

ST MARY *Catechesis of the Good Shepherd* ST ANTHONY

PARENT HANDBOOK

Welcome

Welcome to our St. Anthony the Hermit & St. Mary, Mother of God Catechesis of the Good Shepherd faith formation program.

The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS) is a religious formation approach based on Scripture and liturgy that uses the educational and pedagogical principles of Dr. Maria Montessori.

As CGS catechists, we believe the child comes to us already in relationship with God. The role of the catechist is to nurture the growth of that relationship while allowing the Spirit of God, active within the child, to direct the growth.



The Atrium

We believe that children need their own space to nurture the growth of their relationship with God. The specially prepared space where we gather with the children is referred to as an atrium. The atrium is a place of religious life, not religious instruction.

Dr. Montessori borrowed the term "atrium" from the early church, as it was the space where the catechumens were prepared for baptism. The atrium contains a variety of hands-on materials that are developmentally appropriate for the age range of children that they serve. The catechists and other parishioners make many of the materials as part of their own personal formation experience.



The Materials

We believe the spiritual growth is best served through tangible but indirect means.

During the atrium session, the child freely chooses materials with which to work from those that have already been presented to him/her. The materials serve as an aid for the child's work and pondering of the truths proclaimed in the presentations.

The majority of the materials in the atrium have been handmade by catechists or members of our parish communities as part of their own spiritual formation..

The Catechist

The catechist is the adult who has undergone an extensive personal formational experience with preparation in the Biblical and liturgical themes that correspond with the developmental stages of the children.

The adults who work with children are called, not recruited. They take on a servant-leadership role, using facilitation instead of direct instruction techniques. In addition to their formation and training, the catechists are vetted with background and security checks.

If you are discerning a calling to be a CGS catechist or assistant, please contact Ellen Schlosser at schlossere@stam.church.

The Age of Child Served

Traditionally, children begin CGS at or around age three. As with the Montessori model, each atrium serves a three-year age span of children up through age 12.

We have three atria, located on the St. Anthony campus in the St. Therese of the Child Jesus building. The Level 1 atrium is located on the first floor while the Level 2 and level 3 atria are on the second floor.

If you would like a tour of our atria spaces, please contact Ellen Schlosser at schlossere@stam.church.

Co-listeners

CGS is a common religious experience involving children and adults in which the religious values of childhood, primarily those values of contemplation and enjoyment of God, are predominant.

Following the rhythms of the liturgical year, the catechist proclaims the word of God in Scripture and the action of God in the liturgy. Together, the catechist and child co-listen to Christ, who is the only teacher.



The Work of the Child

Through the work of his hands, the child labors to create himself. The materials serve to concretize the proclamation, allowing the child to contemplate the essential mysteries of the faith and encounter Jesus the Good Shepherd with great joy.

Exercises of Practical Life

Practical life activities are works that serve the care of the environment, oneself, and life in community. The exercises of practical life (EPL) fulfill a deep need in the life of the child and are directly related to both the religious life and the moral life of the child. They serve to orient the child to the environment through purposeful work and answer the child's quest for independence.

Providing an opportunity for focused, controlled movement, EPL helps to develop the will so that the mind and body and soul together pursue the same good. This development is not only foundational for the moral life but also fosters concentration which is the basis of meditation and prayer.



Essential Themes of the Atria

Level 1 (ages 3-6)

- Orientation to the Life of the Church
- Mystery of the Incarnation
- Mystery of Christ the Good Shepherd
- Mystery of the Kingdom of God
- Eucharist
- Paschal Mystery
- Baptism

Level 2 (ages 6-9)

- Orientation to the Life of the Church
- Mystery of the Incarnation
- Mystery of Christ the Good Shepherd
- Mystery of the Kingdom of God
- Eucharist
- Paschal Mystery
- Baptism
- Moral Life
- History of Salvation
- Holy Bible
- Parable of the True Vine
- Reconciliation

Level 3 (ages 9-12)

- Orientation to the Life of the Church
 - Mystery of the Incarnation
 - Mystery of Christ the Good Shepherd
 - Mystery of the Kingdom of God
 - Eucharist
 - Paschal Mystery
 - Baptism
 - Moral Life
 - History of Salvation
 - Holy Bible
 - Parable of the True Vine
 - Reconciliation
 - Prophets of God
 - Virtues
 - Sacraments
 - Old Testament Typology
 - Miracles of Jesus
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The Role of the Parent

"Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children. They bear witness to this responsibility first by creating a home where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and disinterested service are the rule.

"Family catechesis precedes, accompanies, and enriches other forms of instruction in the faith. Parents have the mission of teaching their children to pray and to discover their vocation as children of God. The parish is the Eucharistic community and the heart of the liturgical life of Christian families; it is a privileged place for the catechesis of children and parents.
(Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2223, 2226)

Daily Life:

Bring your family to Mass every Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation.

Participate in spiritual practices in the home: enjoying time together as a family, morning offering, night prayer, Scripture reading, and praying the Rosary.

Reflect: How do I show that God and the Church play an important role in my life?

