

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is a once-a-week Montessori program that helps children to answer two fundamental questions:

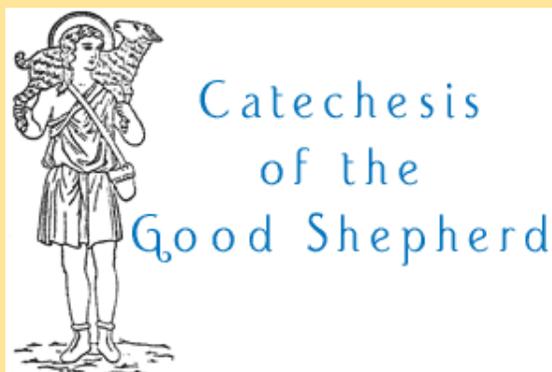
- Who is God?
- Who am I to God?

Level one is for 3- to 6-year-olds, in which they learn the basics of our faith and fall in love with God. They learn about the love of the Good Shepherd using scripture passages that tell them about the life of Jesus. They learn about the Liturgy and Sacraments in an essential way.

Level two is for 6- to 9-year-olds and builds off of level one. Children delve more deeply into the gestures and prayers of the Mass and sacraments and learn about the moral parables and maxims. Now that they are in love and know the most essential truths of the faith, let's take them deeper into learning how to remain connected to the True Vine.

Level three is for children 9- to 12-years-old, delving into the Old Testament covenants, prophets, moments of the sacramental rites, and how the New Testament fulfills the Old Testament. Children in level three unpack the Eucharistic Liturgy like never before as they study the moments of the Mass. These children encounter more deeply the love of God and his plan from the very beginning: a plan of union with him.

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is an amazing program that honors the dignity of each child. This program enables children to slow down and calm their hearts, ponder scripture and the love of God, and work with materials in a small-group community. Here at St. Michael, we will now be offering small group ministry for children from 3 years old through 12th grade, through CGS, youth ministry events, and discipleship groups. How amazing!



Catechesis of the Good Shepherd helps to educate to wonder. We provide an environment in which natural awe and wonder can expand. We give them rich food, but not too much of it in the beginning, and build off that as they get older. Not only are they shown more of the story as they age, but they also think differently and are able to process further as they get older and hear the story again.

What is wonder? A sense of awe that involves the whole being. Not just an intellectual interest, it engages the heart, spirit, and mind.

Level I – 3 to 6 years old

- ✓ Children spend time enjoying and nurturing a relationship with the Good Shepherd.
- ✓ Materials and presentations focus on the life of Christ and His teachings. This makes the great mystery of who God is more understandable for the child.
- ✓ Through geography, words of the prophets, and the infancy narratives, Jesus is established as a real person.
- ✓ The Paschal narratives are treated similarly, using model cities of Jerusalem, empty tombs, and cenacles for the Last Supper.
- ✓ Parables further the child's wonder and curiosity about the great mystery of the Kingdom of God.
- ✓ The children become familiar with the articles of the Eucharist and Baptism as well as the gestures of our liturgy and their meanings.
- ✓ A prayer corner located in each atrium reflects the liturgical time of year by means of appropriate colors, prayers, songs, artwork, and readings.
- ✓ Children learn how to control themselves in their environment. They learn not to interrupt each other, how to practice patience in waiting, grace, and courtesy, and how to properly restore their work when they are finished.
- ✓ Each child grows in reverence for the sacred.
- ✓ They learn to become active participants in our faith at such a young age.
- ✓ Practical life helps each child develop stillness, concentration, control, and focus—mastery of skills needed for the atrium environment.

Level II – 6 to 9 years old

- ✓ The children come to know that God is working from creation through redemption, towards Parousia when God will be all in all.
- ✓ Jesus shows them the way to live together in peace and joy as they abide in Him through their Baptism and the Eucharist. The children learn about the moral parables and maxims, taking them deeper into how they remain on the True Vine.
- ✓ They deepen and strengthen their love and knowledge of staying in right relationship with Jesus through the sacraments and the Liturgy. The children delve more deeply into the gestures and prayers of the Mass and sacraments.
- ✓ Once they can respond with genuine expression, we then introduce them to formulated prayer (i.e., line by line of the Our Father and what it means)

Level III – 9 to 12 years old (Although we have had teens participate)

- ✓ The atrium gives the children the opportunity to explore more deeply the covenants (e.g., an average of eight atrium sessions just on Moses). The Creation stories, the Fall, and the Flood are also explored as well as the call of different prophets that go on mission for God.
- ✓ Looking at a more detailed history of humankind, they discover how God draws all of creation toward Parousia.
- ✓ The children see (in a more challenging way) how God calls us to use our gifts and grow in virtue.
- ✓ They learn how to formulate and lead communal prayer. This communal prayer is structured similar to the Mass structure, allowing for a greater awareness and appreciation for the Mass.
- ✓ Children learn that there are trusted resources for them to find answers and grow in their spiritual life. They learn to research and explore information within these trusted resources.