

Good Shepherd Children Featured in CGS Special Edition online Catechetical Journal April 2021 -We were filled with joy to be able to share our experiences with the children throughout the Pandemic and all our in-person atrium sessions with the Level I, II and III children last year! These are excerpts from the beautiful online journal from CGSUSA.

CGS in Quarantine

*"The light shines in the darkness and
the darkness did not overcome it."*

John 1:5

APRIL 2021 –
A SPECIAL ISSUE



PRAYING WITH THE CHILDREN

Who lead us to the Kingdom

THE QUARANTINE LETTERS

Some of the CGS correspondence
from the year

REFLECTIONS FROM QUARANTINE

On living a year in pandemic

Enjoy this Special Issue - CGS in
Quarantine

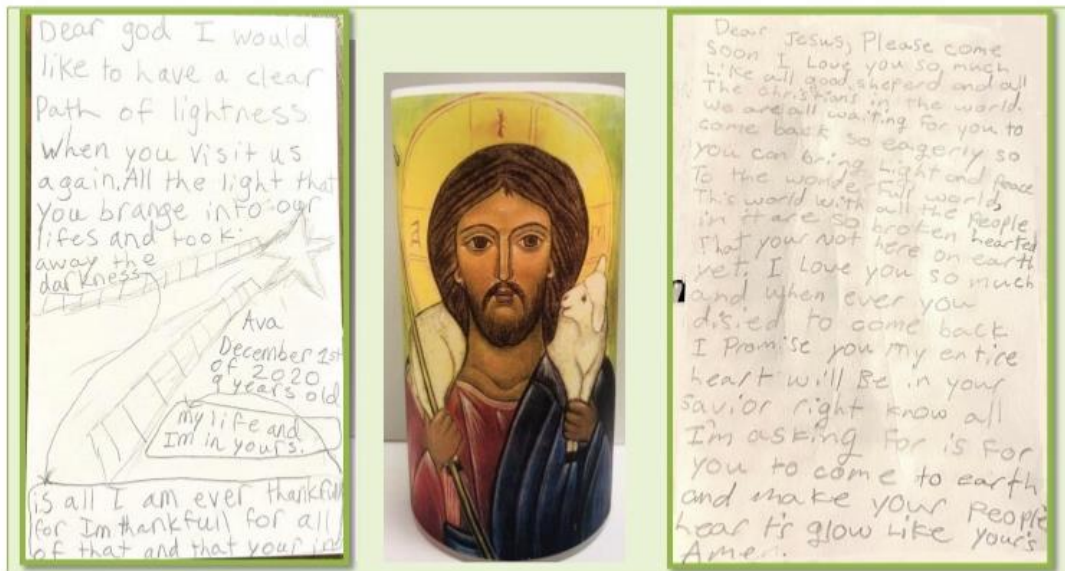
Praying with the Children

Everyone shall get light, even through darkness. We pray to the Lord.
Vincenzo age 9, Morristown NJ

Our world is holy. We all share. Amen.
Jesus is with us. Amen.
God made the earth. God is with us too.
Amen. Amen. Amen.
We love each other. Amen.
Chelsea, age 7, Atrium of the Annunciation, Durham NC

Meditating on Luke's account of Jesus' messianic entry into Jerusalem, I was struck by the Level II children's facility in using the words of sacred scripture to express themselves. As one child described Jesus' humility as a 'king' entering His city, a seven-year-old classmate turned to her and said, "He has lifted up the lowly" (citing directly from the Magnificat). In discussing the people laying their cloaks on the ground, a six-year-old remarked, "like making a way for the Lord and preparing a way in the wilderness" (cited from the Isaiah 40 prophecy). The catechist took the prophecy card for this prophecy and read the verses relating to his comments, at which point another child exclaimed, "A lamp for my feet and a light for my path" (from Psalm 119).

Dan Teller, Cincinnati OH



You Bring Us Hope



Tara Speer, the Coordinator of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd at Assumption Parish in Morristown, NJ shared an email from a mother in her community who wrote: "The kids made these today...the directions were simply... "make a prayer card to share."

How rich and beautiful is the work of our children when given the time and space to be present with God, whether that is in the atrium or at home. The children lead us in prayer and invite us to share in their religious experience of contemplation and the enjoyment of the presence of God.

Dear God,
Thanks you that you are able to bring us hope through tough times, and strengthening us for your purpose. As we miss our friends, family members, school, classmates, activities and church, we are not alone as you are with us. Though we are physically more distant we are spiritually much closer because of your presence in our hearts. We are thankful to have some at our sides and can not wait for you to bring our communities together again and bring joy to the world. We ask this through Christ our Lord.





