

CATECHESIS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

What is Catechesis of the Good Shepherd?

It is a method of nurturing the spiritual development of young children, rooted in the Bible, the liturgy of the Church and the educational principles of Maria Montessori.

What is different about this type of catechesis?

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is a non-scholastic approach to the faith formation of children. Parents often describe it as a peaceful, prayerful experience for children.

Where do children go for Catechesis of the Good Shepherd?

A key component to the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is the environment, known as the Atrium, which is a beautiful, child-sized setting where children may come to know and enjoy the presence of God in their lives.

How often do children gather?

Children come to the Atrium weekly.

What do the children actually do?

Generally, the children spend a small amount of time - 15 minutes or so - hearing and seeing a short presentation. This may be a parable, such as the Pearl of Great Price or the Good Shepherd, or it may involve the setting of the prayer table, or the water and wine, etc. Presentations are carefully planned so as to build upon each other. After the presentation, children are invited to choose the work that interests them for that day. In keeping with what is known as Montessori

approach to learning, the children spend as much time as they wish working with the materials.

What age group does this method serve?

The Atrium is ideal for children ages 3-12. Level I is for preschoolers and kindergarten. Level II is for grades 1,2 and 3. Level III is for grades 4, 5, and 6. St. Elizabeth Ann Seton presently offers Level I and Level II. It is best to consider Catechesis as a multi-year commitment since each session builds on previous sessions, and each year builds on the child's experiences the previous year. Children may say that they have had a session before. The truth is that each year more information and new approaches are added to repeated presentations. This honors the development level and lived experiences of the growing child.

Can parents be involved?

Definitely. Parental involvement is not only beneficial: it is personally fulfilling for the adults.

How should I speak with my child about the Atrium?

One of the crucial aspects of Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is that, although an adult gives the children a presentation, the Holy Spirit is actually the Teacher. We allow the Holy Spirit to work at His pace to help the child understand the theological lesson of each presentation. Since we don't know when the child will understand the concept of the presentation, asking them what they learned in the Atrium, may not bear any fruit. The best questions would be "What did you work with in the Atrium today?" "What prayer response did you draw today?" "Tell me about your picture?" The philosophy of Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is that the child be open to the Holy Spirit and not work for the accolades or approval of a parent, teacher or other adult.