



# Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

## Parent Information



Contact Us:

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Students enrolled in Pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten, and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade at St. Teresa Catholic School have time for CGS incorporated into the school day. The information contained in this parent handbook is for the open, non-school, sessions. Registration is for on a first-come basis, regardless of home parish.

## **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.

# 2022-2023 Weekly Atrium Schedule

## Level 1 Ages 3-6

Monday 9:30AM – 11:00AM

\*\*Volunteer Nursery Help Required

Monday 3:30PM – 5:00PM

Tuesday 1:50PM – 3:20PM

Thursday 10:00AM – 11:30AM

\*\*Volunteer Nursery Help Required

## Level 2 Ages 6-9

Monday 1:40PM – 3:10PM

Tuesday 3:45PM – 5:15PM

Wednesday 3:45PM – 5:15PM

\*\*CCD Time for 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Sacramental Preparation  
Priority Time for St. Teresa 1<sup>st</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> grade students

# 2022-2023 Atrium Schedule

Sessions meet weekly unless noted\*\*

**August 23th**

Required Catechist Meeting

**August 25th**

Required Assistant Meeting

**August 27th**

Required Parent Clean Up/Nursery Training

**August 30<sup>th</sup> – September 2<sup>nd</sup>**

Shortened session for NEW children only

**September 6<sup>th</sup> – 12**

CGS First Full Session for every child  
(deadline for payment)

**November 1st**

Solemnity - Tuesday Sessions Only Cancelled

**November 23<sup>rd</sup>**

Thanksgiving - Wednesday Sessions Only Cancelled

**December 22<sup>nd</sup> – 31st**

Christmas Break for all Sessions

**January 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup>**

Christmas Break Continued (M/T)

**April 10<sup>th</sup> – April 11<sup>th</sup>**

Easter Break for all Sessions

**May 8<sup>th</sup> – May 10<sup>th</sup>**

Last Week of CGS

**July 2023**

Registration for 2023 - 2024

The catechists (teachers) for your child's sessions may 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.

## Additional Information

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

**Communication:** The catechist team will contact parents by email or text message with cancellation notices or volunteer sign-up information.

**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. Each individual session will determine if there will be any “make-up” days for missed classes. 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 36<sup>th</sup> 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.

**Drop off/pick up:** 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 wait in the cry room in the back of the church, and the catechist will come over to escort the group.

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.

Children will be dismissed to a parent from the door of the parish offices. If someone other than a parent is picking up your child, please let your catechist know in advance.

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:**

Solely run by volunteers, everyone is needed to help in some way. **Every parent or designated guardian must a background check and Safe Environment Video training**, located at <https://lincoln.cmgconnect.org/>. If you have completed a background check for the Lincoln Diocese in the last 5 years, please complete the annual "Safe Environment" short video training. Please forward the email confirming your completion, with expiration after May 2023, to Beth Ruhl.

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 at least 2x a month for sessions indicated in the schedule. Two adults (or helper age 14+) required for each week.
- **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.
- **Deep Clean:** 1 – 2 volunteers are needed weekly to deep clean the atrium, wash the dirty laundry, wash dishes, vacuum, etc. Approximately 45 minutes a week.

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**, **assistant**, or **nursery** on a weekly basis will receive a tuition discount.
- **Training for each position is required and will take place in August prior to the start of the year.**

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 program fee** is due the first session of classes, in the form of cash/check. Please make checks out to **St. Teresa** and write CGS in the memo line. 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 reimburse the catechists for their training (\$400+/catechist for 90+ hours of training) and provide funds for the atrium materials.