

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd- Week 1 & 2

Dear Parents and Grandparents:

It has been an absolute pleasure to spend time with your children at the Atrium in the last two Sundays.

We will not have Catechesis next week (Thanksgiving weekend) but look forward to seeing your children again on October 18th.

Please note that for security reasons, the church doors will be closed shortly after the 11AM mass. There will be someone at the main door to let the children in until approx. 1:20 PM and again there will be someone near the door from 2:45PM to let parents in for pick-up. If there is no one at the door when you come in, please call my cell at (613)-882-5690.

Week 1: the children were oriented to the Atrium and the prayer corner and were introduced to and worked on practical life materials. They were also presented with "speaking softly" and "walking slowly". We had a beautiful procession with items on the prayer table as the children walked beautifully to gently lay the items on the prayer table. We ended our session with talking about the things we were thankful for. Every child had something to say.

Week 2: Yesterday it was lovely to see some of the children come in and gravitate towards the practical life work that most appealed to them without the need for Catechist assistance. They sure are getting used to the Atrium!

Four of the children were presented with flower arranging work (which they proceeded to place on the prayer table), as others polished the chalice, poured beans, sponged water between two bowls, poured water precisely between two mini jugs, traced and much more.

Practical Life work, like pouring, meets many of the child's needs: it helps them slow down, focus and have calm and silence so that they can later develop the skill to be still and listen to presentations; it helps perfect their fine motor skills to do things by themselves; another purpose is to perfect a useful skill: the skill of pouring. After this, children can use their newly-perfected pouring skills to meditate on the preparation of the cruets of wine and water before mass. Later, the child uses their pouring skills to meditate on the mingling of water with wine during the preparation of the chalice.

We had a wonderful ceremony to enthrone the Bible in the prayer corner. They were told that a "procession" means "beautiful walking". They were eager to show their beautiful walks -- and they truly were beautiful!!!

The children processed from the hall as they sang and reverently placed the items on the prayer table. The catechist spoke about how the Bible was the most important book in the world and how precious it was because it contains God's words that we give it a place of honor at the prayer table. The Catechist modelled how reverently we hold the Holy Bible. The children took turns holding the Bible and kissing it. The children then listened to the scriptural verse from John 8:12

and meditated on the words. As Catechists, we were awed by the responses of the children to what Jesus was saying and the connections the children made to the properties of light/flame and Jesus. Quite simply ...it was beautiful.

Thank you for bringing these precious gifts of God to the Atrium.

Norma Dawes
Patti Hendricks
Suzanne Sheppard
Anita Kuriakose

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd- Week 3

Dear Parents and Grandparents:

The Catechesis was extra special this past Sunday for our 3rd session. Fr. Pierre joined us at the Atrium to bless the children, the Atrium space and the Catechists.

The children gathered around the prayer corner to listen attentively to Fr. Pierre as he spoke to the children about many things -- including, about the Good Shepherd, and some of the liturgical gestures and what it means.

As you may know, the main aim behind all of the Level I work is to help the child fall in love with God. Level I children, who are 3 to 6 years of age, are in a "sensitive period" with an "absorbent mind" (Montessori terms) and are curious and seeking to know more about God and to be in a relationship with Him. The child at this level has a strong capacity to fall in love and to be in love.

The 3-6 child isn't in a sensitive period for moral formation yet; that will start to emerge in Level II. But the time, space, and opportunity that Level I offers the child to fall in love with God through Jesus, the Good Shepherd, provides a solid foundation for the child's moral formation because their whole life and all its moral choices can be built on the child's knowledge that Jesus, the Good Shepherd, loves them abundantly, completely, and perfectly -- no matter what.

Fr Pierre laid a wonderful foundation for our future presentations and work on the Good Shepherd parables. Thank you Fr. Pierre!

We look forward to be with your children at the Atrium next Sunday.

God Bless.

Norma Dawes
Patti Hendricks
Suzanne Sheppard
Anita Kuriakose

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd- Week 4 and 5

Dear Parents and grandparents:

We completed two more weeks of Catechesis and we have commenced with the incorporation of concrete liturgical work and gestures.

