



# Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

This is the fourth in a series of bulletin inserts concerning Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS) a new initiative/ministry to be launched here at Saint Francis this coming September. As a reminder, we will begin CGS with Level One for children ages 3 to 6; following the hoped for success of Level One we will then introduce Levels Two and Three for older children.

## Why is the Parable of the Good Shepherd so Central to this Ministry?

- ✦ The parable of the Good Shepherd, where the Shepherd calls the sheep who are listening for his voice, introduces the child to the reality of their covenant relationship with God. The covenant relationship is all about God being in search of us and our response to God's initiative.
- ✦ The parable of the Good Shepherd is clearly related to the sacrament of baptism, the very sacrament that marks us permanently as one of God's own. The Good Shepherd reveals to the children that there is one true and unique Shepherd who cares for, knows by name, and protects the sheep, just as there is one true and unique God who cares for, knows by name, and protects those re-born through the waters of baptism.
- ✦ The parable of the Good Shepherd brings to the forefront for the children the fact that the shepherd knows and calls us by name, in other words, God has a personal relationship with each one of us.
- ✦ The parable of the Good Shepherd reveals and makes explicit the "light" of the Shepherd's love. A love so rich and deep that it enriches all the sheep, all those united with Christ the Good Shepherd. This is most especially seen by children ages 3 to 6, who are not yet ready to address mercy, forgiveness and the moral implications in the story of the lost and then found sheep, but are most certainly able to see the great joy that ensues following the return of the sheep and the depth and bond of God's love made visible in the Shepherd's welcome.
- ✦ The parable of the Good Shepherd helps create in the child an openness to others – this is seen most clearly when the children are asked to draw a picture of the shepherd and the sheep and in the picture they identify each individual sheep by a different name, each sheep is unique. The relationship with the shepherd is both personal and communal.
- ✦ The parable of the Good Shepherd reveals to the children the affective dimension of the Good Shepherd, a dimension so rich in love that it helps the children to then

identify other relationships in their lives that reflect this same rich affection and love (such as their Mommy and Daddy). This reflects one of the deepest needs in the life of the child, namely, to be in a loving relationship both with the Good Shepherd and others in their lives who reflect this same depth of love.

- ✧ The parable of the Good Shepherd is without question one of the most important Christological parables in all the scriptures. The parable contains the essential core of the Christian message: in the example of the Good Shepherd's self-giving love we find the heart of Christ's paschal mystery when he died and rose for each of us.
- ✧ The parable of the Good Shepherd helps the children to tap into their own capacity to actually be in love with God. Children make clear to us that they enjoy the presence of the Good Shepherd in their lives.



### Information

Soon we will launch a concerted effort to recruit adults willing to assist with the CGS in various ways: as a catechist, painter and creator of materials for the Atrium, behind the scenes set up and clean up, etc. You are invited to pray and think about your level of involvement in this exciting new parish initiative.

Obviously we will also begin attracting children to participate in the CGS. As this is a Saint Francis Parish initiative we will only be accepting children whose families are registered members of the Parish – this is not a city-wide initiative that we are offering. The CGS is intended to build up the local parish community, to move the children towards greater and fuller participation in the life of the parish, most particularly at Sunday Eucharist.

***“Children must be able to play, study and grow  
in a peaceful environment.  
Woe to anyone who stifles their joyful impulse to hope!”***

~ Pope Francis, @Pontifex, June 12, 2018