

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Parent Handbook 2020-2021



*“And whoever welcomes
a little child like this
in My name welcomes
Me.”*

Matthew 18:5

Welcome to the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

Dear Parents,

Welcome to a new year of Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. I would like to express my gratitude to those of you who have graciously and generously stepped forward to serve in the Atrium as assistants. I pray that this year together will be fruitful and will draw us closer to the Good Shepherd.

These past months have been unexpected for sure and in truth difficult; the abrupt way the school year and catechetical year ended left some of our children confused and the adults stressed. Though we are still dealing with the consequences of the virus, I am thankful that we will have the opportunity to gather in the Atrium. To accommodate as many families as possible, we have increased the number of sessions, though this may still leave some families unable to join us physically, I know we are united in the Good Shepherd.

If you picked up a parent handbook last year, not much has changed, though there are some update in the guidelines, the general information remains the same. Please take a moment to go through the handbook and feel free to send an email to cgs@sistersofmarymc.org with any questions

Whether you are a new or a returning family, I hope that this handbook is helpful to you. As you look at the schedules at the end of the book, please note that **the Atrium of St. Joseph at St. Peter Parish has Level one only** and the Atrium of St. Philomena at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Lourdes has concurrent sessions for Levels two and three; if you have any questions please feel free to email me.

We look forward to a blessed year and ask your continued prayers for this ministry.

In the Love of the Shepherd,
Sr. Christiana Marie
and your 2020-2021 Catechists

What is the Atrium?



Listening to the parable of the Good Shepherd

The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd classroom is called an Atrium. The name comes from the place where people were prepared for joining the Church in the earliest days of Christian history. The Atrium is a place of quiet and meditative discovery where children listen to the Good Shepherd's voice during catechetical presentations and can meditate on God's Word while working. The Atrium is, first and foremost, a place of prayer and can be

compared to a retreat house facilitating silence and contemplation. For the child, the Atrium is a place of preparation for involvement in the larger worshipping community.

Time in the Atrium is more like time in church than going to school. Just as talking about what one experiences at Mass may be difficult, children may not be able to articulate their experiences in the Atrium.



A child sets up the model altar

A typical day in the Atrium includes:

- ❖ A presentation on grace and courtesy, practical life, Scripture or Liturgy.
- ❖ A significant period of time for children to work with materials of their own choice.
- ❖ A gathering time of worship at the prayer table.



Pentecost celebration

Glossary of Terms

There are some terms used regularly in CGS that may be new to you. Becoming familiar with these words will make it easier to understand the work being done in the Atrium.

Catechesis - A word first used in the early Church to describe the instruction people received in preparation for Baptism. In our context, the Catechesis is the way children are prepared to participate more fully in the Christian community.

Catechist - The catechist is an adult who guides the children. This person is not a teacher in the traditional sense. Instead, the catechist prepares the environment, creates materials, presents them to the child and then participates with the child in a sense of wonder about God. Our catechists have completed over 90 hours of training and formation for each level. These trainings/formation courses are specific to CGS and include exploring the religious potential and characteristics of the child, methodology & guiding principles of CGS, and meditation on the scriptural, doctrinal and liturgical themes presented to the child.

Assistant - The assistant participates with the lead catechist in preparing and maintaining the environment and observing the needs of the children. Assistants do not typically give presentations unless they have completed a formation course.

Materials - The materials in the Atrium invite the children to explore and deepen faith experiences at their own rhythm. Many of the beautiful materials have been made by catechists or members of the parish. The most important characteristic of the materials is their close link to biblical and liturgical sources.

Maps of Israel and other miniature environments represent the elements of the parables and historical events from Scripture. The altar, baptismal font and other liturgical items initiate the child into the liturgical life of the Church. These elements, events and items have been shown to satisfy the spiritual needs of the child.



Note: Much of the child's time in the Atrium is spent working with these materials. Please do not expect to see traditional crafts and handouts coming home from these sessions.

Presentation - A “lesson” given by the catechist to 1 - 4 children at a time. The presentation includes a time of learning on the topic of focus (and includes a Scriptural passage if the presentation is Biblical), a time of prayer or contemplation and a demonstration of how to use the associated materials. A presentation can be on grace and courtesy, practical life, Scripture or Liturgy. Please be aware that while some presentations are planned based on the Liturgical season, much of what your child receives will be based on the catechist's observation as well as the child's response.

Work - This is the Montessori term for the child's use of the materials. Different than play, working with the materials is the job of the child. Work is the way that the child delves more deeply into Biblical passages and Liturgy.

Important note on the Schedule - In the Atrium, we live the Liturgical life of the Church and strive to first and foremost assist and guide the children in their prayer life. Though there is an order to what presentations the children receive, they are not offered these works in a didactic or systemic manner. Therefore, please do not be surprised if your 2nd year child spends more time working with Practical Life materials than another or if during the Advent season they only meditate with the Annunciation. Likewise, you may find your 1st year child has received presentations that according to the planned schedule is for the 2nd year child. What the child receives depends on the Catechist's observation and most importantly, the child's interest and readiness.

