

St. Mark's Cathedral

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

Atrium Handbook



The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is a faith formation experience for children ages 3-8 years old. It is based upon the belief that young children can and do experience God. The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd's work is done in an "Atrium," an environment created to nurture children's spirituality. This is done by proclaiming the Gospel through the parable method,

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prayer, singing, silence, and exploring liturgical events. Hands-on materials are used to help children and adults reflect together upon the great mysteries of the Christian faith.

The lessons presented in Catechesis of the Good Shepherd are based upon the Montessori methods, which encourages the children to participate in presentations given by the trained Catechists as well as child-directed activities in a prepared environment.

Level I Atrium is prepared for children ages 3-5 years old where they will engage in prayer, lessons presented by the catechists, silence, practical life, music and artwork. Here they will learn about Jesus, the Good Shepherd who loves them and leads them.

Level II Atrium is prepared for children ages 6-8 years old where they will engage in a deeper relationship with Jesus, as well as with others within their environment. Level I and Level II coincide with one another, and both help foster connection and knowledge with the Good Shepherd.

Liturgy of Eucharist

- ❖ Parents we encourage you to bring your children to Catechesis on a regular basis so that they are continuously familiar with the environment, and are receiving the majority of the presentations each week.
- ❖ We also encourage parents to allow their children to join them for the liturgy in the Cathedral at the appropriate time.
- ❖ Move to the front of the church so your children can listen and participate in the liturgy service.

Calendar

- ❖ The Atrium follows the liturgical seasons of the Episcopal Church from the end of August through the end of May.
- ❖ Please keep up with the church calendar and other forms of communication through the church to know when we will not be holding Catechesis.

Dress Code

- ❖ We encourage the children to wear comfortable clothing and shoes because they will be moving about the room sitting, standing, kneeling, etc.

Arrival and Hours

- ❖ The Atrium, like the Cathedral is a reverent space, so please remind your children to use their Atrium voice and Atrium walk when entering.
- ❖ Start time is 9:30 am
- ❖ End Time is 10:30 am for those who are not attending the service...(non-parishioners)

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- ❖ The children will be brought into the cathedral during the peace (11:00 am) unless you indicated on the sign in sheet that your child will remain with Mrs. Beth until the service is over.

Arrival/Dismissal

- ❖ Upon arrival, you will indicate on the sign in sheet whether or not your child will be brought to you in church or if you will pick them up when church is over.
- ❖ The children will come in to church at the “peace.”

Environment and Behavior

- ❖ The Atrium is a special place for prayer and enjoyment of God, where children listen to the Good Shepherd’s voice during catechetical presentations and can meditate on God’s Word while working. In order to cultivate a prayerful environment, we teach children to use the slow Atrium walk and quiet Atrium voice. Please model a quiet manner of speaking and walking to help your children become accustomed to using their Atrium voice and Atrium walk.
- ❖ If, in the discretion of the Catechists, your child is having difficulty respecting the culture of the Atrium environment, then we will ask them to skip the next week of Atrium. This is to cultivate an atmosphere of respect in the Atrium. If it happens a second time, the child will be asked to wait until the next semester to return.

Child’s Paperwork

- ❖ Each child will have a folder in which to keep their papers (coloring, gluing, etc....). At the end of the year, we will send the work home. We ask parents not to expect paperwork after each session, since one of the key Montessori principles is that young children work for the process not the end product.

Allergies

- ❖ In addition to the Rally Day form, please also note IN WRITING any allergies that your children have that the catechists need to know and understand (food, environmental, medicine, flowers, plants, etc.). This may include an allergy plan.

Visitors

- ❖ Please make arrangements with the catechists before visiting the Atrium. Parents have the opportunity to meet and greet with the catechists at Rally Day on August 26th.

Important Dates

- ❖ Rally Day: August 28, 2022
- ❖ **Start date:** September 11, 2022
- ❖ No Atrium being held:
 - October 9, 2022 (Fall Break)

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- November 20, 2022 (Thanksgiving)
- December 25, 2022 (Christmas)
- January 1, 2023 (New Year's Day)
- March 12, 2023 (Spring Break)
- April 9, 2023 (Easter)

❖ **End date:** May 21, 2023

Parents

- ❖ As parents, we all want to know what our children learn. It is very difficult for adults to explain their relationship with God; this is true for the children as well. Here are a few suggestions for you to ask your child about the time spent in the Atrium.
 - What did you hear in the Atrium today?
 - What material did you work with today?
 - Did you enjoy your time with God today?

For any comments, question or concerns please contact Caroline Reeks at 318-221-3360 ext. 4065 or email at caroline@stmarkscathedral.net.

St. Mark's would like to thank the Cathedral of Saint Raymond Nonnatus in Joliet, IL for allowing us to use their wonderful Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Handbook for our program. We cannot thank them enough for their blessing and prayers for our Catechesis of the Good Shepherd ministry, and we want extend the same kindness to them! Thank you St. Raymond.

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd 2018-2019

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