

▫ A Vision for Children ▫

The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd offers a method of catechesis for children ages 3 through 12 through which children are helped in forming an authentic, faithful relationship with God. The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is grounded in scriptural and liturgical study framed by Montessori's principles of education and understanding of the developmental needs of children. Themes that comprise Level I include *Introduction to the Atrium and the Life of the Church, Prayer, Mystery of Incarnation, Mystery of the Kingdom of God: Kingdom Parables, the Mystery of Christ as the Good Shepherd, the Paschal Mystery, The Gestures of the Mass/Eucharist, and Baptism.*

If we want to help the child draw nearer to God, we should with patience and courage, seek to go always closer to the vital nucleus of things. This requires study and prayer. The children will be our teachers if we know how to observe them. -Sofia Cavalletti

This method of catechesis began in Rome, Italy in 1954 with Sofia Cavalletti, a biblical scholar, and her colleague, Gianna Gobbi, a Montessori trained educator. Both women were Roman Catholic. In their observation and engagement with children, **they sought to discover what face of God children most need to see in order to grow in their knowledge and love of God.** Children need the sensitive guidance of the adult and the inner guidance of the Holy Spirit to nurture this relationship.

The adult prepares a sacred space, called the atrium, which allows children a prayerful place to listen to and respond to God through Jesus, the Good Shepherd. The atrium is also a place of celebration and community - to be with God, enjoy Him, listen to His Word, and to share this experience with others. It is designed to reflect the beauty of His creation and God's abiding love. It is also a place to begin to recognize the signs and symbols that speak of Him through the liturgies of Baptism and Eucharist.

▫ Level I Catechist Formation ▫

Level I catechist formation is foundational for all three levels of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. The primary focus is preparation to serve three-to six-year-old children. The objectives of Level I catechist formation include:

- ❖ To present the guiding principles of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd.
- ❖ To explore the vital religious needs and capacities of the 3–6-year-old child;
- ❖ To offer the adult time to prayerfully reflect and personally consider the Biblical and liturgical themes presented to the 3–6-year-old child.
- ❖ To broaden the adult's ability to observe and learn from children's spirituality.
- ❖ To cultivate the capacity to deeply listen to and enjoy with children the Word of God.
- ❖ To offer guidelines and assistance in preparing the atrium, writing the catechist's album, and making materials.

▫Your Invitation ▫

You are invited to participate in this Level I catechist formation preparing you as a catechist to serve children ages three to six years old.

Level I Formation dates:
February 5-6, 2022, March 12-13, April 30-May 1, June 4-5, July 25-30 at St. Thomas More Catholic Church, Decatur.

This course is designed to include spiritual formation for adults as well as instruction in this method of catechesis in order to serve the religious life of young children. The pace of the course is retreat-like allowing for its contemplative nature to be a prayerful experience for adults and a model for the children's atrium experience. A three-year cycle of presentations is offered from scripture and liturgy as given to children. Adults will also receive background information on the themes that undergird this approach including a foundational study into Maria Montessori's work with children. Catechist formation includes seeing all the presentations as given to three- to six-year-old, reading the core CGS texts, writing album pages for the presentations, and making a few of the materials used in the atrium. Successful participation of this course will result in a certificate from the United States Association of The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. Partial Scholarships are available through the Tina Lillig Memorial Fund: <https://www.cgsusa.org/learn/courses-for-adults/scholarship-grant-information/>

Tuition is \$500.00 for the entire course payable with registration. Membership to the United States Association of The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, www.cgsusa.org, is highly recommended for each participant and will allow access to the Level I Materials Manual.