



The United States Association of

The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd®

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd — Level One Formation

Pedagogical Foundations for Catechesis w/ Young Children

With emphasis on the Centrality of the Kerygma; and the Role and Formation of the Catechist

Overall Approach to this Theme in CGS, Level One

The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is grounded in the belief that the child already has a relationship with God before s/he arrives in the atrium, but desires to understand more fully the nature of that relationship and to celebrate it. The Catechesis seeks to help the child's relationship with God flourish by introducing and pondering with the child core mysteries of the faith in a way that is respectful of both the child at this phase of her/his development and the rich scriptural & liturgical heritage of our sacramental tradition. The adult plays a unique role in the Catechesis – as both the preparer & facilitator of the atrium space and a co-listener with the child before the Word of God.

Exercises in practical life can help the child to gain the concentration and stillness that aide a deep listening to God's Word. They also help strengthen the community life in the atrium by giving the child sense of ownership for the care of the space & tools for interacting with others in a kind & respectful manner.

Specific Presentations & Adult Background Offered in 3-6 Formation Course in which the Theme is Addressed

- +History of CGS
- +Who Is the Child?
- +Who Is the Adult?
- +What Is the Prepared Environment?
- +Practical Notes on How to Set up an Atrium
- +What is an Album Pg?
- +Theory of Practical Life
- +Basic Practical Life Presentations
- +Intro to Nomenclature & Movement / The Three-Period Lesson
- +Intro to Artwork in the Atrium
- +The Role of the Catechist vs. Aide
- +Overview of the Presentation Cycle in the 3-6 Yr. Atrium
- +Resources for Parent / Parish Formation
- +Reflection on the 32 Characteristics of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

Relevant Ecclesial Documents

- +The child's right to catechesis: DCE 2-3
- +Call to holiness in all stages of life: LG 40-41
- +“Divine Pedagogy” / Finding a Method Congruent to Content: GDC 139-149; DC (2020) 194-196
- +Nature & Task of Catechesis: GDC 78-87; DC (2020) 79-89
- +Catechesis to be adapted to age of person: GDC 163-165; DC (2020) 236-243 (children), 244-256 (adolescents)
- +Special characteristics of catechesis of infants / young children: GDC 177-179; DC (2020) 244-256
- +Role of Catechist: GDC 156; DC (2020) 110-113
- +Formation of the Catechist: DC (2020) 79-89, 90-109, 133-150
- +Theology of Work: LG 33-39
- +On fostering a contemplative spirit &

(cont. Relevant Ecclesial Documents)

space: CCC 2709-2719

+On becoming a child: CCC 526

+Who is the human person?: CCC 33,
1700-1706, 1718-1719

+Human freedom: CCC 1730-1734

+Kerygma: DC (2020) 57-60

+Methodologies in Catechesis (Space): DC
(2020) 221-223

Specific Scriptural (NAB) and Liturgical Foundations Referred to in the Presentations & Meditations

+Lk 18:15-17

+Mk 10:13-16

Relevant CGS Literature

+RPC I (3rd ed.), intro-32

+JJ, 7-21, 97-106

+Gobbi, 1-33, 39-54, 69-96

+Lillig, intro-52

The Trinitarian God**Overall Approach to this Theme in CGS, Level One**

In the 3-6 atrium, the child comes to know a God who is deeply relational, who reaches out to be in relationship with humanity, who is Life in Abundance and invites us to share in that life. While the doctrine of Trinity is not explicitly explored with the 3-6 yr. old child, the foundations for this doctrine are laid and the child is introduced to the traditional prayer language of the Church in which God is addressed as Father, Son, & Spirit.

