



Good Shepherd News

St. Gerard Majella 2026-27
Catechesis of the Good Shepherd



God and the Child

The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is a Montessori-based religious program aimed for children beginning at age three. The atrium is a sacred space where children can nurture a personal relationship with God. The space is ordered, child-sized, and beautiful, allowing the children opportunities to interact directly and intensely with materials that are specially prepared by the catechists and community. The atrium is not a classroom, but rather a place prepared for the child to fully receive God's love and feel His presence. Children are given opportunities to learn about and experience prayer, the Kingdom of God Parables, the Altar and parts of Mass, the Geography of Israel, the Infancy Narratives, the Paschal Mystery, Baptism, and Jesus as the Good Shepherd. Children have the liberty to move freely and choose works they feel drawn to. The eventual aim of the atrium is to prepare the children to develop and nurture their faith and to participate more fully in Mass.

Areas of the Atrium

The atrium is complete with ten areas:

1. Practical Life
2. Prayer Corner
3. Kingdom of God (Parables)
4. Altar/Mass Works
5. Geography
6. Infancy Narratives
7. Paschal Mystery
8. Baptism
9. Good Shepherd

Materials

The materials in the atrium are generally not available to purchase and must be made to follow specific guidelines. They need to meet the following criteria:

1. Essential
2. Beautiful
3. Durable
4. Reflect the Culture and Community
5. Hand-made by the Catechists and Support Team

Level I & II Atrium Sessions

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is a treasure that offers each child a personal encounter with our Lord. St. Gerard Majella currently offers Levels I, II and III. Level I serves children ages 3-6 years and Level II serves children ages 6-9 years. Level III serves ages 9-12 years. The intent of Level I work is for the child to nurture a loving relationship with God. Level II builds on the Level I work while moving in the direction of the covenant with God—acknowledging the individual response to God's gifts through Moral Formation and Sacramental Preparation. Level III builds on prior levels with emphasis on the History of the Plan of God, His people, Sacraments, Moral Formation, and our role in building the Kingdom of God.

CGS is in its 17th year at SGM. We are in awe of the work that God does in the time that children are in the atrium. The special moments, deep thoughts and insights that children of all ages share are truly inspiring and moving.

***Parents are welcome and encouraged to observe children at work in the atrium.** We ask that you sign in at the school office. Please make every effort to observe a class other than your own child's class as this may disrupt his/her precious time in the atrium. If you are interested in volunteering as an assistant, please email cgs@sgmparish.org. We would love to have you!

In the love of the Good Shepherd,
Chris Bickhaus Barb Frein Michelle Golinvaux
Ann Eilermann Heidi Mostek