Information and Guidelines

Attendance - It is our goal to provide the best possible religious formation for the children in Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. In the interest of your child's faith formation and the formation of the other children in the class, regular attendance is critical. Each CGS session builds on the previous one. Therefore, an expectation of consistent attendance is required (no more than three absences), unless an emergency or illness arises. Please understand that we have a waiting list and inconsistent attendance will forfeit your place and it will be given to another. Thank you for your understanding.

Artwork - In the Atrium, we send children's work home twice a year, before Christmas break, and at the end of the year. Why is this? We do not want the children to feel that they need to "produce" a piece of artwork to take home. For the child, it is the process that is important, not the product. The child is developing through the process of creating art and theological reflections.

Preparation - To prepare your child for the session, please avoid giving him/her sugary snacks and drinks and make sure he/she goes to the bathroom before entering the Atrium.

Discipline - There is an atmosphere of peace in the Atrium that develops from the start. The children learn how to "move" and "be" in a way that does not distract others. We take time in the beginning of each session to "settle." From time to time a child may have difficulty settling. We have various peaceful ways of helping the child with this. We may ask you for help by coming into the session. We are here to support your child, please keep open communication with your child's catechist to help us in this work.

Observing in the Atrium - We are happy to have you observe this sacred space any time you like. To preserve the natural rhythm of the Atrium, we ask that you contact us to schedule a visit. Please note that observations will not be scheduled until after Advent, this will allow the children and catechists to be settled into the life of the Atrium. Once you have scheduled an observation, the catechist will give you instructions at check in.

Schedule - Sessions **begin the week of October 26th, 2020 and conclude on the week of May 24th, 2021.** There are some weeks throughout the year where we do not have Atrium, please note the schedule at the back of this handbook. You can also find a copy of the schedule on your parish website as indicated below:

St. Philomena Atrium - <https://spokanecathedral.com/cgs>

St. Joseph Atrium - <https://stpeterspokane.org/cgs>

The schedule for the Atrium year is provided to give parents an idea of what we are living in the Atrium. What is presented is based on 1) the Liturgical season and 2) the child. Though some presentations will be received by everyone on the dates/weeks planned (such as the Messianic prophecies, the Baptism presentations etc.) much of the presentations will depend on the child's response and readiness.

Illness - If your child is experiencing a profusely runny nose, a fever, has vomited etc. in the past 24 hours, please keep them at home. He or she must be free of illness for 24 hours before returning to the Atrium.

Snacks - The Atrium is a place of prayer and therefore a sacred space. Food and drink are not permitted in the Atrium. We will have celebrations throughout the year that correspond to Church celebrations (i.e., Epiphany, Easter, Pentecost, etc.). We will notify you when these occur so you can participate with your child in these celebrations. Any food or drink in connection with these times will occur outside the Atrium.

Photo Consent - Photographs may be taken in the Atrium in connection with your parish and its Catechesis ministry (for newsletters, bulletin boards, bulletins and website). If you wish to deny consent for photographs to be taken of your child, please inform your catechist by indicating your preference on the liability/consent waiver form.

Communication – We communicate using Flocknote, please take a moment to ensure that you are enrolled in the CGS Flocknote group. If you would like to enroll or to verify your enrolment, please send an email to cgcs@sistersofmarymc.org with your email and your mobile phone number if applicable. If have a concern/question and wish to have an extended meeting with your child's catechist, please schedule an appointment. Atrium time is devoted 100% to the children.

Helping this ministry – We are very grateful for the parents and parishioners who have responded and have signed up to serve in the Atrium. We have grown significantly over the last couple of years (from one session to eight sessions between two parishes) We have many needs as we grow Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. **Your time, talent, and treasure are needed.** Please contact Sister Christiana Marie if you are interested in helping us sustain this work.

Toileting - Children must be toilet trained and able to self-toilet. ***Catechists are not allowed to assist with toileting.*** Dress young children in clothing that is easy for them to manipulate (sweatpants vs. jeans, leggings vs. tights etc.)



