



The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd *St. Francis of Assisi Parish*



Level One Information

Purpose of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd?

To assist the involvement of children and adults in a common religious experience in which the religious values of childhood, primarily those values of contemplation and enjoyment of God, are predominant.

Mission Statement

Our mission is to support catechists, parents and others in the Church and beyond, as they grow in their understanding of the religious potential of children.

What is the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd?

This is a religious education and catechetical initiative that is rooted in the Word of God. It begins with the understanding that God has already established a relationship with each of God's beloved, most especially with children. It does not pour information into the child, but rather it provides an environment for the child to contemplate the great mysteries of our faith at their own pace, in an environment of peace; an environment which so many people seek today, a place to be quiet with our God. This initiative recognizes the Holy Spirit as the true teacher of faith. The objective of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is to present the children with the richest and best spiritual food – the mysteries of the Resurrection, the Incarnation, the Eucharist, etc. Ultimately this initiative seeks to answer the child's request to “come to know God by myself”. This initiative is clearly counter-cultural, its pace is slow and quiet.

What is the Atrium?

This is the name of the space that has been prepared for the children to have their authentic encounter with Christ, in our case the Atrium is in the Assisi Room. It is a quiet place for the children to fall in love with the One who calls them by name. The Atrium has simple, yet beautiful materials designed to draw the children into prayer. The Atrium is a holy and sacred place, a place to contemplate and encounter our God. 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. The Atrium is probably best described as a retreat house that provides for recollection and silence in the presence of God.

What the Catechesis is not.

It is not a replacement for the Children's Liturgy of the Word program at the 9:00 am Sunday Mass – the two activities support one another in our efforts to introduce children to God. It is not busy work, each child works at their own pace; it recognizes that each child of God is unique and comes to God in different ways and at different times. Without question it is not babysitting; it is not noisy; it is not programmed in the fashion of secular education programs.

What is Level One?

Level one of the Catechesis is for those **children ages 3 to 6**. The primary purpose of level one is to 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? These questions are addressed by meditating upon the Word of God; familiarizing the child with biblical stories; exploring the parable of the Good Shepherd and the child's covenant relationship with God; working with the child as they grow in their awareness of all the various dynamics of our faith and how we celebrate that faith, particularly the celebration of the Mass. By using the materials provided in the Atrium the child will begin to establish a greater awareness of Jesus as a real person. This awareness will help the child to unlock some of the great mysteries of our faith.

Expectations Regarding Participation.

The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd requires a level of commitment and participation on the part of the child, assisted by their parents/guardians. This is a weekly activity, normally lasting 1 1/2 hours, from September to Pentecost. While life sometimes throws an unexpected curve ball into our weekly activities, or you have a family activity or vacation already scheduled, nonetheless you are being asked to make every effort possible to insure your child participates weekly. Absences from weekly activities sometimes occur, this reality does not exclude your child from participating, you are simply being asked to make a serious commitment to weekly participation.

Child Safety.

The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd will faithfully adhere to all rules set forth by the Diocese of Hamilton concerning the protection of children. For instance: the adult catechists will all be properly screened with police background checks; and there will never be a time when only one adult is present with the children. The safety of your child, and providing a safe and comfortable environment for them is our primary concern.

Drop-off and Pick-up of Child.

Parents/Guardians are required to physically bring their child into the Atrium and present them to the adult catechists at the time of drop-off. Likewise, parents/guardians are required to come directly into the Atrium to pick their child up at the conclusion of the session. The child will only be released into the care of the person(s) specifically named on the registration form to pick them up. If the person(s) designated changes the parish office must be notified of this change no later than the day before the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd session.

Date and Times.

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Level One will be offered on
WEDNESDAYS OR THURSDAY from 4:00 – 5:30 pm.

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd begins in the Fall and
and concludes in **the Spring (Dates TBD)**



In Summary.

“Let the Little Children Come to Me”
(Matthew 19:14)

We believe that God and the child have a unique relationship with one another, particularly before the age of six.

We believe that the growth of this relationship should be assisted by the adult, but is directed by the Spirit of God within the child.

We believe that children need their own place to foster the growth of that relationship.

We believe that the child's spiritual growth is best served through tangible but indirect means.