In **Week 4** the children were introduced to a prayer that doesn't really need words: the Sign of the Cross. The Catechist sat beside the child (as opposed to sitting across from them) and demonstrated the Sign of the Cross.

If, as parents, you wish to practice the Sign of the Cross, we recommend sitting beside your child so the child can follow with the correct hand and direction (as opposed to mirroring your hand and directions when they sit across from you. There will be fewer use of left hands that way).

They were also introduced to the gesture of genuflection which they practiced in the Atrium. They were also given the opportunity to visit the Blessed Sacrament chapel in the church where they genuflected beautifully in front of the Tabernacle.

In **Week 5**, the Catechist revisited the Sign of the Cross and genuflection. The children demonstrated the gestures with aplomb!

This week the children were introduced to the Altar Work. They eagerly soaked in the presentation as they repeated the names of the special articles that go on the Altar: Altar cloth, Chalice (to hold the wine that becomes Jesus), Paten (to hold the bread that becomes Jesus); the candles (representing Jesus as the light) and the Crucifix. [Note: we don't talk about body and blood yet when we refer to the bread and wine -- simply, that they become Jesus).

Following the meditation moment where Catechist and children reflected on what a beautiful meal Jesus is inviting us to at the Altar, the children were invited to help put the items away and work with the materials whenever they wanted to. The invitation was accepted almost immediately!

Altar Work consumed them for a large part of the time and beautiful work products were created as they made Altar collages; traced the altar items; and filled in Altar cut-outs. These activities give them opportunities for reflection and provide moments to reinforce the correct names of the sacred articles that they will see at the Altar in church.

It's cold and flu season and a number of children were away. We intend to present the materials to them when they return.

We look forward to seeing your children again next Sunday.

God Bless.

Norma Dawes
Patti Hendricks
Suzanne Sheppard
Anita Kuriakose

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd- Week 6, 7 and 8

Dear Parents and Grandparents:

We have completed 3 more weeks of catechesis and there is so much the children have been presented with and have learnt. Many of these presentations are considered to be foundational.

In **Week 6**, the children were introduced to the liturgical colours of the church. They worked with the different coloured chasubles (the outermost liturgical vestments of the priest worn during mass). The children know that, like nature, there are seasons to the church and each season has its own colour.

To reinforce what they were presented with, they were taught the "Liturgical Colours Song" which they sang with gusto.

"Purple and Green, Red and White
Are the Colors of the Year.
Purple and Green, Red and White
Remind Us of the Light.

Purple is for Preparation,
White is for Celebration
Green is for the Growing Time,
and Red is for Pentecost"

They spent much time working with the chasubles.

Week 7: Geography was the main focus of week 7--specifically, biblical geography. The children were presented with the textured Globe. We identified Canada. How big Canada is.

A small red dot identified the land of Israel. A place so small yet so important. Big things can come from small humble places-- this is the theme that the children will recognize when we begin the infancy narratives later on.

We took a closer look at that dot by bring out the topographical relief map of the land of Israel. The children are beginning the process of putting Jesus in time and place. They saw the blue waters that they recognized from the globe. They felt the rough mountains and the textured land. This presentation has a sensorial component to it as sight and touch are important to learning.

They learnt about the three most important cities in the life of Jesus. They identified Nazareth - where the angel came to Mary; Bethlehem - where Jesus was born, and Jerusalem- where Jesus died and rose again.

Week 8: In anticipation of the advent season and Christmas, it was time to present the children with one of the important Prophecies. (There will be other prophecies in the coming weeks).

The Catechist read from Isaiah 9:1: "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light".

The children innately knew who Prophet Isaiah was speaking about. They readily identified the light as being "Jesus" or "God". The people were waiting in darkness. They had been waiting for such a long time....

As we enter into the season of advent, we will wait like the people and prepare for the celebration (the feast) of Christmas.

Next session will be an exciting one as the children will participate in the changing of the colours from green to purple at the prayer table. The Advent presentation is a beautiful one involving a procession, advent candles and more.

As always, we look forward to spending time with your children on Sunday.

God Bless.

Norma Dawes
Patti Hendricks
Suzanne Sheppard
Anita Kuriakose