



# Faith Formation for Children

As parishioners of Saint Ladislav we are all invited to participate in the Generations of Faith Program, an intergenerational life-long faith formation that takes place once a month during the school year. Attendance by the entire family is encouraged.

Another program that has been available at our parish for the last few years is known as the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. It is a way of religious formation for children that is quite different from published programs. It does not use a catechetical series of books or take place in a classroom. In this approach there is a room prepared for the children in which every object is to help in their knowledge of God. It is a place of simplicity and order, prayer and work, and community. Everything in this room, known as the Atrium, is appropriate to the ages and sizes of the children who gather there. The Atrium allows the children to come into contact with scripture, the liturgy of the church and for the older ones, the whole of sacred scripture.



**The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is not new. It began in Rome in 1954. The process involving parent and child has been a proven success in many parishes throughout the world.** Our prayer is that there can be a conversion to God for adults as the child grows in religious development.

### Atrium Times

#### **3-6 year olds:**

Sunday 9am - 10:30am  
Sunday 11am - 12:30pm  
Monday 1:00pm - 2:30pm  
Tuesday 9:30am - 11am  
Tuesday 4pm - 5:30pm  
Wednesday 1pm - 2:30pm  
Thursday 9:30am - 11am

#### **6-9 year olds:**

Sunday 9am - 10:30am  
Monday 4pm - 5:30pm  
Tuesday 4pm - 5:30pm  
Wednesday 4pm - 5:30pm  
Thursday 4pm - 5:30pm  
**9-12 year olds:**  
Monday 7:45pm—8:15pm  
Tuesday 7:45pm - 8:15pm



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Catechesis of the Good Shepherd  
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# St. Ladislav Church

## The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd



“If we want to help the child draw nearer to God, we should with patience and courage...seek to go always closer to the vital nucleus of things. This requires study and prayer. The child himself will be our teacher if we know how to observe him.”

Sofia Cavalletti



# The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

## God and child with the adult

An interpersonal relationship is always a mystery, all the more so when that relationship is between God and the child. We believe that there is a deep bond between God and the child which produces in the child the desire to draw near God. The catechists' role is to prepare the environment and to make presentations that "call forth" the child's response rather than "pour in" information. They listen with the child and together ask, "God, who are you? How do you love us?" The adult is a co-wonderer with the child as they together enjoy meditating on the questions generated by the Scriptures with the prepared environment as a developmental aid.



## The Prepared Environment/The Atrium

The *atrium* is one of the elements that helps the relationship between God and the child to flourish. After a theme has been presented, the child is free to choose an activity that will make possible the inner dialogue with the "Interior Teacher.

"How does the atrium help to nourish this relationship?"

- The atrium can be compared to a retreat house facilitating recollection and silence.
- The atrium is a place for religious life, for community and worship - not a classroom for instruction.
- The atrium is a place of work which becomes a conversation with God.
- The atrium was the place in the early church where the catechumens were prepared. For the child, too, the atrium is a place of preparation for involvement in the larger worshipping community.

## The Materials

The materials in the atrium are attractively displayed inviting children to explore and deepen experiences at their own rhythm. The most important characteristic of the materials is their close link to the biblical and liturgical sources. The shelves might include maps of Israel and miniature environments representing the elements of the parables and historical events from Scripture that have been shown to satisfy the spiritual needs of the child. The arrangement of the altar and its related furnishings conveys the centrality of the Eucharist. The Baptismal font and other liturgical items initiate the child into the liturgical life of the church.



"The catechetical material...consists of concrete 'signs' of a transcendent reality...(and)...is a way of letting the child prolong, alone with the inner teacher, the meditation begun together with the adult."  
Sofia Cavalletti