Specific Presentations & Adult Background Offered in 3-6 Formation Course in which the Theme is Addressed

+The Sign of the Cross

+Baptism: Gestures

Specific Scriptural (NAB) and Liturgical Foundations Referred to in the Presentations & Meditations

+Mt 28: 16-20

+OCIA 54-56, 226

+Order of Baptism for Children 41, 60, 70

+Order of the Mass

Relevant Ecclesial Documents

+Baptized “in the name of....”: CCC 232-234;
DC (2020) 78

+Trinitarian- Christocentricity: GDC 99-
100; DC (2020) 168-170

+Sign of the Cross: CCC 1235, 2157

Relevant CGS Literature

+HKG II, 115-116

The Economy of Salvation (Salvation History)**Overall Approach to this Theme in CGS, Level One**

Because the 3-6 year old child does not yet possess a sense of the expansiveness of time, we do not look yet at the history of salvation. However, we do lay the foundations for further work in this area in our exploration of the theme of Incarnation. We look at the person of Jesus Christ as the greatest gift of God – the gift of God’s very own Light & Life. We look at how God prepared humanity for this gift through the prophets. We also look at how the Light & Life of Christ began to be shared throughout the world with the coming of the Spirit.

Specific Presentations & Adult Background Offered in 3-6 Formation Course in which the Theme is Addressed

+Introduction to the Prophecies

+The Messianic Prophecies

+Introduction to the Plan of God: Creation /
Redemption / Parousia

+Pentecost

Specific Scriptural (NAB) and Liturgical Foundations Referred to in the Presentations & Meditations

+Is 9:1
+Is 9:5
+Is 7:14
+Mic 5:2
+Num 24:17
+Acts 2:1-4

Relevant Ecclesial Documents

+Prophets: DV 15; CCC 64, 218, 522
+Pentecost: CCC 731-738

Relevant CGS Literature

+RPC I (3rd ed.), 74-76
+HKG I, 1-7, 125-133, 184-185

The Life of Jesus Christ (Incarnation and Paschal Mystery)

Overall Approach to this Theme in CGS, Level One

Jesus Christ is the greatest gift of God. To humanity, however, he is also the greatest paradox. The greatest of kings born in the smallest and most humble of places. A mighty God who chooses the small and hidden. The Lord who embraces human death. In Jesus, we see the clearest revelation of how God works in history.

With the 3-6 yr. old child, we enter into the mystery of who Jesus is by looking at the land in which he lived and by pondering core events surrounding his birth, death, and resurrection.

Specific Presentations & Adult Background Offered in 3-6 Formation Course in which the Theme is Addressed

+Introduction to the Geography of Israel
+The Globe & Raised Surface Map of Israel
+The Regions of Israel
+Background Exegesis on the Infancy Narratives
+The Annunciation
+The Visitation
+The Nativity & Adoration of the Shepherds
+The Adoration of the Magi
+The Presentation in the Temple
+Passover & Memorial
+The Last Supper
+The City of Jerusalem
+The Empty Tomb

Relevant CGS Literature

+RPC I (3rd ed.), 76-85
+JJ, 73-86
+HKG I, 144-155, 177-183

Specific Scriptural (NAB) and Liturgical Foundations Referred to in the Presentations & Meditations

+Lk 1:26-38
+Lk 1:39-49, 56
+Lk 2:1-20
+Mt 2:1-12
+Lk 2:22-40
+Mk 14:12-17, 22-26 / 15:33-16:8 / 16:1-8
+Mt 26:26-29 / 28:1-8
+Lk 22:7 – 24:12 / 24:1-9

Relevant Ecclesial Documents

+Christ at heart of catechesis: CCC 426-429; GDC 40-41, 80-81, 98; DC (2020) 159-165
+Who are you, Lord?: CCC 430-451
+Mystery of the Incarnation: CCC esp. 456-469, 514-534; DC (2020) 159, 165
+Mary, the Mother of Jesus: CCC 484-489, 494-495; DC (2020) 159
+Paschal Mystery: CCC 571- 573, 595-597, 610-618, 624-628, 638-655
+Presence of the Spirit in the Gospels: CCC 717-736

The Teaching of Jesus Christ

Overall Approach to this Theme in CGS, Level One

The Gospels reveal that the primary, overarching theme in Jesus' preaching and teaching was the Kingdom of God. With the 3-6 yr. old child, we ponder several of Jesus' "Kingdom parables" in an attempt to grasp the true nature of this Kingdom as 1) that which is most precious and valuable and 2) that which reveals the great mystery of growth & transformation in all creation.

