

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is a method of religious formation for children ages 3 to 12. It is rooted in the Bible, liturgy of the Church, Montessori principles, and is based in the belief that:

- The child and God have a unique relationship with one another;
- The child has an innate knowledge of God;
- The growth of this relationship is directed by the Holy Spirit;
- The environment plays a role in the spiritual development of the child.



The Atrium is a specially prepared environment containing materials that aid in the child's relationship with God. It is a place of simplicity, order, prayer, and work. In the Atrium, the child is given time to listen, wonder, work, pray, sing, and talk about God.

Level I Atrium – Ages 3-6 (K)

Catechesis for the 3-5 year old explores the ever present love of the Good Shepherd for His sheep. Joy and wonder are evoked as they discover the mystery of the kingdom of Heaven and the beauty of the Light that came into the world at Jesus' birth. The major themes for this age group are Gift, Light, and Protective Love. These themes are expressed not only through parables and sacred scripture, but also through liturgy. Eucharist becomes the Sacrament of Gift; Baptism becomes the Sacrament of Light.

Level II Atrium – Ages 6-9 (1st – 3rd)

Catechesis for this age explores the unity of the History of the Kingdom of God as we discover God's action in Time, Nature, and the Bible. Moral issues are explored through meditation on parables and the maxims of Jesus. The emphasis moves from the Good Shepherd to the deeper perspective of the True Vine. A major theme for the whole of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is our covenant relationship with God. Children will now begin to consider their response to God, which is part of the covenant. The expression of this relationship through Liturgy is a thread that winds throughout the seven years of catechesis. A special focus is placed on the Liturgy of the Eucharist as well as moral parables and Reconciliation during the First Communion year.

Level III Atrium – Ages 9 – 12 (4th – 6th)

Over a three year period, the 9-12 year old will explore Salvation History, the history of God's redeeming presence throughout time. The children will study the Bible as one book and one history. The Old Testament stories of creation, the fall, Abraham, Moses, Exodus, and the prophets will be explored. The upper elementary child will ponder his response to God, and will begin to ponder the questions of "What is my place in the kingdom of God?", "Do my actions further or hinder the spread of God's kingdom?", and "How can I be of service to others?" All seven sacraments as well as the liturgy of the mass are explored at greater depths as well.

Sacramental Programs

First Communion and First Reconciliation

Preparation for these sacraments begins at 3 years old, when the child first enters the atrium and Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Level I. The Eucharistic work from Level I builds to a rich reception of First Communion for the Level II child. This faith formation journey continues through every year of religious education. An essential part of preparing to receive First Communion and First Reconciliation is experiencing the liturgy and witnessing the reception of Eucharist by the community during weekly Mass. Each year our children grow in their knowledge of the Catholic faith and in their relationship with God. Children who do not participate regularly in faith formation and Mass may not be ready to receive the sacraments.

Preparation for First Communion/First Reconciliation is a 2 year program - 1 year of Sunday School (at least 1st Grade) prior to entering the year of First Communion Prep (at least 2nd Grade).

First Eucharist Prep Year

Children must be in at least 2nd grade to receive First Eucharist.

In addition to attending regular Atrium classes, children will attend (with at least one parent) 2 family retreats: 1 for First Reconciliation and 1 for First Communion. Parent meetings will be held during the year as well.

A certificate of Baptism is required for First Communion.