

## **WHAT IS THE CATECHESIS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD?**

- **A hands-on, Montessori approach to Christian Formation designed for 3 - 12 year olds.** Prepared rooms, called 'Atriums', provide materials to aid the child in understanding Scripture and Liturgy. The Atrium is designed to be a place of quiet work and concentration- a place where work is prayer.
- **The Sacraments and Scripture are broken down into essential components.** This makes these aspects of our faith accessible and profoundly relevant to the child. A deep knowing is fostered by allowing the child to freely choose the material and to synthesize it themselves.
- **Appeals very much to children.** Children love this approach. The hands-on materials attract the child to the subject meditated on and encourage active participation and quiet meditation.
- **Allows for moral formation based on love and gratitude.** The cultivation of awe and wonder as primary and memorization of information as secondary allows for true moral formation as the child is helped in falling in love with the One who made them.
- **Cultivates deep listening.** It is from the cultivation of wonder that the children eagerly and actively pursue the language and knowledge to understand our religious sensibilities and enable the discussion of these truths at a very high level.
- **Encourages a thirst for God.** Using the parables of Jesus, the children are asked to ponder the mystery of the Kingdom of God. This method requires the listener to wonder: Who is God? The phrases and parables provide inexhaustible avenues for contemplation. Therefore, adequate time is given for developmentally appropriate prayer, worship and work.
- **Enjoys wide spread, cross-cultural appeal and nourishes people of all ages.** Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is in 37 countries and is currently used by Mother Teresa's Sisters of Charity for the formation of their novices worldwide. Visit [www.cgsusa.org](http://www.cgsusa.org)

## **WHERE DID CATECHESIS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD ORIGINATE?**

- **It began in Italy (Rome) in 1954, by two Catholic educators and developed over a 50 year span.** Dr. Sofia Cavalletti (a Hebrew and Scripture scholar) and Gianna Gobbi (a child development expert) continued the work begun by Maria Montessori, which was to provide a place for children to prepare for their life in the church. By observing the religious potential of the children, these educators discovered which aspects, in what form, and in what order, the Christian faith was best received by the children.

## **CATECHESIS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD AT ST. TERESA OF AVILA: 2011-2012**

- **We have a team of more than 10 highly trained catechists.** Each of these catechists has over 100 hours of training. They, along with their dedicated assistants, have been donating their time and expertise to Catechesis of the Good Shepherd for many years.
- **We have an entire building designated solely for Catechesis of the Good Shepherd.** The Religious Education Center, directly south of the church, has three atriums filled with beautiful hands-on materials. Classes are offered three different times weekly.

## **WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO START AT AGE THREE?**

- The joy the young child displays on being presented with the parable of the Good Shepherd shows that this message, this face of God as the Good Shepherd, speaks to a vital need of the child. It is the need to enjoy this relationship of being called by name, of being led, cared for, protected and loved.
- It is important to allow the child to enter into a relationship with God, the One who made them, before they enter into reasoning about moral behavior. If one acts out of a response of being loved, moral behavior flows freely.
- The younger child experiences the Eucharist as gift. They enjoy this gift of God's self-giving and respond with much gratitude. Later the older child will naturally ask, how can I respond best to what has been given? This, then, includes a desire to ask for forgiveness and to sacrifice for the good. But the youngest child does well to simply enjoy God as the One who gives.
- The 3-6 year old child has a huge capacity for religious sensibilities because of who they are at this point in their development. This age child has a huge capacity for: relationship, quiet concentration, gratitude, awe and wonder, living in the moment, expressing joy, compassion, forgiveness, essentiality/simplicity and living with mystery.

## **ARE YOU BEING CALLED TO THIS MINISTRY?**

- **Please prayerfully consider becoming involved in this ministry with children.**
- **Assistant catechists are needed to work with lead catechists with the 3-12 years olds.** Training will be provided. This position requires volunteering 6 hours a month during the school year. The times are Tuesdays or Thursdays from 4:30-6pm or Sundays from 10:30- 12noon.  
**Singers are also needed to lead us in song.** This requires about 1 ½ hours a month.  
**Artists and craftsmen are occasionally needed to make and replace materials.**
- **Young adults are needed to work with 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders as they prepare for confirmation.**

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

- Contact Kate Lynch at 773-528-6650 ext. 232 or email [klynch@stteresaparish.org](mailto:klynch@stteresaparish.org) or visit [www.st-teresa.net](http://www.st-teresa.net) and [www.cgsusa.org](http://www.cgsusa.org)