We also examine with the 3-6 yr. old child images that Jesus offers in his teaching to help his followers understand his own true nature / his own role in the Kingdom. With the young child, we will particularly focus on the image of Jesus as the "Good Shepherd" – who calls each of us by name and invites us into an intimate personal and communal relationship to him that we might enjoy "fullness of life."

Specific Presentations & Adult Background Offered in 3-6 Formation Course in which the Theme is Addressed

+Education to Wonder / The Parable

Method (Method of Signs)

+The Mustard Seed

+The Precious Pearl

+The Hidden Treasure

+The Growing Seed

+The Leaven

+The Good Shepherd

+The Found Sheep

+The Grain of Wheat

Relevant CGS Literature

+RPC I (3rd ed.), 33-48, 107-118, 125-134

+JJ, 31-56

+HKG I, 167-170

Specific Scriptural (NAB) and Liturgical Foundations Referred to in the Presentations & Meditations

+Mt 13:31-32

+Mt 13:45-46

+Mt 13:44

+Mt 13:33

+Mk 4:26-29

+Jn 10:1-18

+Lk 15:1-6

+Jn 12:24

Relevant Ecclesial Documents

+The Kingdom of God: CCC

541-546; GDC 101-103; DC (2020) 15, 50, 198, 200, 319

+The Good Shepherd: CCC 606-609 (total gift of self), 764

+The mystery of death: GS 18; CCC 1010-1014

The Church

Overall Approach to this Theme in CGS, Level One

In the 3-6 atrium, the child is introduced to multiple images from scripture in which humans are invited to share in both a personal and a communal relationship with God, thereby laying a foundation for a rich theology of Church. In presentations on Baptism & Eucharist the children begin to look at images in our liturgical life that reveal to us what it means to be Church (eg. the many candles lit from the one Paschal candle).

Specific Presentations & Adult Background Offered in 3-6 Formation Course in which the Theme is Addressed

{Indirectly addressed in several scriptural presentations, particularly: the Good

Shepherd, the Grain of Wheat, and Pentecost. Also indirectly addressed in the presentation on Baptism & Eucharist.}

Specific Scriptural (NAB) and Liturgical Foundations Referred to in the Presentations & Meditations

N/A

Relevant CGS Literature

N/A

Relevant Ecclesial Documents

+Scriptural images of the Church: LG 6; CCC 753-757

The Liturgical/Sacramental Life of the Church

Overall Approach to this Theme in CGS, Level One

From the beginning of their first year in the atrium, the children are introduced to the names of the articles of the Mass and the rhythm of the liturgical year so that they can increase their sense of ownership of and participation in the Church's liturgy. Over the course of the next three years, the children look at key gestures and prayers in the Mass and in the Order of Baptism one-by-one, learning how to engage the Church's rich language of liturgical sign. After spending significant time working with the image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd, the children enter into deeper meditation on the Eucharist as that moment in which the Good Shepherd, who is always with his sheep, chooses to be with them in a most particular & intimate way in the form of bread and wine.