"We are in weekly phone and email contact with parents, supporting in whatever way we can. A monthly Zoom meeting to check on how they are doing. Most feel overwhelmed as our country is economically brought to its knees. The health crisis here is huge and is impacting on many levels. Support, prayer, faith-sharing groups are what we are offering, not overburdening parents with too much but meeting them where they are"

A catechist from the Summer Seminars

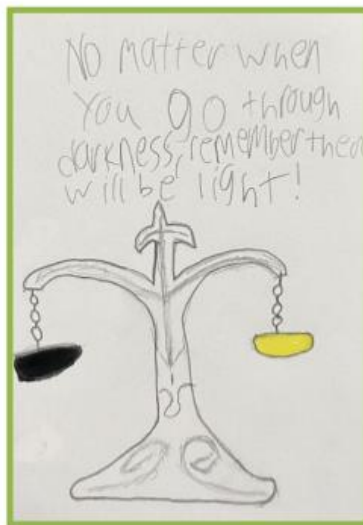
Cautious Joy and Constant Vigilance *a reflection from a catechist*

By Tara Speer

Like many atri, the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS) at Assumption Church was abruptly closed in March of 2020. This was a decision made for public safety and had my full support. As the summer progressed, the volunteers and I were faced with questions about the future of our Good Shepherd community. Frankly, I was unsure if we could open again. I compulsively checked the news every day for indications of COVID-19 spikes or future school closures. In phone calls and Zoom meetings, the volunteers and I would discuss worries and outlooks. But the staff was adamant: CGS brought much needed peace and fellowship to our community. If we could open safely, we should.

Using guidance from CGSUSA and the Morris School District, I created a nearly 21-page safety plan to keep our Good Shepherd community safe. We opened our Level I, II and III atri in September with cautious joy and constant vigilance. Taking temperatures, asking parents to fill out questionnaires, and staggered drop-off times for smaller sessions became our norm. But it was the reaction of the children and families that gave us the fortitude to continue to stay open. The children were so filled with joy and so grateful to be meeting again – even if sessions were often conducted outdoors, with pre-drawn 6-foot markers and masks. I firmly believe that safety comes first, but that there is intrinsic, unquestionable value to having in-person sessions for the children, especially during this time of anxiety and online school.

In-person CGS sessions allow us to support the children, many of whom are grieving, anxious, and stressed. We start our sessions with prayers and "check-ins" about how students are doing. Common feelings include loneliness, missing friends and family, and Zoom exhaustion. One Level II child expressed, "Everything is better in person." Another Level III child commented, "We were online for longer that we would have been at school today. I'm so tired." Seeing each other and praying together affords the children a much-needed break from screen time, but also allows them to feel that their concerns and troubles are heard by their community, peers, and the Good Shepherd.



Our sessions also allow us to support the children through loss, which is a sad reality of the current pandemic. One week before a Level II session, I received a text from a parent that two students were grieving the sudden loss of their grandmother. I am very grateful to this parent for alerting me of the children's sadness, as the volunteers and I could sensitively prepare our session's presentations and focus. The children began their session around the Prayer Table, remembering the great love of Jesus, the Good Shepherd and the True Vine. We proclaimed Jesus' words to us in the Gospel of John Chapter 15. Together, we wondered upon the strength of Christ's love – how it is stronger than death, darkness or sin. After revisiting our Paschal Candle, we took time to think about what happens to those we love when they are lifted into the arms of the Good Shepherd. We took great comfort in remembering that those who we love and who are joined to the True Vine are still connected to us through Christ.

After reflecting on the parable of the True Vine, the children shared the names of their loved ones for whom they were grieving. I was overwhelmed to learn that four of the five children had recently lost a grandparent during the pandemic. I introduced the Prayer for the Deceased to the children and invited them to insert the name of their grandparent in the prayer. The children worked outside in front of the new statue of the Good Shepherd, where they could look closely at the little lamb held with great love and think of their grandparent.

Moments of support and reflection like this occur in every session. And, while safety and public health must be prioritized, I believe that the children would not be able to have such powerful experiences of support while online. Some may argue that online catechesis is better or the way of the future, but I believe that in-person catechesis is much more valuable. If it can be done safely, meeting in person allows children to continue to grow closer to the Good Shepherd and each other, grieve together, and be strengthened; it also empowers them with the tools, faith, and hope to make sense of their new world.

