



St. Joseph's
Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS)
Newsletter – February 2020

Communications/Reminders

Schedule Notes: Mark your calendars to celebrate Mass together:

Sunday March 1 at 11:00am

Our CGS children will participate in different ways.

Ordinary Time: Did you remember to change your prayer cloth to green? New prayer cards were distributed.

Children Preparing for First Eucharist: Preparation begins in earnest this month. See below for more important information.

Did you know: What is a parable?

Parables are short stories with big meaning. Whenever Jesus wanted to teach something, he very often spoke in parables. He chose real-life circumstances that drew upon nature (such as seeds) and familiar occupations (like merchants, bakers and shepherds). Though Matthew offers an interpretation of some parables, it is believed that Jesus himself left their meaning to be pondered and discovered. Thus, we can return to them again and again and always find something new. How is the Kingdom of God like the merchant's pearl of great price, a mustard seed, or the yeast mixed into the dough? What is our part in finding/obtaining it, or helping it grow/rise?

February in our Atria

During this period of Ordinary Time, our Level I children (3-6-year-olds) look at more gestures of the Mass and continue pondering the Kingdom of God, reflecting on parable images about its value and growth/transformation. Our Level II children (1st/2nd grade) focus on moral formation and the Eucharist, meditating on moral parables and more deeply on parts of the Mass.

Level I Atrium (pre-K/K) Spotlight –

The Parable of the Good Shepherd

As we wonder about who Jesus is and our relationship with him, we look to his own words to help us. We read together from the Bible (*John 10:3b-5, 10b-16**) to hear how Jesus answers this question by saying “I am the Good Shepherd” (*John 10:14*). We wonder what makes him different from other shepherds. We read that the Good Shepherd knows each of his sheep by name. The sheep know his voice, and follow him – but not the voice of a stranger. He leads his sheep to pasture – “that they may have life” (*John 10:10*). He loves and protects his sheep. The Good Shepherd will “lay down [his] life for the sheep” (*John 10:15*).

The materials that accompany this presentation to the children wonderfully depict the Good Shepherd and his flock. The children may work with the sheepfold, with its Good Shepherd figure and small wooden sheep. They may open the gate to the sheepfold, and have the Good Shepherd lead the sheep out.

The scripture and materials help us to wonder ...



... what makes the Good Shepherd so “good”? What is so special about him? (They often are touched that he knows each sheep by name – he knows them very well – each one is special!)

... what he does with/for his sheep? (Calls them by name, leads them to food, water, etc.) What do his sheep do? (They listen to his voice, they follow, etc.)

... how the sheep feel to be with the Good Shepherd? (Happy is the typical answer.)

... who these sheep who are so loved by their Good Shepherd could be? (We don’t tell them, but if they express that they would like to be one of the sheep, we would agree!)

**Note that we intentionally skip the verses about the wolf and hireling, as well as the gate, as this is too much for this age group.*

Level II Atrium (1st/2nd Grade) Spotlight - The Mystery of Faith

The Mystery of our Faith is a prayer recited together at every Mass. There are different versions of this prayer and though simple – no more than three lines long - it says so much. The presentation on The Mystery of Faith is intended to help the child slow down and focus on the prayer that they have said and heard so many times, and give meaning to it.

*We proclaim your death, O Lord,
and profess your Resurrection,
until you come again.*

We recognize that Christ “humbled himself to share in our humanity”, dying for us on the cross. But that is not the end of the story. We also recognize that Christ is risen. And, we will encounter Christ face to face when He comes again at the Parousia (when Christ comes again in glory, and his Kingdom will be complete). We continue to encounter the Risen Christ in His Eucharistic Presence at mass. Because of Jesus’ Eucharistic Presence, we participate in the full sweep of His life: past, present, and future as we celebrate the Mass.



For the Home

What are some ways we can best serve our children? In our busy lives, it might seem easier to jump in and “do” for them. Taking the time to “observe” our children and their needs might help us to serve them better. Enjoy this CGSUSA article on [Observation as a Tool for Parenting](#) to help make observation a spiritual practice.

It is said that when we sing, we pray twice. Share this song version of the [Lord’s Prayer](#) with your child (which might also help them memorize it). And here’s another inspiring version [sung in Aramaic](#).

First Eucharist Preparation Information

As we begin our formal preparation for First Eucharist, please keep these in mind:

1. Attend Mass regularly, celebrating the Eucharist together as a family. Receiving Communion will be second nature if they regularly approach the altar with you for a blessing.
2. Pray together daily. In addition to prayers of thanksgiving, praise and petitions, these prayers should be committed to memory:
 - ❖ Sign of the Cross
 - ❖ Glory Be
 - ❖ Hail Mary
 - ❖ Our Father ***may be sung at one of their services. [Click here](#) to learn to sing it.*
 - ❖ Additionally, an Act of Contrition of their choice or personally written, such as:
My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart. In choosing to do wrong and ailing to do good, I have sinned against you, whom I should love above all things. I firmly intend, with your help, to do penance, to sin no more, and to avoid whatever leads me to sin. Our savior Jesus Christ suffered and died for us. In his name, My God, have mercy. Amen.
3. The children are asked to select a prayer partner to pray for and support them through their preparation. Please make sure their prayer partners receive their cards and invitation to the Reconciliation Service and First Eucharist Mass.
4. Be sure your calendar has these other important items:

Meditation Series:

True Vine 1	Sun Feb 16, 9:45-10:45am, <i>followed by Mass</i>
True Vine 2	Thurs Feb 20, 4:30-5:30pm
Found Coin/Found Sheep	Thurs Feb 27, 4:30-5:30pm
Forgiving Father	Thurs Mar 5, 4:30-5:30pm
Centurion's Servant	Sun Mar 15, 9:45-10:45am, <i>followed by Mass</i>
Rain Date:	Thurs Mar 19, 4:30-5:30pm

Retreat: Sat March 28, 2:00-4:15, *followed by Mass*

First Reconciliation: Thursday, April 2nd, 7:00pm

First Eucharist: Sunday, May 3rd, 11:00am

Many Blessings to you and your families,
St. Joseph's CGS Team

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