

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd- Week 9, 10 and 11.

Dear Parents and Grandparents:

We have had three more wonderful, spirit-filled weeks at the Atrium.

An Invitation: Next Sunday is our last Atrium session for the Fall. We would like to extend an invitation to the parents and grandparents to come to the Atrium to observe in prayerful silence the work of the children at the Atrium. You are welcome to join us for the entire two hours or, if you prefer, join us at 2:00PM for the presentation and then the gathering at the prayer corner. The first hour will be dedicated to practical life work and reinforcing previous scriptural and liturgical work.

Please let us know, whether you will be attending and how many from your family will be there so we can arrange the necessary number of seating in the Atrium.

Week 9 - The first Sunday of Advent. The Atrium session commenced with a wonderful procession for the changing of the colours at the prayer table from green to purple to emphasize the change in the season of the church. Prior to the procession the children had the opportunity to visit the church and notice the change in colours at the altar and to note the beautiful Advent candles and wreath near the altar.

The procession was followed by a period of thoughtful mediation. Advent was introduced as a time of waiting and preparing for the great feast of Christmas. The Catechist presented the beautiful Advent wreath with the 5 candles: three purple, one pink and one white.

We lit the first candle representing Hope. Hope is like a light shining in a dark place. As we looked at the light of this candle we celebrated the hope we have in Jesus Christ who is coming into our world on the great feast of Christmas.

As we draw nearer to Christmas, another candle will be lit, each candle dispelling the darkness a little more; marking the passage of time until the Light comes to the world.

Week 10: In the 2nd week of Advent we lit the second candle for Peace to remind us that Jesus is the Prince of Peace and that in him lasting peace is found.

The presentations during Advent revolve around the Messianic prophecies and Infancy narratives.

The children are introduced to the prophecies so they too can participate in preparing for the Light in this period of waiting. Children learn that prophecies are words spoken by prophets. The prophets are people who listen very attentively to God's voice and then speak His words to others. Prophecies help in understanding the plan that God has for us.

Today's prophesy was Prophecy of the Names, Isaiah 9:6 "*His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*"

The Children were introduced to the different names for Jesus. When we read from the Bible in Atrium, the catechist reads, and re-reads, the words of the prophesy in a quiet, slow manner. The catechist will invite simple, brief reflection. The response of the children, particularly at the youngest ages, may be silence.

However, at this presentation what a wonderfully moving moment it was for the Catechist and adults who were observing the response of the children to the prophesy! For example, the Catechist explained the meaning of Counselor as someone who helps, someone who you go to when you have something on your mind. A counselor listens to you and helps/guides you. The children's genuine curiosity elicited questions like: Can we talk to Jesus anywhere? What about at night? How can Jesus listen to everyone everywhere? and so on...

It was a very interactive presentation displaying the children's deep thirst to know about Jesus and to be reassured in the knowledge that Jesus loves them completely and unconditionally -- all the time. A truly beautiful session!

At the gathering at the prayer table, the Catechist asked the children to think about what gift they will give Jesus for his birthday.

In **Week 11**, the children were introduced to the first of 5 Level 1 infancy narratives. Infancy narratives are Gospel accounts about Jesus' birth and childhood.

Today's narrative was the Annunciation, found in Luke 1:26-35. In this narrative, the angel Gabriel tells Mary that she will give birth to Jesus. And Mary responds, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word."

We heard so many big word in this scripture reading: "Virgin" is a young woman who is not married; "Bethrothed" means that Mary was promised to marry Joseph; "Favoured one" means that Mary was so special to God; "Ancestor" is a relative from long time ago; "Kinswoman" is a relative.

After reading the words from the Bible once, the Catechist showed the children the manipulative material to reflect on this narrative with re-reading from the Scripture. The material consists of beautiful, three-dimensional figures of Mary and the Angel.

The Catechist and children wondered together what Mary was doing when the Angel Gabriel came to her.

I wonder what she was thinking and feeling.

I wonder if she was afraid. The Angel Gabriel said "be not afraid".

What did Mary say to the Angel?

At the prayer table we lit another candle, the pink candle for Joy, to remind us that when Jesus is born again in us we have joy and that through him there will be everlasting joy on earth. When

the angel Gabriel told Mary that a special child would be born to her she was filled with joy. She sang a song that began with the words: "My soul magnifies the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my saviour."

We look forward to seeing you and your children next Sunday for the last session of 2015.

God Bless,

Norma Dawes
Patti Hendricks
Suzanne Sheppard
Anita Kuriakose