



## ***Catechesis of the Good Shepherd***

This is bulletin insert number two intended to bring even greater clarity and understanding regarding the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, a parish initiative/ministry that will begin here at Saint Francis this coming September. From last week's bulletin insert a number of questions were raised by members of the parish.

### **More about the Atrium**

As was mentioned last week the Atrium is a prepared environment where the child can have an authentic encounter with Christ. What exactly does this mean? The Atrium is a physical place set up for the use of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS), where the children will gather and where all the materials for the CGS are kept, in other words, a room somewhere within our church facility (it could be a space set aside exclusively for the use of CGS, or a space that is shared with other parish activities – not both at the same time).

The primary purpose of the Atrium is to provide a place that will help the relationship between God and the child to flourish – it is a place of conversation with God. An Atrium is probably best compared to a retreat house that provides for recollection and silence in the presence of God. It is a place for religious life to flourish rather than a classroom for intellectual instruction. Ultimately the Atrium is the place where the children are prepared for greater involvement in the larger worshipping community of Saint Francis.

Pictures probably explain the dynamic of an Atrium best. With this in mind you are again referred to two web sites that contain pictures of Atrium's ([www.cgsusa.org](http://www.cgsusa.org) and [www.cgsac.ca](http://www.cgsac.ca)). For those who use Google, on the Google home page click on "images" in the top right corner. Then in the Google search box type in "Catechesis of the Good Shepherd" and press enter – hundreds of Atrium pictures will appear.

The "Atrium Prayer" might help explain the Atrium's purpose even more:

*When we come to visit Jesus in this Atrium,  
we work quietly, and we listen,  
so that we can hear the Good Shepherd's voice in our hearts.  
We give him our love, and we are kind to one another.  
As we work silently and think about the mysteries of Jesus' life,  
He teaches us without words in the stillness of this room.  
Please bless our time together Jesus.*

### **What is Level One?**

As mentioned both in the Sunday homily of two weeks ago, and last week's bulletin insert, the CGS is divided into three levels: level one for ages 3 – 6, level two for ages 6 – 9, and level three for ages 9 – 12. When the CGS begins in September we will begin by offering only level one, and then depending upon the successfulness of this initiative/ministry levels two and three will be added at a later date. So what is the focus and purpose of level one for the 3 to 6 year old child?

Primarily level one will assist the child in coming to a greater awareness of two essential spiritual questions: one, who is God/Jesus?; and two, who am I in relationship to God/Jesus? How are these questions addressed?

- ✧ By meditating upon the Word of God, the biblical stories and parables contained in the sacred scriptures, the child will discover that "God is Love", "Jesus is Risen" and "We are His Sheep"
- ✧ The child will familiarize themselves with the biblical stories about the birth of Jesus, the Last Supper and the prayers of the Church.
- ✧ Through the Parable of the Good Shepherd the child will enter into the mystery of our covenant relationship with God.
- ✧ By working with child-friendly figures in dioramas and miniature articles used by the Church (such as a baptismal font, altar, paschal candle, etc) the child will deepen and grow in their awareness of all the many and varied dynamics of our Church.
- ✧ Awareness of the liturgical year will be heightened as they celebrate the seasons of the Church – Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter and Pentecost.

