30 – 10:30 AM
    - Level 3 (grades 4-6) 9:30 – 10:30 AM
  - Wednesdays (September – April):
    - Level 1 (ages 3-5) 4:30 – 5:45 PM
    - Level 2 (grades 1-3) 4:30 – 5:45 PM & 6:15 – 7:30 PM
    - Level 3 (grades 4-6) 4:30 – 5:45 PM
- Children who attend Catechesis of the Good Shepherd benefit greatly by also attending Mass regularly because many of their lessons are linked to the liturgy.
- Catechesis of the Good Shepherd takes place in a specially prepared space called an Atrium.
  - The Atrium contains age appropriate materials that are simple and essential to the child's development of a relationship with God.
  - The Atrium items are carefully selected or created out of wood, glass, metal, and fabric. Many of the materials will remind the child of what they see in church.
  - Children are taught a sense of reverence for the Atrium and for the items it contains. Expected behavior in the Atrium is peaceful and respectful, similar to what is expected at Mass.
  - In our busy, noisy world, many children find refuge in the quieter atmosphere of the Atrium.
  - Each session consists of a presentation of new material, work time, and prayer.
    - Presentations include biblical geography, liturgy, the Nativity narratives, parables, and practical life lessons. Older children are also introduced to Old Testament work.
    - The presentations are selected to coincide with the Church year.
    - After the presentation, the children may choose to work with the materials during their work time. All materials remain in the Atrium the entire year so children may revisit past presentations during their work time. The children are given time for repetition and contemplation but may only choose to work with materials that have been presented to them.
    - Communal prayer takes place during each atrium session. The children gather around the prayer table and are encouraged to be calm and silent. This habit helps develop an atmosphere to listen and talk to God.
- A visit to an atrium session would be a good way to understand the experience of Catechesis of the Good Shepherd.
- Students in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade in the CGS program will need to attend 4-5 bible studies that take place outside of their regular class time for sacrament preparation for 1<sup>st</sup> Reconciliation and 1<sup>st</sup> Communion.
- For more information or if you have questions, please contact Christen Cota, DRE, at 515-440-1030 or [ccota@saintfrancischurch.org](mailto:ccota@saintfrancischurch.org).