

ANNUNCIATION

Archdiocese of Portland - Catechetical News

JULY/VOLUME 2/ISSUE 6



A Child-Like Faith

By Rolando Moreno

In C.S. Lewis's novel, *The Great Divorce*, the character of the White Spirit offered this interesting insight: "Once you were a child. Once you knew what inquiry was for. There was a time when you asked questions because you wanted answers and were glad when you had found them. Become that child again even now" (p.41). In a similar way, we hear in Sacred Scripture the profound and challenging words of our Lord "unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Mt. 18:3). Children are the paradigm of faith, with an untiring wonder, a Marian-like receptivity, and openness toward truth. They model for us the proper posture to receive our Lord. Keeping these traits in mind, we come to one of the most unique and spiritually rich catechetical methodologies at the service of the Church today; Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS). It is a method of catechesis that truly considers the way in which children learn. It also respects the child's timeframe in how they learn. These are defining characteristics of this method. CGS derives from the Montessori method of education which takes a hands-on approach to learning. CGS teaches the truths of the faith through a specially prepared place, an Atrium, where a child can come closer to God in freedom and joy. Encountering Catechesis of the Good Shepherd seems to provoke two initial reactions: one is admiration for the beauty and profundity of the method itself as there is an attraction to how it is done. Secondly, people often feel overwhelmed by the amount of training for certification as well as the space needed (the Atrium) at the parish to offer this ministry. From my end, I think the rigor and commitment of the training serves as witness to the seriousness of the craft of catechesis. If only all catechists were committed to their craft in such a way and had to receive mandatory training regardless of method, faith formation would be in a different place today. The Archdiocese supports the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, and we encourage catechists, pastors, and priests to learn more about it. In this issue we highlight this ministry as a beautiful option for children's catechesis and where to get more information, including upcoming training opportunities.

WHAT'S NEW

EVENTS

Find out what events are being offered now and in the fall

RESOURCES

Find online workshops, articles, and videos to support your work in Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

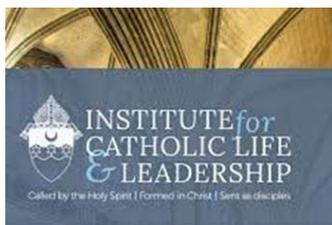
SPEAKER SPOTLIGHT

Featuring Sarah Zielinski of St. Alice in Springfield

Archpdx Connections

Institute for Catholic Life and Leadership

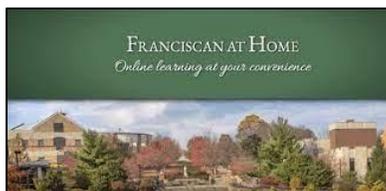
We will be opening a new cohort of students for the Fall at Mt. Angel Seminary!! If you are interested or have any questions regarding the new program or available scholarships, please don't hesitate to reach out to rmoreno@archdpdx.org for more information. Registration will begin soon!



Franciscan University Catechetical Institute

The Franciscan University offers many workshops to the Archdiocese of Portland through its partnership.

For more information on how to register for these workshops for free, contact rmoreno@archdpdx.org



Articles on Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

On this topic, there were so many options to learn and read that it was hard to choose just a couple to showcase!! The most basic article [Montessori Catechesis](#), gives a good overview of the basic principles. For a moving philosophical perspective, [Children's Catechesis: The Meeting of Two Great Mysteries](#), by Sr. Mary Michael Fox is worth the deep dive.



Events

July 14 - 17: Ignite Your Torch:

Calling all youth to deepen their relationship with Christ. To register go to [ignite website](#) or find a group to tag along with email: info@ignitenw.org

Aug 1 - 4: Quo Vadis Days: For young men to understand what it means to discern a life of vocation. Email vocations@archdpdx.org for more information

August 1st: CGS Training: Deadline to [register](#) for Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Toddler training and Level 2 training at St. Alice Parish in Springfield.