Specific Presentations & Adult Background Offered in 3-6 Formation Course in which the Theme is Addressed

- +The Articles of the Mass
- +The Liturgical Colors
- +The Liturgical Calendar
- +The Vestments of the Priest
- +The Epiclesis
- +The Offering
- +The Preparation of the Chalice
- +The Washing of Hands
- +The Sign of Peace
- +The Eucharistic Presence of the Good Shepherd
- +*The Cosmic Function of Liturgy*
- +Baptism: Signs & Gestures

Relevant CGS Literature

- +HKG II, 1-11, 31-43, 44-50, 63-96, 117-123
- +RPC I (3rd ed.), 49-72, 125-134
- +Gobbi, 55-57

Specific Scriptural (NAB) and Liturgical Foundations Referred to in the Presentations & Meditations

- +Order of Mass
- +OCIA 218-230
- +Order of Baptism for Children 32-71
- +Liturgy & Catechesis: CCC 1066- 1075
- +On imp. of helping children understand liturgy: DCM 8-15; EM 15
- +Encouraging full participation in liturgy: CSL 47-48
- +Reading Sacramental Signs: CCC 1145-1152
- +Articles of the Mass / Vestments: EM 52; CCC 1181-1186; GIRM 253-307
- +On liturgical yr / colors: CSL 102-111; GIRM 308-310; GNLY 1-44; CCC 1163-1171
- +On Eucharist: EM 3, 6-10; GIRM esp. 48-56; CCC 1104-1109, 1337-1405
- +Baptism: LG 22; CCC 683, 694-699, 1213-1216, 1234-1245, 1262-1274
- +Jewish roots of liturgy: CCC 1096
- +The bridge between Word & Sacrament: LMI 10; CCC 1153-1155

Relevant Ecclesial Documents

(see above)

Christian Morality/Catholic Social Justice Teaching

Overall Approach to this Theme in CGS, Level One

The atrium space is created to be conducive for listening, in a most particular way for the voice of the Holy Spirit or “Inner Teacher” who will guide the child consistently toward that which will bring him/her the “fullness of life” the Good Shepherd promises. Such disciplined listening lays the foundation for the formation of conscience.

In this space, the children from the earliest age have the experience of “falling in love” with God. Such an experience lays the foundation for moral development that is based on joyful, loving relationship. This approach is based on the belief that when one loves, one will want to do what is right toward the beloved. The motivation for moral actions will be internal rather than external.

Specific Presentations & Adult Background Offered in 3-6 Formation Course in which the Theme is Addressed

+*The Good Shepherd & Moral Formation*

{Indirectly all presentations serve this area, most especially those on the Good Shepherd}

Relevant CGS Literature

+RPC I (3rd ed.), 119-124

Specific Scriptural (NAB) and Liturgical Foundations Referred to in the Presentations & Meditations

N/A

Relevant Ecclesial Documents

+On conscience / Inner Teacher: GS 16; CCC 1776-1779, 1783-1785; GDC 288-290; DC (2020) 84, 239-240, 378

+Moral life grounded in love / joy: CCC 1770

Prayer

Overall Approach to this Theme in CGS, Level One

In the 3-6 atrium, the child is encouraged to express spontaneous prayer, especially in the form most natural to the young child: thanksgiving and praise. Over time, prayer phrases from the larger Christian Tradition (eg. key prayer phrases from the Psalms or the Gospels) are introduced, to help link the child’s prayer to the prayer of the larger Church to which they belong.

Specific Presentations & Adult Background Offered in 3-6 Formation Course in which the Theme is Addressed

+*Prayer & the 3-6 Child*

+*Intro to Prayer Corner in Atrium*

+The Sign of the Cross

+The Bible in the Prayer Corner

+Genuflection / Reverence for Eucharistic Presence

+Psalm 23

+Prayer Phrases (including beg. of “Hail

Mary” & “Magnificat”)

Relevant CGS Literature

+RPC I (3rd ed.), 89-105

+Gobbi, 97-106

+HKG II, 115-116

Specific Scriptural (NAB) and Liturgical Foundations Referred to in the Presentations & Meditations

+Ps 23:1-4

+Jn 8:12

+Lk 2:14

+Lk 1:28

+Lk 1:42

+Lk 1:46-47

+various Psalm phrases

Relevant Ecclesial Documents

+On prayer: CCC 2558-2567, 2623-2643, 2659-2660; DC (2020) 86-87
+Prayer corner: CCC 2691
+On reading /praying Scripture: DV 11-16, 21-26; CCC 131-133

+Psalms: CCC 2585-2589
+Reverence for Eucharist: EM 57
+Hail Mary: CCC 2676-2678
+Amen: 1061-1065
+Sign of the Cross, CCC 1235, 2157

Education for Community Life***With emphasis on Mission and Evangelizing*****Overall Approach to this Theme in CGS, Level One**

From the earliest days in the atrium, the children are given lessons that introduce them to care of the environment, care of self, and care of the community around them. These lessons lay the foundations for learning how to relate to each other and live with each other in a healthy, Christian manner.

