



Faithful Footsteps

**Walking Together in Faith on a Lifelong Journey
“The Good Shepherd Calls His Little Ones” —
CGS Flourishes in Our Diocese**

Two Level I formation courses for the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS) brought new momentum to parish faith formation this year. A course was held in Dickinson in May, and a companion course was held at Our Lady of Grace Church in Minot in July. Each session welcomed about 15 new catechists, preparing a total of roughly 30 adults to serve our youngest disciples (ages 3–6) in parish atria across the Bismarck Diocese following the completion of their courses in the summer of 2026. A group of 22 also completed the Level II training at the Cathedral this summer. Together, these trainings strengthen parish capacity to offer CGS across our region—meeting a clear and growing interest among families and catechetical leaders.



“This style of faith formation is growing rapidly, and many of our parishes are weaving it into their sacramental and catechetical processes.”



CGS is a Montessori-influenced approach to children’s faith formation that began in Rome in 1954 through the work of biblical scholar Sofia Cavalletti and her Montessori collaborator Gianna Gobbi. Rooted in Scripture and the liturgy, CGS invites children to encounter Jesus the Good Shepherd in a prayerful, hands-on environment called the “atrium.” Level I is designed especially for children ages 3–6, with Levels II and III serving children ages 6–9 and 9–12, respectively.

Parishes are drawn to CGS because it respects the child’s innate relationship with God and nurtures it through quiet prayer, proclamation of the Gospel, and child-sized materials that make the mysteries of the faith tangible. Formation for adults is offered in a retreat-like format that prepares catechists spiritually, theologically, and practically to guide children in the atrium.

The Bismarck Diocese will offer another CGS Level I course beginning next summer and continuing into 2027. Details on dates and registration will be shared with parishes as they are finalized. Prospective catechists and parish leaders are encouraged to begin discernment now and to speak with their pastors or parish faith formation coordinators about preparing an atrium space.

The United States Association of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGSUSA) supports formation and growth nationwide. Today, there are thousands of CGS atria across Catholic and other Christian communities in the U.S., reflecting steady expansion over the past several decades. CGSUSA articulates the core characteristics of the method—particularly its scriptural, liturgical, and Montessori heritage—through its foundational “Points of Reflection” and formation courses for adults.



To learn more about how CGS can serve your parish, visit cgsusa.org or connect with Diane at dhuck@bismarckdiocese.com.

Walking Together in Faith to these

UPCOMING EVENTS

Emmaus Youth Retreat

Williston: Sunday, October 26, 2025, St. Joseph Parish
 Minot: Sunday, November 16, 2025, Bishop Ryan High School
 Dickinson: Sunday, February 22, 2026, Trinity High School
 Bismarck/Mandan: Sunday, March 22, 2026, St. Mary's Central

All retreats run from 12:30 - 6:00 pm local time
 with 5:00 pm Mass included

Prairie Sheepfold Catechist Day Retreat


Saturday, September 6
 10:00 am - 4:00 pm
 Christ the King Parish

505 10th Ave NW, Mandan, ND 58554

Register \$20 at
bismarckdiocese.com/goodshepherd

- Optional 8am Mass, Bfast, Morning Prayer
- Lunch provided
- See website for full schedule

Retreat Leader: Fr. Schneider
 Upper Elementary Guide, Christ the King Catholic Montessori School, Pastor of St. Vincent de Paul Parish, Director of Worship, Bismarck Diocese



We welcome CGS catechists/aides of all levels.
 Nursing infants welcome.

2025-26 SEARCH WEEKENDS

Don't wait until the last minute, the deadline to register is 2 weeks before.

- OCT 10-12, 2025
- NOV 14-16, 2025
- JAN 16-18, 2026
- MAR 6-8, 2026
- APR 17-19, 2026

WEEKEND COST: \$75⁰⁰

PARTIAL SCHOLARSHIPS ARE AVAILABLE. NO ONE WILL BE TURNED AWAY BASED ON FINANCIAL NEED.

REGISTER ONLINE
SearchinMedora.com



A PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN MUST BE PRESENT WHEN REGISTERING ONLINE IF UNDER 18.

Prairie Sheepfold is a for all those who are involved in Catechesis of the Good Shepherd at the school or parish level –parents of students are also welcome to attend.

THE BISMARCK OFFICE OF CATECHESIS AND YOUTH INVITES YOU TO

How Grace Works through the Ordinary: Why Practical Life Activities Matter

(Romans 12; Ephesians 2:10)
 Grace, God's help, comes to each of us constantly, and in the Sacraments, God himself comes to live within us. Thus, every moment, place and relationship is an opportunity for God's love to be known to us and to be made known to others. All is an opportunity for each of us to make a sincere gift of ourselves.



