



Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

Parent Information



Contact: Beth Ruhl CGS Director ruhlcgs@gmail.com



Students enrolled in Pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten, 1st grade and 2nd grade at St. Teresa Catholic School have time for CGS incorporated into the school day. Registration for additional sessions open to all may be found on the parish website beginning in early August. **Registration prioritizes, in the following order, children of volunteering catechists/weekly assistants, children of parents available for weekly nursery help, parishioners, children with previous CGS experience, and non-parishioners.**

What is Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS)?

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS) is a method of helping children enter into a relationship with God. It was developed based on the educational principals of Maria Montessori, an expert who studied early childhood development in depth and greatly valued the dignity and immense potential of the child for learning.

Where does CGS happen?

CGS takes place in a room called the "atrium". This is what the entrance space in Basilicas was called in ancient times. The Atrium is "more like a church than a classroom." (Religious Potential of the Child, 1992). It is a place where the children learn to contemplate God. This room is prepared by the catechists for the religious experience of the child.

How did CGS get started?

Two women, Gianna Gobbi and Sofia Caveletti, started using this method in the 1950s in Italy. Through extensive experience praying with children and observing them work in the "atrium" they identified which scripture passages seemed to resonate the most deeply with the children. One of these passages was the parable of the Good Shepherd. They wondered why the children grasped onto this particular story so much. By listening closely, they heard the children saying they loved the story "because the Good Shepherd knows my name!" Developing this personal loving relationship with Christ is what CGS is all about.

What happens in the atrium?

The children are presented with short scripture passages which they ponder with the trained adult catechist. Some of the presentations have "materials" that go along with them. For example, for the story of the Annunciation, the children listen to the scripture and are then presented with figures of Mary, the angel Gabriel, and the Holy Spirit in the form of fire. After hearing the scripture, the children are invited to "work" with the materials. This leads them to internalize the scriptures and contemplate it in a personal way. Similar presentations are given with materials to teach about the Liturgy. This helps the children understand what is going on at Mass and become more engaged as they make connections between what they absorb in the atrium and what they see in the Liturgy on Sunday.

Many presentations correspond with the Liturgical year of the church. However, the catechist also strives to observe each child and offer presentations in which the individual child shows an interest. For this reason, and because the atrium is an environment with blended ages, summaries for parents about the weekly presentations are not provided. All parents are welcome to observe (after the first 6 weeks) at any session.

In what level should I enroll my child?

CGS is not a curriculum, and previous experience does not necessarily indicate in which level a child should be enrolled. Generally, children ages 3 – 6 should be enrolled in Level 1; children ages 6 – 9 in Level 2, and children 9 – 12 in Level 3. These grouping of ages correspond to the planes of development defined by Maria Montessori. In the first plane (Level 1), children enter the conscious stage of learning. They learn by exploring their senses and interacting with their environment. They learn by using their hands. The phrase the Montessori observed these children proclaim is, "Help me to do it myself." In the second plane (Levels 2 or 3), children desire to work with their peers and are ready to learn about collaboration. The children have a great capacity for information and details. They develop their sense of moral justice and are typically very honest in their observations.

For children with summer birthdays, consider which plane of development your child is exhibiting/feel free to contact me with specific questions to determine the appropriate level for the coming year.

2026 – 2027 Annual Calendar

Sessions meet weekly unless noted

August 27th	6:30PM Required Catechist Meeting
September 3rd	6:30PM Required New Parent Meeting
September 8th – 14th	Shortened session for NEW Level 1 children only
November 25th – 27th	Thanksgiving Break - Sessions Cancelled
December 8th	Immaculate Conception – No Tuesday Sessions
December 21st – 31st	Christmas Break for all Sessions
January 1st – 5th	Christmas Break Continued
March 25th – March 30th	Easter Break for all Sessions
May 10th – May 17th	Last Week of CGS
August 2026	Registration for 2026 - 2027

The catechists (teachers) for your child's sessions will decide **additional sessions** of break throughout the year or may use these additional days as sick day cancellations as needed. The catechists will communicate any additional cancellations days directly to you.

Please see online registration form for session times available for each level.

Additional Information

Eligibility: Children need to turn 3 year olds by August 31st for Level 1 and be potty-trained. Any exceptions need to be pre-approved prior to registration acceptance.

Level 1 is for children ages 3-6; Level 2 is ages 6-9; Level 3 is ages 9-12.

Communication: The catechist team will contact parents by email or text message with cancellation notices or volunteer sign-up information. Each session is led by 3 catechists/weekly assistants.

