

Parent Handbook  
For Students Entering

CATECHESIS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Dear Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Family

Welcome to the atrium and to the joyful journey with the Good Shepherd! We are so grateful to God to be able to offer this approach to faith formation to your child.

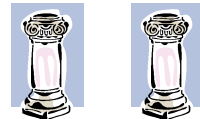
WELCOME



The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd classroom is called an atrium. The name comes from the place where people were prepared for joining the Church in the earliest days of Christian history. It is a place in very close proximity to the church—just like the atrium or indoor courtyards in modern office buildings are today. The atrium is a place of quiet and meditative discovery. It is here that your child will delight and give expression to his or her relationship with God.

We know that even the youngest children, in their deepest being, are in an intimate, loving relationship with God. The atrium environment helps them give expression to that relationship. Every movement and even every word in the atrium environment is purposeful in helping the children to that end. The environment is carefully and lovingly prepared and controlled to give the children the independence and silence they need to meet the Good Shepherd and delight in His presence.

You might wonder how is this accomplished? First and foremost it is a gift from God the Father, accomplished through Our Lord Jesus Christ the Good Shepherd, by the power of the Holy Spirit. In a prepared environment (the atrium) with trained catechists whose primary sources are Sacred Scripture and Liturgy the children come to live the joyful life of a child of God. Through Scripture the Father Who is in heaven comes lovingly to meet His children and talks to them. In Liturgy the children of God respond in faith and love to the great gift of God's blessings.



With Scripture and Liturgy as the pillars the children will be soundly supported in learning about the Kingdom of God, the Life of Jesus, the Mass, the Sacraments and prayer.

They will also develop practical life skills like pouring, sweeping, polishing, folding—all which are skills necessary to keep the church ( and your home—the domestic church) clean and neat. Some of the skills they learn this year will help prepare them to serve Mass when the time comes. But most of all they will know how much the Good Shepherd loves them and their joy will be deep within them and they will delight in the realization that God has chosen them to receive such a magnificent blessing.



Know that you are always welcome to observe in the atrium, but if possible please let us know at the beginning of the class the week before you would like to observe. This will give us time to prepare the children for the observation— something that is important to the order of the atrium. There is a sheet in your packet that gives you information about coming into the prepared environment. It is important to the life of the atrium to follow the guidelines. Like monks, their work is their prayer!

The first few weeks will be spent in helping the children learn about life in the atrium. They will learn to speak in a quiet voice and to walk slowly both of which respect the work of the other children in the atrium. It may be wise to wait a few weeks to observe unless you are certain that your presence will not be a distraction to your child or any other child in the atrium.



Catechesis of the Good Shepherd begins at 6:30 PM and ends at 7:45. Parents and children all enter and leave through the north door. We begin with Evening Prayer in the church. If your child is in Level I (3-6 yrs old) we ask that you accompany them to Evening Prayer. Feel free to sit anywhere in the church that is not occupied by another class. The chairs in the front of the church on the west side would be ideal for the little one's view.



Each class is dismissed one by one from Evening Prayer. When your child's atrium name is called you may take them to their room and assist them in removing their shoes. The Atrium of St. Anne— Level I, Year One children and their parents will meet the catechists in the hallway outside the atrium door. The children will remove their shoes there and the catechists will welcome them to their atrium. It is always a good idea to hang their coats up when they enter the church before Evening Prayer and to have them use the restroom. After Evening Prayer, please honor the reverence for the presence of the Blessed Sacrament by remaining silent until you have left the church.

Level I, Years Two & Three children will be accompanied by their parent to the Atrium of St. Anthony following Evening Prayer. The catechists will be waiting there for the children.

Levels II (1st-4th grades) and III (5th-8th grades) children will sit with their class for Evening Prayer. There will be pew markers on the pews for the first few weeks and someone in the back to direct the children to the pews.

You are welcome to wait in the Library during Faith Formation. For the first few months many parents assist in preparing the Goody Bags for Christmas. All hands are welcome! This project usually gets underway the first part of October. Let one of the office volunteers know that you would like to help. While you are in the building please respect the quiet of the hallways, gathering space and parish hall. The Library is the place for quiet conversations.



With the exception of High Schoolers with signed waivers, none of the children are released from their rooms until their parent comes to get them. If your child is leaving with someone other than yourselves—please fill out the Student Release Authorization form before leaving today. We will get a copy to your child's catechist. A copy of the updated Student Handbook will be posted to the website [www.parishesonline.com](http://www.parishesonline.com) in the next few weeks. Please take some time to become familiar with the nuts and bolts that keep the children safe and things running smoothly on Wednesday nights. If you would like a hard copy of the Handbook—let the office volunteers know and they will be happy to print one for you.



Children in the atria are blessed individually by their catechist before leaving. The catechist will make sure that they see you in the hallway before blessing your child and sending them forth. Always feel free to call or see Ginger or your child's catechist if you have any questions - we welcome your interest and are always happy for a chance to talk about The Catechesis!

Note: Ginger is a Level III catechist on Wednesday night and a Level I catechist on Thursday morning. She is available after class to talk to parents—please wait in the Faith Formation office or feel free to call or email—523-1943; 707-4703; [stUARTSsaintS@gmail.com](mailto:stUARTSsaintS@gmail.com) if that is more convenient.

God's richest blessings upon your family,

#### Level I

Atrium of St. Anne— *Miss Catherine, Miss Pam, Miss Linda*

Atrium of St. Anthony—*Miss Donna, Miss Mary, Miss Teresa*

#### Level II

Atrium of St. Benedict—*Miss Gina, Miss Sandy*

Atrium of the Blessed Mother—*Miss Janis, Miss Lisa*

#### Level III

Atrium of St. Charles—*Miss Ginger, Miss Maureen, Miss Merry*

Atrium of St. Cecilia—*Miss Lynda, Miss Sharon*