Saturday, September 13 Dr. Stella Marie Jeffrey

10 AM - 4 PM CT

Church of St. Joseph
 Beulah, ND

\$20 registration fee



FMI or to register:
 Scan QR code or go to
<https://bismarckdiocese.com/catechesis-youth>

Hello everyone! My husband Greg and I currently live in Fargo, ND (yes, it's a real place). In Fargo, I spend the majority of my time working in missionary discipleship and evangelization. I also take on "teaching gigs" and do "retreats" and "parish missions" whenever possible. Currently I work full-time for Franciscan University of Steubenville both supporting our partners with the Catechetical Institute, CI, and as an adjunct professor for Theology and Catechetics. My hobbies include playing guitar, choir, dancing, reading, and community improvement. I have served "on the front lines" of the apostolic work of the Catholic Church for most of my adult life. I pray that whatever I do will be a means for all to grow in our love, understanding, and passion for the Jesus Christ, the Saviour and Lord, and His Family, the Church. May we increase our ability to "speak the Faith in a conversational way" with everyone we meet.

"If you want to go fast go alone, but if you want to go far go together." – African Proverb

This is so important to remember especially as we enter into the fall. If you want to do ministry for the long haul, you need travel partners. God has called you, to not only walk with others, but to invite others to walk with you. Building teams and surrounding yourself with accountability and support is essential to your longevity in ministry. Marathon Youth Ministry

How Grace Works

is open to all people of the Bismarck Diocese but especially DREs, youth ministers, catechists, young adult ministers, parents or college students who may be "working in the vineyard" in the future. Dr. Stella will introduce us to the **Catechetical Institute through Franciscan University** and how it can benefit all life-long learners.

Do you have a past event you would like to highlight or an upcoming event you would like to share? Email Diane at dhuck@bismarckdiocese.com with all the information, photos, quotations and more to be including in the upcoming issues of Faithful Footsteps.



Parent Page Newsletter

For the parents of children in the CGS Atrium

August 2025 [PP-Practical-Life-2025-mm1.pdf](#)

Practical Life

What is Practical Life?

In the atrium, young children are typically first drawn to the Practical Life area, as its materials closely resemble those found in their everyday home environment. These exercises—such as pouring, folding, and table washing—offer familiar, hands-on experiences that help the child transition into the atrium while building concentration, coordination, and independence.

What does Practical Life have to do with the child's spiritual formation?

Practical Life activities are essential to the spiritual formation that is nurtured in the Atrium. As children engage in these simple, purposeful works—such as pouring, sweeping, or arranging flowers—they develop inner order, concentration, and a sense of peace. These qualities prepare the heart and mind to encounter God. Through repetition and care in their work, children begin to experience stillness, attentiveness, and joy in doing small things with great love—dispositions essential for prayer and contemplation. As children engage in these practical life works, they will:

- Develop a sense of wonder and reverence: When the child carefully arranges flowers or polishes a brass paten, it can become a meditative act, which invites contemplation and a deeper connection to God's presence in creation.
- Encounter the joy of serving God and others: When the child contributes to the care of the Atrium environment and participates in activities like setting the prayer table or creating a prayer card, it is an act of love and service to our Lord.
- Build the foundation for prayer and contemplation: When the child engages in a practical life activity, the concentration and focus developed help prepare the child for periods of silent reflection and listening to God's Word.
- Make Silence: Silence is important as a necessary means of listening to and responding to God. This is the greatest help to the child in becoming aware of and mastering his or her own actions. The experience of silence heightens the child's awareness of self, others, and the environment. Silence fosters a state of inner peace and thus, also a greater capacity for listening to God.



New CGS Trainings Already in Motion for 2026

Plans are underway for a Level 1 training to start July 13-18, 2026 at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit! Registration will be open soon on the diocesan website. Also working on the details for a Level 2 and Level 3 training for July 2027-2028! CGS is growing and I am so excited to support it from the diocesan level!

Be sure to attend the Prairie Sheepfold event on September 6!

[Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Bismarck Diocese](#) | [Bismarck, ND](#) | [Bismarck Diocese](#) | [Bismarck, ND](#)

LOOK WHO'S WALKIN'

Celebrating fun and educational events in our Diocese that are spreading the Love of Jesus!



"We enjoyed our last Summer Veritas in the cool playing some games as we begin a new school year!"
Fr. Ben Wanner—St. Joseph's Parish, Williston



Passing the Torch: College Youth Launch Parish Youth Ministry

Allison Bleth is one of the youth ministry volunteers at **Christ the King, Mandan**, who assisted with their kick-off Youth Ministry event on August 9th stated, "This kick-off retreat was only my second time leading young people in a setting like this, but these students made it such a special experience. They each had something unique to bring to the group and I really enjoyed seeing how they became comfortable throughout the day as they learned about their relationship with the Lord and participated in some energized group activities. I enjoyed each conversation I had with the students and having the opportunity to get a small glimpse of each of their beautiful hearts. Not too long into the retreat, they began asking if we were going to be having more of these events, and we were very excited to share that we get to gather as a youth group just about every Sunday during the school year! It was such a joy to be a part of this retreat as it was so evident that the Lord was present with us during each moment. I cannot wait to grow in relationship with each of these students and the Lord throughout the coming year and we hope to have even more join us!"



Christ the King parishioner Monica Gardner started a middle-school youth group with hopes of leading the youth into their high school years with a strong faith foundation. They held their first official youth ministry gathering Sunday, August 24th. They played spike ball, Allison gave a talk on our identity as an adopted child of God, the youth wrote letters to God, and played a game called "salad bowl." The kids had a blast, and leaders got more than one parent saying how much their children loved it.