Specific Presentations & Adult Background Offered in 3-6 Formation Course in which the Theme is Addressed

+Practical Life Exercises
{also addressed implicitly in presentations on Liturgy and the Good Shepherd}

Specific Scriptural (NAB) and Liturgical Foundations Referred to in the Presentations & Meditations

N/A

Relevant Ecclesial Documents

+Human meant to be in community: GS 24-32; CCC 952, 959, 1878-1880
+On common good: CCC 1905-1917
+Communal nature of catechesis: GDC 158-159; 220-221; DC (2020) 48-50, 88-89
+Family life: DC (2020) 124-126, 226-231

Relevant CGS Literature

N/A

Course Description:

The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is a Montessori-based religious formation method for children, beginning at the age of three. It seeks to create and facilitate a sacred, "hands-on" space for children called an atrium, in which both the children and the catechists can hear, ponder, and celebrate the most essential mysteries of the Christian faith as revealed in the scriptures and the liturgy. Originally developed in Rome by Dr. Sofia Cavalletti and Gianna Gobbi approximately 70 years ago, the Catechesis continues to spread worldwide and is used with adaptation in various Christian traditions. This Level I course grounds the participant in the theory and praxis of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd while also concretely preparing her/him to develop and facilitate an atrium for 3-6 year olds.

Course Objectives:

- To explore with participants the general developmental and religious characteristics of the 3-6 year old child.
- To facilitate meditation upon the biblical and liturgical themes of the Catechesis.
- To offer guidelines and assistance to catechists in setting up an atrium for 3-6 year olds, preparing an album, and making materials.
- To deepen participants' ability to observe and learn from children, while also exploring avenues for deepening parental and congregational ability to observe and learn from children.

Required Course Texts:

Cavalletti, Sofia. *Religious Potential of the Child: Experiencing Scripture and Liturgy with Young Children*. 3rd ed. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2020. (RPC I, 3rd ed.)

Coulter, Patricia et al. *The Good Shepherd & the Child: A Joyful Journey*. Rev. ed. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2014. (JJ)

Gobbi, Gianna. *Nurturing the Whole Child: Montessori Principles Applied to the Catechesis of Children*. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2024. (Gobbi)

Lillig, Tina. *The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd in a Parish Setting*. Rev. ed. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2018. (Lillig)

Recommended Course Texts:

Cavalletti, Sofia. *The History of the Kingdom of God I: From Creation to Parousia*. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2012. (HKG I)

_____. *The History of the Kingdom of God II: Liturgy and the Building of the Kingdom*. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2013. (HKG II)

Code of Abbreviations for Ecclesial Documents:

CCC – Catechism of the Catholic Church (1994)

CSL – Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum concilium*) (1963)

DC (2020) – Directory for Catechesis (2020)

DCE – Declaration on Christian Education (*Gravissimum educationis*) (1965)

DCM – Directory on Children's Masses (*Pueros baptizatos*) (1973)

DV – Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (*Dei verbum*) (1965)

EM – Instruction on the Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery (*Eucharisticum mysterium*) (1967)

GS – Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*) (1965)

GDC – General Directory for Catechesis (1997)

GNLY – General Norms for the Liturgical Year and Calendar (1969)

GIRM – General Instruction on the Roman Missal (1975)

LG – Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen gentium*) (1964)

LMI – Lectionary for Mass: Introduction (1981)