

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd – Spring 2016

Parent Updates from Week 3 to Week 7

Dear Parents and Grandparents

This is a reminder that next Sunday will be the last CGS session of the 2015-16 year. CGS sessions end with Pentecost. We hope all the children can attend this final session as we will be concluding Atrium with a special celebration for Pentecost. Our children have learned that red is the color of Pentecost -- they may choose to wear red for the occasion if they wish.

Weeks 3 - 7

We have had a wonderfully rich spring session at the Atrium.

Since the children have joined the Atrium at different times during the year, as catechists we were drawn during this session to stagger and tailor the presentations to the level of the individual child. As such, we found ourselves moving away from larger group presentations and focusing on one or two children at a time. Not every child received the same presentation at the same time. This is how a CGS Atrium normally works. The children will all eventually receive all of the Level 1 presentations and work with all of the materials over the 3-year cycle.

Parable of the Mustard Seed:

During the course of the spring session then, some of the children continued to reflect more about the mysteries of the Kingdom of God. What is so beautiful about the Kingdom of God parables is Jesus' use of simple language and imagery to evoke reflection of a complex and inexhaustible mystery. Big words and many sentences can lose the child who is developmentally still grasping the intricacies of language and complex logical thought.

We remember the parable of the precious pearl and what a beautiful response it evoked from the children. This session we reflected on the parable of the mustard seed:

"The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that a person took and sowed in the field. It is the smallest of all the seeds, yet when full-grown it is the largest of plants. It becomes a large bush, and the birds of the sky come and dwell in its branches." (Matthew 13:31)

The mustard seed that Jesus was talking about is not the standard mustard seed we find in the store: the Israeli mustard is much smaller ...almost like a speck/flake of pepper. If you breathe on it, it will float away. The children were each given a tiny mustard seed on their finger.

The children then looked at a picture of a mustard tree fully grown. So big!

What makes such a small seed grow so big? We wonder.

The children are fascinated by the transformation of the very small into the very big. They can relate to being so small in such a big world -- so the parable speaks to them. They sense the

power within them that makes them grow and change like the mustard seed. They absolutely plan on becoming the big tree one day as they work to master the skills of those around them who are bigger.

What could Jesus be telling us about the Kingdom of God when He says it is like a mustard seed that grows into a large tree? We wonder. Jesus says that the birds of the sky will find shelter in its branches. As adults we may reflect on Jesus' words that all species of birds of the sky will come and dwell in its branches.

The children were each given a book-mark which had one Israeli mustard seed in the centre of it and a picture of the mustard tree with the birds flying around and resting on its branches. It is a reminder of the parable and the transformation that they themselves are going through - whether spiritual, emotional or physical.

Baptism I- Light and White Garment:

Easter is the perfect time to introduce the sacrament of baptism to the Level 1 children as the new-life and light of Easter is intrinsically linked to baptism. The baptism presentations are given in 3 separate stages.

The children are first introduced to the gift of Christ's light as the Catechist slowly begins by lighting a model of the paschal candle:

Before Jesus was born the people were waiting for the light to come into the world. When Jesus was born, the light came [Catechist lights the Paschal candle]. Then when Jesus died the light went out [Candle is snuffed out].

When He rose again the light came back [re-lights candle]. This light was different -- it was brighter and stronger. It grew and the light went all over the world to other lands and peoples.

When each of us were baptised we received the light. The Catechist lights individual baptismal candles from the paschal candle and hands it to each child saying "[Name], when you were baptised, you received the light".

From one light there were so many lights.

The light is the most important gift of baptism. There is also another thing that represents light: the white garment that is worn during baptism. That also represents the light -- it is an outward sign of the light of Christ within us. [The children were shown a small white garment].

Pentecost:

Pentecost is known as the birthday of the church. It is a wonderful celebration.

The Pentecost presentation at the Atrium will begin at the Cenacle where Mary and the 11 disciples are gathered. They were afraid as the followers of Jesus were being persecuted. The doors and windows were closed and locked when suddenly a gust of wind fills the room and

tongues of fire rested on them and they were filled with the Holy Spirit. We will read from Act 2:1-4.

We look forward to celebrating Pentecost with your children on this last session of this catechetical year.

God Bless,

Norma Dawes, Patti Hendricks, Suzanne Sheppard, Anita Kuriakose