Articles	Author	Region
The Little Things of Family Life	LeAnne Osborn	Great Lakes
Through your eyes	Dana Mooney	Southwest
Joseph's Prayer	Ann Eilermann	Northern Plains
Finding The Good Shepherd At Lydia's House	Laura Menze	Great Lakes
Receiving COVID-19 as a Gift	Joel David Musser	Southeast
Cautious Joy And Constant Vigilance	Tara Speer	Northeast
Learning to Be a Domestic Church	Jana M. Bennett, with Janinne Elsinger	Great Lakes
Shield the Joyous	Davette Himes	Southeast
The Domestic Church	Barbara Matera	Northeast
God is Present with Us	Catherine Maresca /Jodi-beth McCain	Northeast
A Pastoral Perspective	Rev. Msgr. Brendan Muldoon	Southeast
Accompanying Each Other Through Grief	Susan Stuhlsatz-Reese	Northern Plains
Positive and Negative Uses of Digital Technology	Barbara Matera	Northeast
A Dream	Connie Moretti	Pacific Coast

Prayers and Artwork	Author or Artist	Region
p. 2 Jesus the Light	Christina age 9	Great Lakes
p. 3 Reflection on the Coronavirus	Gerson age 12	Pacific Coast
p. 5 Everyone shall get light	Vincenzo age 9	Northeast
p. 5 Amen	Chelsea, age 7	Southeast
p. 5 Alleluia	Patrick age 10	Northeast
p. 5 Reflection	Dan Teller	Great Lakes
p. 5 Dear God	Ava age 9	Northeast
p. 5 Dear Jesus	Penelope, age 9	Northeast
p. 6 People who Walked	Isaac age 9	Northeast
p. 6 As I have loved you	Fatima age 6	Northeast
p. 6 Thank you for Hope	Maria Fernanda age 12	Northeast
p. 11 Alleluia in Hebrew	from Way of the Shepherd School	Northern Plains
p. 14 Alleluia	from Way of the Shepherd School	Northern Plains
p. 19 Alleluia	from Way of the Shepherd School	Northern Plains
p. 19 The Light	David age 12	Northeast
p. 21 I love God	Clare age 4	Northern Plains
p. 22 Shepherd and Sheep	Gwyn Morgan	Southeast
p. 23 Come Let Us Sing...	Gwyn Morgan	Southeast
p. 25 The Empty Tomb	Daniel age 7	Southwest
p. 25 Alleluia	from Way of the Shepherd School	Northern Plains
p. 25 Risen Jesus	Abram, age 7	Great Lakes
p. 26 Be Still	Birdy, age 9	Southeast
P. 31 Christmas is Love	Maia, age 3	Great Lakes
p. 32 Darkness and Light	Rosemary, age 9	Northeast
p. 37 No matter when	Patrick; age 12	Northeast
p. 52 Risen Life	Amelia age 7	Southwest
p. 50 Prayer Table	Remy age 7	Northeast
p. 52 Annunciation	Cecilia age 9	Southwest

Photo	Photographer	Region
p. 4 Child at prayer	Lydia's House	Great Lakes
p. 7 Easter Fire	Annie Dowden Mazzella	Great Lakes
p. 7 Easter Fire	Kayla Cowell	Great Lakes
p. 7 Liturgy of Light	Mary Heinrich	Northern Plains
P. 7 Easter Candle	Jayne Orn	Great Lakes
p. 7 Liturgy of Light	Ann Oliver Eilermann	Northern Plains
P. 7 Easter Fire	Matthew Irvin	Southeast
P. 7 Liturgy of Light	Rachel Manley	Northern Plains
p. 8 Francesca and Patrizia Cochinni	Teague Mooney	International Celebration

Photo

p.4 Child at prayer
p.7 Easter Fire
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p.7 Liturgy of Light
P.7 Easter Candle
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p.8 Francesca and Patrizia Cochinni

Photographer

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Region

Great Lakes
Great Lakes
Great Lakes
Northern Plains
Great Lakes
Northern Plains
Southeast
Northern Plains
International Celebration

p.11 Pentecost table
p.11 Child and catechist at prayer
p.17 Lenten prayer
p.22 Heather
p.30 Family prayer table
p.31 Maia
p.32 Deklan and Rowan
p.32 Altar pasting/Last Supper
p.33 Joseph's prayer
p.34 Lydia's House
p.35 Shay
p.36 Flower Arranging
p.37 Planting bulbs
P.38 Lenten Prayer Table
p.39 Liturgy of Light
p.40 Pretzels for Lent
p.41 Prayer Bag
p.41 Davette and Ezra
p.42 Child at prayer
p.43 Liturgy of Light
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p.46 Making Paschal Candle
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p.51 CGSUSA Board of Trustees
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Mary Heinrich
Carolyn Kohlhaas
Ann Eilermann
Heather Morgan
Sarah Malanaphy
LeAnn Osborn
Dana Mooney
Tara Speer
Ann Eilermann
Laura Menze
Tara Speer
Lydia's House
Tara Speer
Jaclyn Thibaudeau
Pamela Bartell Scofield
Tara Speer
Davette Himes
Preston Winter
Leslie Caraway
Sarah Malanaphy
Jayme Orn
Jaclyn Thibaudeau
Matthew Irvin
Christina M. Crow
Mary Mirione
Mary Mirione

Northern Plains
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