Schedule: Our program is run by volunteers, so please be aware that the catechists leading your session may have family conflicts (illness) that would require additional cancelations. Please check emails/phone texts for messages concerning cancelations.

Location: Our atrium, the room prepared for the children, is located in the basement of the rectory/parish offices, the building immediately south of the church, at 36th and Randolph. Doors are located on the NE side of the building, across from the back side doors of the church, on an elevated walkway. The babysitting room is located across the hall from the atrium.

Drop off/pick up: For the first part of the year, for child drop off, please wait outside during pleasant weather and the catechists (teachers) will promptly come out to escort the group down to the atrium. Please wait with your child in the courtyard between the rectory and church. During colder weather, please escort your child to the rectory basement babysitting room.

Prior to every session, **please ensure your child has recently used the restroom/washed hands etc.** as these can cause accidents/disruptions to our atrium time. There is a restroom in the cry room at the back of the church for easy use. As always, we catechists are moms and we understand when life is busy and accidents happen.

If someone other than a parent is picking up your child, please let your catechist know in advance. Parents may pick up children from the babysitting room at the end of the session.

Please be on time. Frequent tardiness in drop-off and pick up will result in a request to discontinue attendance.

Illness: Please be prudent and do not send your child if they are ill. Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is not a “check-box” curriculum. Your child will not “miss” any lessons or presentations, as we strive to tailor our approach to each child. Your help with this is much appreciated.

Volunteer: For Level 1 and Level 1 sessions.

Solely run by volunteers, everyone is needed to help in some way. Parents are expected to volunteer in some capacity **every week**. Every parent or designated guardian must have an up-to-date background check and Safe Environment Video training. Please see the following page for detailed information on how to complete.

Volunteer options include:

- **Catechist:** lead atrium sessions weekly; attendance in CGS formation required.
- **Assistant:** assist in atrium sessions weekly, no formal training required. *Encouraged for those discerning attending formation in the future.* Childcare for other children provided as needed in nursery room (located across the hall from the atrium).
- **Nursery:** required for sessions indicated in the schedule. Two adults (or helper age 14+) required for each week. Please volunteer as frequently as able. If you are unable to volunteer at least 2x a month with nursery, please discuss with Beth Ruhl prior to registering your child. (The catechists cannot lead your child's sessions without your help! Thank you to all those who give in this way.)
- **Clean Up:** Every week, all parents are expected to assist in restoring the atrium. Training and a weekly checklist will be provided. This should take less than 15 minutes.

Additional notes:

- For **catechists** and **assistants**, young babies are welcome and frequently present in the atrium. Childcare for other children provided as needed in nursery room (located across the hall from the atrium.)
- For **nursery** and **clean up** help, children are welcome to be with you during your volunteer commitment.
- Parents who volunteer for **catechist** or **assistant** on a weekly basis will receive a tuition waiver.

Our atrium is located both in an adult work environment and in the basement of people's home. Please be aware at all times to use quiet voices as able (even in the nursery) and to promote a peaceful work environment. Please enter and exit the offices with this in mind. Of course, the fussiness of little children is understandable/ often unavoidable, but we ask your assistance with this request.

Investment: The **\$100 annual program fee** (plus a small processing fee) is due at the time of session confirmation via the online parish giving. Please note that after the 3 sessions, there is no reimbursement should a parent choose to withdraw their child(ren). We ask your understanding; the funds sponsor the catechists for their training (\$450+ /catechist for 90+ hours of training) and provide funds for the atrium materials.

Background Check / Annual Safe Environment Training Requirement:

As every parent may be asked to volunteer during the CGS sessions, current status with Safe Environment is required.

To access the diocesan online training dashboard, required for all adults in the diocese interacting with children, please visit <https://lincoln.cmgconnect.org/>.

If you have not created an account in past years, please create a new account. Else, sign in with your former Username and Password.

Once logged in, the following status bar will be near the top of your screen:

Certification Status Yes - Expires: 08/04/2023	Live Training Registration No Upcoming Training	Background Check Status Expires on 09/25/2023
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The Background Check Status requires renewal **once every 5 years**. This process does have a fee associated with it.

The Certification Status requires renewal **every year**, with renewal required every January. Both dates need to be later than **January 2027**. If one or both are not after that date, please scroll down to complete additional training.

Depending on your past training, you will see options. If unsure which training you need to complete, contact St. Teresa Safe Environment Coordinator at TAEI-AA@cdolinc.net.

All volunteers' names are submitted to the diocesan office prior to the start of the year to confirm approved status. If you do not have up-to-date Safe Environment, your child cannot attend CGS until you have completed the training. Thank you for your cooperation.

EVERYONE is required to renew training in January 2027, regardless of original completion date.