Atrium of St. Joseph at St. Peter Catholic Church

2020-2021 session schedule

**** Please note opening weeks info below,
full sessions do not begin until week 5****

Date	3+ / First year	4+ / Second year	5+ / Third year
30-Oct	* Orientation to the Atrium	* Re-orientation to the Atrium	* Re-orientation to the Atrium
6-Nov	* Practical Life	* Practical Life	* Practical Life
13-Nov	* Enthronement of The Holy Bible * Practical Life	* Enthronement of the Holy Bible * Practical Life	* Enthronement of The Holy Bible * Practical Life
20-Nov	* Practical Life		
4-Dec	* Practical Life		
11-Dec	* Advent Celebration	* Advent Celebration	* Advent Celebration
18-Dec	* Messianic Prophecies	* Messianic Prophecies	* Messianic Prophecies
8-Jan	* Epiphany Celebration	* Epiphany Celebration	* Epiphany Celebration
15-Jan			
22-Jan	* Infancy Narratives	* Infancy Narratives	* Infancy Narratives
29-Jan			
27-Jan	* Kingdom Parables	* Kingdom Parables	* Kingdom Parables
5-Feb	* Gestures of the Mass	* Gestures of the Mass	* Gestures of the Mass
12-Feb			
19-Feb			
26-Feb			
5-Mar	* Lenten Procession * The Good Shepherd	* Lenten Procession * The Good Shepherd	* Lenten Procession * The Good Shepherd
12-Mar			
19-Mar			
26-Mar			

30-Mar	* Last Supper	* Last Supper	* City of Jerusalem
2-Apr	* Liturgy of Light	* Liturgy of Light	* Liturgy of Light
16-Apr	* Baptism		
23-Apr		* Baptism	* Baptism
30-Apr			
7-May			
14-May			
24-May	* Pentecost Celebration	* Pentecost Celebration	* Pentecost Celebration

PLEASE NOTE SCHEDULE FOR OPENING WEEKS

October 30	30-minute sessions
November 6	45-minute sessions
November 13	1-hour sessions
November 20	1-hour sessions

HOLIDAYS/NO SESSIONS:

November 27	Thanksgiving Break
December 23 – Jan 3	Christmas Break
April 5 - 9	Spring Break





Atrium of St. Philomena at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Lourdes

2020-2021 session schedule

**** Please note opening weeks info below,
full sessions do not begin until week 5****

Week	Level I	Level II	Level III
26-Oct	* Orientation to the Atrium	Orientation to the Atrium	Orientation to the Atrium
2-Nov	* The Prayer Table * Practical Life	* Practical Life * Communal Prayer	* Practical Life * Communal Prayer
9-Nov	* Enthronement of The Holy Bible * Practical Life	* Practical Life * Kingdom Parables	* Practical Life * Kingdom Parables
16-Nov	* Practical Life	* The Vastness of the Kingdom of God	* The Vastness of the Kingdom of God
23-Nov	* Practical Life		
30-Nov	* Advent Celebration	* Advent Celebration	* Advent Celebration
7-Dec			
14-Dec	* Messianic Prophecies	* Messianic Prophecies	* Messianic Prophecies
21-Dec			
4-Jan	* Epiphany Celebration	* Epiphany Celebration	* Epiphany Celebration
11-Jan	* Infancy Narratives	* Infancy Narratives	* Infancy Narratives
18-Jan	* Kingdom Parables	* Moral Parables	* The History of the Gifts
25-Jan			
1-Feb	Sessions times adjusted due to Lourdes Novena - Additional information will be sent out via Flocknote		
8-Feb	Sessions times adjusted due to Lourdes Novena - Additional information will be sent out via Flocknote		
15-Feb			
22-Feb	* Lenten Procession		
1-Mar	* The Good Shepherd	* Lenten Procession	* Lenten Procession
8-Mar	* Psalm 23	* The Good Shepherd	* The Good Shepherd
15-Mar		* Psalm 23	* Psalm 23
22-Mar			
29-Mar	* City of Jerusalem * Last Supper	* Passion Narratives	* Passion Narratives

12-Apr	* Liturgy of Light	* Liturgy of Light * Baptism	* Liturgy of Light * Baptism
19-Apr			
26-Apr			
3-May			
10-May			
17-May			
24-May	* Pentecost Celebration	* Pentecost Celebration	* Pentecost Celebration

PLEASE NOTE SCHEDULE FOR OPENING WEEKS

Week of October 26th	30-minute sessions
Week of November 2nd	45-minute sessions
Week of November 9th	1-hour sessions
Week of November 16th	1-hour sessions

HOLIDAYS/NO SESSIONS:

November 2	All Souls
November 11	Veterans' Day
November 25	Thanksgiving Break
December 23 – Jan 3	Christmas Break
January 18	MLK Day
February 15	Presidents' Day
April 5 - 9	Spring Break





Your 2020 -2021 Catechists

Atrium of St. Joseph at St. Peter Parish

Serving children ages 3 – 6

Sr. Christiana Marie
Sr. Gabrielle Marie
Mrs. Laura Palmquist

Atrium of St. Philomena at Our Lady of Lourdes

Serving children ages 3 – 12

Sr. Christiana Marie
Sr. Gabrielle Marie
Sr. Maria Consuela
Sr. Paschalina Marie
Mrs. Christina Carleton
Ms. Elizabeth Lund
Ms. Kajsa McCann
Mrs. Alicia Ries
Mrs. Linda Zvonar

Please email your questions to cgs@sistersofmarymc.org