



## CGS Schedule

*St. John the Baptist currently offers Level I and Level II Atria sessions.*

The levels are grouped by age:

**Level I:** 3-6 years

**Level II:** 6-9 years

Children attend one session per week.

- **Level I and Level II sessions are offered Sundays at 8:45 a.m as well as Wednesday & Thursday at 6:00 p.m.**
- *All children enrolled in St. John the Baptist Catholic School attend weekly CGS sessions through Level II.*
- *CGS is held weekly for all children enrolled in our Pre-school and Religious Ed. through Grade 2.*

### A typical atrium session consists of:

- *A presentation originating from the Bible or Liturgy*
- *A period of self-directed, quiet work as an aid to contemplation and prayer*
- *A time of worship in the prayer corner.*



*"Help us, O God, to enter into the secret of childhood, so that we may know, love, and serve the child in accordance with the laws of Thy justice and following Thy holy will." – Maria Montessori*

## The Atrium and the Child's Work

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is a Montessori based approach to Catholic religious education where children can grow in their relationship to God through a deep engagement in Scripture and liturgy. The beauty and mystery of God's Kingdom are revealed through Gospel readings of the Parables, Infancy Narratives, and the Paschal Mystery Narratives. The child is prepared to enter more fully into the life of the Church and participate in the Holy Mass.

The atrium is a specially prepared room that contains beautiful, mostly handmade, materials that the children work with as a way of meditating upon the historical events of our faith and reflecting upon the significant aspects of our liturgy. Especially in the younger ages, the artwork children produce often reveals their response to what they see and hear.

All materials are all designed for

little hands to grasp and manipulate easily.

Materials such as interactive maps of Israel and a three-dimensional model of the city of Jerusalem help situate Jesus as a real person in time.



*"Numerous drawings demonstrate how the children enter the parables message and how it resounds within them; the most apparent effect they derive from it is a serene peace..."*  
– Sofia Cavalletti



# Catechesis of the Good Shepherd



## St. John the Baptist Catholic Church



315 N. Constitution Ave  
New Freedom, PA 17349

Phone: (717) 235-2439

Email: reled@sjbnf.org

*"Help me come closer to God by myself."*  
– Sofia Cavalletti

## Level I Atrium

*Jesus said to his disciples: "Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these."  
Mk 10:14.*



The Level I atrium fosters the 3-6 year old child's innate relationship with Jesus using the Parable of the Good Shepherd. The reality of Jesus in this image affirms within the child the covenant relationship that exists between the Good Shepherd, Jesus, and his sheep. We wonder about these sheep that Jesus calls by name, feeds and protects, searches for when lost, and rejoices when found. The treasure hidden in the parable -- of who these sheep could be -- is for each child to joyfully discover on his or her own.



*I am the Good Shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father.*

As the child is orientated to the atrium, we present lessons in grace and courtesy as well as controlled movement and practical life activities, such as pouring and transferring, to assist in the development of fine and gross motor skills and in preparation for more advanced work specific to the atrium. We also introduce nomenclature and gestures that are part of our life in the Church, such as the Sign of the Cross, Genuflection, and articles of the Mass, as well as the liturgical colors and calendar.

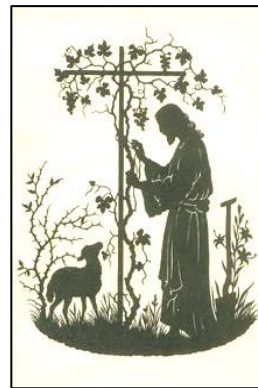
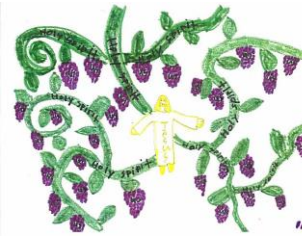


*The Good Shepherd lays down his life for his sheep.*

## Level II Atrium

*"The Bible exceeds the limits of the created world because it speaks of a covenant that unites humanity to the whole of creation and to God himself ... and is revealed through the incarnation event when God becomes human. This great cosmic reality is what satisfies the immense thirst of the older child." - Sofia Cavalletti, Religious Potential of the Child, 6-12 Years Old*

The Level II atrium focuses the 6-9 year old on the image of Jesus as the True Vine. As children become more morally sensitive and aware, the loving relationship with the Good Shepherd is cultivated, nurtured, and transformed into branches and fruits on the vine. The unity and vastness of salvation history is revealed as we ponder the gifts of the natural world and wonder, "Who prepared all this for me?" Parousia, the time when God will be All in All, is the culmination of God's covenant with us. What is our part in this relationship? How do we remain on the vine? To respond to the child's need for guidance, the moral parables (i.e., The Good Samaritan) and parables of mercy (i.e., The Prodigal Son) along with the Maxims and Summary of the Law, offer models for comparing his or her own behavior with Jesus' examples.



*I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit. - John 15:5*

## Origins of CGS

The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS) is the result of an unexpected, but joyful, journey that brought Sofia Cavalletti, a Hebrew scripture scholar, and Gianna Gobbi, a Montessori educator, together in Rome. Over a long period of time, they carefully observed children and discovered that, even from the earliest age, children eagerly seek religious experience and find fulfillment in it only if they are helped to live this experience in its deepest, most essential elements. They observed that children have an innate religious potential and relationship with God that can be actualized through work in a special environment called the atrium. Our work, as catechists, is not to "pour in" information, but, instead, to facilitate the child's relationship with God in an environment that nurtures this relationship and prepares the child for fuller participation in the liturgy, especially the Holy Mass. We provide a peaceful, reverent setting and plant seeds that are nurtured by the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. We ponder these mysteries with the children, always wondering what He wants us to know.

*The child's natural sense of wonder is a powerfully attractive force that advances the child towards the object of his astonishment. It takes root in one who is able to settle and rest in things. - Sofia Cavalletti*



*Pope John Paul II visits Sofia Cavalletti's atrium in Rome.*