Discussing the Atrium Experience:

- Share about your own faith life.
 - Praise and thank God aloud.
 - I'm wondering what you enjoyed in atrium today. Would you like to share?
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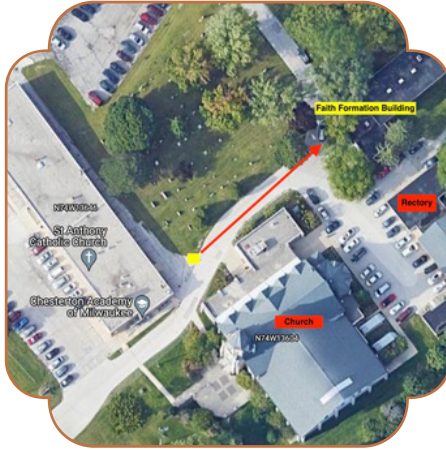
Practicalities

Preparing to be in the Atrium:

- Eat a healthy snack and drink water.
 - Use the bathroom.
 - Get a little exercise.
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Drop Off & Pick Up Procedures:

All atria sessions are hosted by St. Anthony parish in the St. Therese of the Child Jesus Center.



Drop Off:

Level 1: Please walk your child into the building, please enter using the door on the North side of the building.

Level 2 & 3: Children may walk into the building and to the second floor on their own.

Parents are welcome to wait in the dining area of the kitchen on the first floor or visit the Eucharistic Adoration chapel.

Pick Up:

Children will be escorted out of the building by their catechist. Parents are welcome to wait in their cars or to wait inside the building. If you choose to wait inside the building, please enter through the door on the North side. Please maintain a respectful silence as there is a Eucharistic adoration chapel near the entrance.

Nota bene: Please do not ask your child to cross the parking lot without an adult.

Attendance:

If your child will be absent, please notify:
via email: Ellen_Schlosser_schlossere@stam.church
or
via phone: St. Mary parish offices 262-251-0220

Class Cancellation:

Notifications will be sent:
via email
and
the Remind app.
You will receive an invitation to join your child's atrium session on the Remind app

Sign Up Genius:

Parents will receive an email with a link to 2 different Sign Up Genius pages:

(1) Observation: The best way to understand life in the atrium is to observe a session. Parents are welcomed and encouraged to sign up to spend a session observing in the atrium.

(2) Level 1 - Flower Arranging: Parents of Level 1 children are invited to contribute flowers for the children to arrange. This is one of the most popular activities!

Thank you!

Spiritual Opportunities for Parents

Eucharistic Adoration

The St. Joseph Eucharistic Adoration Chapel is open Tuesday through Friday. Eucharistic Adoration is time when we worship the true God in the person of Jesus who is truly present in the sign of the Eucharistic host. Take time to simply be in His presence. You might then offer him thanks for the people and gifts in your life, call to mind your sins and ask for His mercy and healing, pray for others, and perhaps read a Scripture and reflect on it.

Confession

Confession is offered in St. Anthony church, Monday through Friday at 5:00pm as well as Friday mornings from 9:15-10:45.

If you haven't been in a while, just let Father know when you enter the confessional and he will be more than happy to help you. This [video](#) might also help.

If a large group of parents plan to go on the same day (so that they can watch each other's children), please let Fr. Linn know and he would be happy to begin confessions early that day to accommodate. Childcare is always available on Friday mornings.

Adult Speaker Series

On the third Sunday of the month in the conference rooms of St. Mary parish school, a speaker series for parents is offered. All are welcome. Please contact Karissa Tousignant tousignantk@stam.church for more information.

New Mass Times beginning September 9

St. Anthony:
Saturday: 4:30pm
Sunday: 9am & 11 am

St. Mary:
Saturday: 5:00 pm
Sunday: 9am & 11 am

CATECHESIS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD 2023-24 Calendar

Beginning of the Year Modified Times:

Oct 2-6: All sessions meet for one hour: 4:00-5:00 (MTuWTh); Wed evening 6:00-7:00; Fri morning 9:30-10:30)
Oct 9-13: L1 meets from 4:00-5:15 (MTuWTh) or 9:30-10:45 (F); L2 & L3 meet for the full session: 4:00-5:45 or 6:00-7:45
Oct 16-20: L1 meets for full session: 4:00-5:30 (MTuWTh) or 9:30-11:00 (Fri);
 L2/L3 meet for full session: 4:00-5:45(TuWTh) or 6:00-7:45 (W)

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CALENDAR KEY:

New Parent Meeting: September 20, 2023, 7:00pm

- Atria in session.
 Level 1: MTuWTh 4:00-5:30
 Level 1: Friday 9:30-11:00
 Level 2: TuWTh 4:00-5:45
 Level 2/3: W 6:00-7:45
 Level 3: 4:00-5:45
- No Atria sessions.

**6:30-7:30pm
Liturgy of the Light
St. Anthony Church**

Easter Celebration for all atria.
 All children are asked to attend with their families.
 No regular atria sessions on this day.
 All children are invited to arrive at 4pm to plan the liturgy.

Last Week of Atrium: May 6-10, 2024

FIRST RECONCILIATION/COMMUNION DATES:

- 1st Meditation: Monday, March 18, 2024
- 2nd Meditation: Monday, April 8, 2024
- 3rd Meditation: Monday, April 15, 2024
- 4th Meditation: Monday, April 22, 2024

All Sacramental Meditations are held in St. Anthony church from 6:30pm-7:30pm and are attended by the child and their adult.

St. Anthony Sacraments Weekend: April 27 & 28, 2024

St. Mary Sacraments Weekend: May 4&5, 2024

Parishioners may choose to participate in either weekend regardless of parish affiliation.

Crowning of Blessed Virgin Mary at St. Mary Parish: May 11&12, 2024

Corpus Christi Procession: June 2, 2024

First Communicants are invited to participate in the above mentioned devotions.