

ARRIVAL

Comfortable, modest clothing that allows ease of movement is recommended. Arriving on time is essential, as sessions will begin promptly. Since the atrium is a reverent environment, encourage children to use their “atrium voice” and their “atrium walk” upon entering. Please take care of any bathroom needs prior to session.

MASS

Parents and children are encouraged to participate in Mass every week. In experiencing the Liturgy, children will connect what they hear in the Atrium with the Mass.

VISITORS

Once the children are normalized in the atrium, please coordinate with a catechist if you would like to observe or assist. Although we love seeing friends and siblings of atrium students, visiting during sessions is discouraged.

AUTHENTIC MATERIALS

We have real plants and flowers in the atrium. If your child has any allergies to these, please let us know. In addition, we light real candles when reading Scripture and during sacred moments. Adults will always supervise children when they are near candles, and only adults handle the matches.

ILLNESSES & ABSENCES

Please keep sick children at home until they recover. “Make-up sessions” are not provided; however, we will do our best to review or repeat presentations.

DISMISSAL

When atrium time has concluded, the children gather around the prayer table to listen to the Word of God, pray, and sing. Children will be called by name to line up. Please be prompt in picking up your children, as they will be looking forward to seeing you.

CATECHISTS

- Brittani Bedison • Ticia Gallo
- Gail Eplin • Mary Karson
- Sherry Farmer • Melinda Lindgren

QUESTIONS?

For questions and registration information, please contact Ticia Gallo at 850-585-2482 or ticia@saintritarparish.org

We extend a special thank you to Knights of Columbus members Ed Underwood, Bob Powers, Rick Rogers, and Gary McFadden; to Chick Huettel, John Lindgren, Liz Calais, Jerry Danos and David Karson for contributing their talents with painting and wood materials in the Atrium; and immense gratitude to Stewart Danos and Mike Harr for their renovation expertise.



CATECHESIS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD



SAINT RITA CATHOLIC CHURCH

He walks ahead of them, and the sheep follow him,
because they recognize his voice. *John 10:4*

CATECHESIS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD



In 1954, Dr Sophia Cavalletti and Gianna Gobbi began their work with children and learned that the parable of the Good Shepherd resonates with the child the most:

“We present the Good Shepherd parable found in the 10th chapter of John, to children with the greatest respect for the text, without adding anything other than what is found there. The text, which is so rich theologically and so literately valuable, needs no embellishment or additions on our part. We restrict ourselves to highlighting the parable’s various elements, and to helping the children savor their richness. The points on which we linger, for it is these that most enchant the children, are above all the personal love and presence of the Good Shepherd: He calls each one of His sheep by name. He knows each intimately even if there are many sheep; He calls his sheep and gradually they become accustomed to the voice of their Good Shepherd and they listen to Him. In this way a precious relationship is established; a thread of love binds the sheep always more closely to their Shepherd. The Shepherd’s voice is powerful and supremely patient; it never tires of calling and reaches out even to those sheep who are far away, beyond the sheepfold. Slowly they too turn to hear His voice and they gather together into one great flock. The Shepherd knows the needs of His sheep, and He guides them to good pastures, walking ahead of them to show the way and to be the first to confront any danger

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS) is a focused approach to faith formation through which even the youngest children build a deep, lifelong relationship with Christ and His Church. It uses a Montessori approach to profoundly engage children based on Sacred Scripture and the Liturgy. Children gather in a specially prepared room called the Atrium, which is filled with a rich variety of beautifully hand crafted materials related to Christ’s life, His parables, the Liturgy, and the Sacraments. Unlike “children’s church”, the Atrium facilitates the child’s immersion into a quiet and meditative environment. CGS was born from the joy of the children in their encounter with God and the announcement of God’s love experienced through Jesus, the Good Shepherd, who died and is risen.

should it arise. So the sheep are safe and peaceful with their Good Shepherd.”

It is the announcement of God’s love experienced through Jesus the Good Shepherd who died and is risen, that is central to CGS.

THE ATRIUM

The Atrium is an environment carefully prepared by the catechist and is one of the most critical aspects of CGS that assists in developing the relationship between the child and God. This environment fosters concentration, silence, and contemplation. The children learn from the atrium environment by interacting with developmentally appropriate materials which are based on Sacred Scripture and Liturgy. These materials are often handmade, wooden, 3-dimensional, and represent items that can be found in Baptism, Eucharist or a particular scripture. Other materials might include mini environments representing parts of the parables (Mustard Seed, Hidden Treasure) or historical events from infancy or paschal narratives. The following description illuminates an atrium presentation:

“The 3-6 year old child enters the mystery of the Eucharist by first learning the names of the articles used on the altar and then through the most important gestures including the preparation of the chalice, the epiclesis and offering, and the sign of peace. Through the experience of seeing these gestures, presented one by one, the Mass emerges as the Sacrament of the Gift. The child becomes acquainted with the historical character of the liturgy through the events of the Last Supper, Christ’s death, and His resurrection.”



READINESS FOR CGS

Please consider the following to determine if your child is ready for the atrium:

1. Does your child separate easily from you?
2. Is your child potty trained?
3. Can your child communicate in simple sentences?