



Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS) Newsletter – October 2019

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Communications/Reminders

- **Sunday Parking, Pickup/Dropoff:** For the safety of the many families and children attending Mass and PREP during our CGS session, vehicle traffic is prohibited on the driveway Sunday mornings. Please use the main church parking lot to enter, park, and exit.
- **Level II Notice:** On October 8th, we plan to give an outdoor presentation. Please have your children dress appropriately for the weather and wear sneakers/closed shoes.
 - Rain date: October 15th.
- **Prayer Table Kits:** Each child should have received essential articles for a personal (or family) prayer space at home. Please let us know if you are missing any essential items for your child’s prayer space (felt cloths, LED candle, mini Bible, prayer card and stand).

Did you know: What is an Atrium?

The term we use for the rooms where we gather with the children each week is an Atrium. This term is chosen because of the unique nature of these rooms: designed to be children’s retreat houses, where they gather in prayer and work to draw closer to God. The term is borrowed from the early church’s practice of gathering catechumens – those desiring to learn about Christianity and become baptized into the faith – in the outer “atrium” of the church. This is where the catechumens completed their time of preparation to be baptized, confirmed, and celebrate Communion – typically at the Easter Vigil. (Note, the plural of atrium is atria.)

October in our Atria

We continue to settle into the rhythm of atrium life with lessons on Grace and Courtesy and practical life activities. Both Level I and II children are introduced to presentations on life in the Church, such as identifying the many articles (chalice, paten, ciborium...) and vestments (alb, stole, cincture...) used during the Mass, as well as some of the prayer gestures (epiclesis, offering...). Our Level II children are also beginning to unlock some of the mysteries of the Bible, beginning with the History of the Kingdom of God: from Creation, to Redemption, to Parousia!

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

Gesture: The Sign of the Cross

Being able to recognize and interpret the meaning behind the many gestures of the Mass helps us (and the children) to participate more fully and joyfully during the Mass.

Perhaps the most frequent gesture is one that we all make: The Sign of the Cross. This can be difficult and frustrating for children to master and appreciate. We try to help the child by taking it slowly...

We begin by showing the child the basic articles of the Mass, allowing the child to become familiar with the articles by setting them up on our miniature altar. One of the items always on (or near) the altar is the crucifix that reminds us of how – out of great love – Jesus died for us and rose again.

At a later time, we invite the child to again set up the miniature altar with the crucifix on it. As we face the crucifix together, we recall how it reminds us of Jesus' love. Yet we can make this sign of love even closer to us – right on our own bodies! We then invite the child to watch as we slowly and silently “draw” a vertical line from our forehead down to our belly, then a horizontal line across from shoulder to shoulder. We invite the child to “draw” this sign on their own bodies, as we feel His closeness to ourselves.



This silent movement is enough for our youngest ones, who enjoy being able to mark themselves with Jesus' love. With the older children who have mastered this movement (and perhaps even begun to quicken the movement to the more familiar “tapping out” of the gesture), we add the words honoring the names of God's family, the Holy Trinity.

Level II Atrium (1st/2nd Grade) Spotlight -

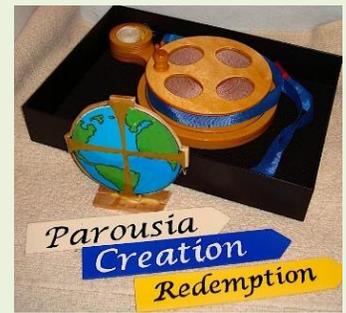
The History of the Kingdom of God: La Fettuccia

One of the primary focuses in the Level II is introducing the children to the History of the Kingdom of God. This History is told in the Bible. A number of different materials help us ponder this great history, including La Fettuccia: a 54-yard-long grosgrain ribbon “timeline” that we unroll outside to put God's plan into perspective.

We begin by placing the beginning of the ribbon in the first book of the Bible (Genesis). As we unroll the blue ribbon, we recount the unfolding of God's plan as described there: beginning with creation of the cosmos, and the gradual formation of the land, seas and air of the earth. After about 16 yards, the ribbon changes to brown. Now we imagine the first forms of life appearing in an orderly fashion. First, an abundance of plant life, then a variety of animal life in the water, land, and air. This unfolds over another 37+ yards of ribbon! (Note: each tiny rib of our ribbon represents about 1,000 years.)

Once all had been carefully prepared like a banquet, we see the form of a human stitched into our ribbon: the moment when God breathed an immortal soul into the first humans: created in God's image, with intelligence and hands that could receive these gifts and put them to even greater use. As we look back at over 50 yards of ribbon, we marvel at how much time, care and preparation God put into preparing the earth for us. And yet, God was not done giving gifts.

Through the prophets, God continued to prepare the people for a Redeemer. After less than two feet more of ribbon, the color changes again. In the yellow ribbon we see stitched a red cross – the sign of Christ’s life, death and resurrection, as told in the Gospels. We are now in this time of redemption – just a tiny piece of yellow ribbon representing the last 2000 years. The rest of history leading up to Parousia – when God’s love and light will fill all of creation – is yet to be written. We have a part in writing this history. We attach a piece of white ribbon to the end – representing the blank page that we will write along with God to complete this History, as we wait for his second coming. God has lovingly provided for us, and we are part of the History of God’s Kingdom!



For the Home

Just as in the atrium, the children are encouraged to setup a home prayer space (using the kits provided or of your own making) and spend time daily with the Lord. We are currently in Ordinary Time, so the green cloth may be used (until Advent). Encourage your child to make their own prayer cards or pictures (prayer art). Some of the children have been making prayer cards in the atrium which can be taken home and placed in their prayer space.

Prayer is simply talking and listening to God. Set aside time for prayer moments each day. What would your child like to say to or tell God about their day? What have they seen or heard that touched their hearts in some way? Find opportunities to bless them with the Sign of the Cross on their foreheads – marking them with God’s love. Encourage them to “draw” this sign on their own bodies any time to feel closer to God.

Asking God for His peace and blessings,
St. Joseph's CGS Team

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