



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

## Communications/Reminders

**Schedule Notes for January:** there will be no sessions on the following dates:

Sunday January 19<sup>th</sup> and

Tuesday January 21<sup>st</sup>

**Preparing for First Eucharist:** hopefully all our children are praying daily to God in thanks and any special needs. Include these familiar prayers to commit to memory and help prepare for Reconciliation (our formal preparation begins in February):

- ❖ Sign of the Cross
- ❖ Glory Be
- ❖ Hail Mary
- ❖ Our Father

For your Enjoyment: Pictures from around our Atria



## Did you know: Why the term “Kingdom of Heaven”?

Last month, we explained the Greek term Parousia, which is used to refer to the Second Coming of Christ, when his Kingdom will be complete and *God will be all in all* (1Corinthians 15:28). Throughout the Gospels, Jesus tells many parables that help us to understand what this Kingdom is like. Certainly, it will be “Heavenly”. The Gospel of John calls it the “Kingdom of God”. The Jewish people at the time would not speak the name of God, and thus elsewhere in the Gospels we will see it called the “Kingdom of Heaven”. This might make one think that God’s Kingdom is high above the sky, out of our reach. Yet we are part of His Kingdom, here and now, and have a role to play in building the Kingdom.

### January in our Atria

We begin the New Year in the Christmas Season with a celebration that includes: a procession to our prayer table, changing its cloth to white; songs; scripture; and prayer to our Newborn King. We will continue to think about the events surrounding the birth of the King of Kings and Prince of Peace for the first half of January, then move back into Ordinary Time and reflect on the Kingdom of God. Our Level I children will ponder what His Kingdom is like, while our Level II children begin to also ponder our role in the Kingdom. Our First Eucharist children begin to look more closely at some of the gestures of the Mass.

#### Level I Atrium (pre-K/K) Spotlight -

##### Parable of the Pearl

This parable draws us to dwell on the priceless value of God’s gift to us – His kingdom within us and around us. So great is the value of that kingdom that it surpasses everything else!

***The Kingdom of heaven is like a merchant searching for fine pearls. When he finds a pearl of great price, he goes and sells all that he has and buys it.***

*Matthew 13:45-46*



We have a small diorama of a merchant’s home, a wooden merchant, with baskets of pearls and one “precious” pearl that the children may work with. While moving the merchant about his shop, bringing in the baskets of pearls and then selling them all in order to obtain the precious pearl, the children are given the opportunity to reflect on the parable and wonder about its

meaning. It is tempting to try to explain everything to our children, especially when they always want to know “why?” Once they have the answer, they are satisfied. But when it comes to their spiritual thirst, we don’t ever want them to be satisfied! So rather than giving them (adult) answers, we try entering into the mystery with them, posing wonder questions, such as:

- ... I wonder what was so special about the precious pearl?
- ... I wonder how the merchant knew that that pearl was special?
- ... I wonder what made the pearl so special that the merchant would sell all that he owned for it?
- ... I wonder how the Kingdom of God might be like this?

## **Level II Atrium (1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> Grade) Spotlight -** **The Sign of Peace in its Cosmic Dimension**



There are many gestures of the Mass which are prayers we do with our bodies. The movement we make tells us something about our prayer's meaning. When presenting and reflecting on the Sign of Peace with the children, we begin by revisiting two other familiar gestures/prayers of the priest which precede it. During the Epiclesis, we see the priest's hands come *down* onto the bread and wine asking the Holy Spirit to come down and transform the bread and wine. This is later

followed by the gesture of Offering when the priest lifts the consecrated bread and wine back *up* to God in thanks. In these two up/down gestures we see our (vertical) connection with God. The gesture of the Sign of Peace begins with the Priest spreading his hands *outward* as he says "The Peace of the Lord be with you". We respond by saying "And with your spirit". Then, we too, exchange a gesture that moves in an outward (horizontal) direction as we (typically) shake hands with those who surround us. We demonstrate this to the children by passing the sign in a circle. We wonder together:

- Did we all touch each other? (No.) Yet did we still share the same peace?
- What connects us? (Jesus' peace!)
- We first saw the gift come down, then the gift going up. Now which way does this gift go? (Out - Like the Cross.)
- Where else is this done? Just our church? (Every church all over the world.)
- So who all is God's peace meant for? Who all are we connected to?

With this gesture we show that we are connected to one another in the peace of Christ, and this connection extends beyond the confines of our own parish: we are united with people across the world and into heaven in the peace of Christ!

### For the Home

For more on parables of the Kingdom, see [here](#).

We return to Ordinary Time January 13<sup>th</sup>. Remember to change your prayer cloth back to green – for the growing time!

When at Mass, look for and/or participate in familiar gestures with your child(ren):

- How high does Father start the Epiclesis?
- Were the bells rung during the Epiclesis? When else?
- How many times do we pray the Sign of the Cross together?
- Are there other ways we exchange the Sign of Peace besides shaking hands?

As always, set aside time for daily prayer, remembering to offer thanks to God for the many gifts received this Christmas season and in the New Year – not just the ones under the tree!

Many Blessings in this New Year,  
St. Joseph's CGS Team

CGS Catechist and Formation Leader:

Anne Pulsifer

[cgsstjoseph@comcast.net](mailto:cgsstjoseph@comcast.net)

484-431-5156