August 22: Professional Development Workshop for Catechists and Teachers: by Sophia Institute for Teachers at St. John Fischer parish in Portland. To register click [HERE](#). For a promotional flyer click [HERE](#)

August 12 - 14: Mount Angel Abbey, will hold a retreat on True Devotion to Mary with Brother Louis de Montfort OSB. Click [here](#) for more information.

September 23 - 25: Women's Silent Retreat: Join Retreat Master: Fr. Gregory Dick, O.Praem. on the theme, "Abide with Me - Living the Mass we Celebrate" at the Queen of Peace Retreat Center.

Other Resources

Focusing on this topic and not mentioning our own home-grown international speaker, [Linda Kael](#), on the subject would be considered a travesty. We did reach out to her first but was disappointed that she will be in Europe most of the summer forming catechists there.

More information on how to host your own training, or purchase materials, books or find another level of training can be found on the [United States Association of Catechesis of the Good Shepherd website](#).

Speaker Spotlight

by Amy Parent

Sarah Zielinski
Director of Education and Music
St. Alice, Springfield, Oregon



Originally developed sixty years ago in Rome by Sofia Cavalletti and Gianna Gobbi, the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is a Montessori based religious formation for children. It seeks to create and facilitate a sacred, "hands-on" space for children called an Atrium. The Atrium is a space in which both child and catechist can hear, ponder, and celebrate the most essential mysteries of the Christian faith as revealed in Scriptures and the Liturgy. This method is utilized in Catholic parishes and schools internationally. Sarah Zielinski, working at St. Alice now for a year, has degrees in both Music and Education from St. Olaf and the University of North Carolina.

Tell me about your Catechesis of the Good Shepherd program and the training program that you have initiated.

Through a generous grant we were able to send 8 catechists or guides to the initial training (Level 1 for 3 to six years old). I inherited the materials for an Atrium and in the last year have been able to focus on that program. St. Alice does not have a school associated with it and that is unusual for a large 800 family parish. Fr. Mark and I are trying to both support the families that are homeschooling as well as create a solid foundation for catechesis for older children, so we are expanding both to toddlers and elementary age children. The toddler training will be more of a retreat setting which will focus on the creation of an environment that will support wonder within the child.

With your background, not having experience with this type of teaching, what was your initial thoughts of this budding program?

I had been teaching, in a middle school classroom, which felt like an "input- output" model. It was a knowledge dump that felt like it wasn't communicating the faith. This approach was more genuine. The children are presented with challenges to their way of thinking and allowed to discover. Then there is the issue of time, in a traditional setting, we are given a short time to digest information. In the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd program, the children are given time with the Mysteries of the faith. The program's materials present layers of meaning, so its easy for a child to be introduced to a material and then, later, come at the same material and receive a different perspective. The process of learning is much more of an experience with the Mysteries rather than just learning factually about them.

What is your elevator speech about what the CGS program?

I like the phrase that we heard in our first formation, CGS is where Mystery of God meets the mystery of the child. There is so many moments where the Holy Spirit is speaking to these children and what we are doing is providing a space for discovery. The Atrium then becomes a retreat space where they can be presented the truth of the Church. The Liturgy and the Scriptures are brought to the child and then they are allowed to meditate, reflect, and wonder about them.

Tell me about the training?

The training is about 90 hours, and we will be hosting Level T for Toddlers and Level 2 for Lower Elementary (6 to 9 years old). We are really hoping that the Toddler program will be looking at exploring the faith of the adult and preparation for the catechists. As I said, this will be more of a retreat experience. The Lower Elementary training will place the child within the cosmos, with an aim at cultivating an understanding of the Catholic human anthropology. This will be continuing to form those catechists for the next three years.

Obviously that has certain impacts on your physical geography of your parish setting. What is your long game with all these trainings and investment of both time and money? And each session is two hours long - how will you balance all these factors.

I do have a dream. Our pastor dedicated 2 classrooms for the use of an atrium. However, they are small; they only hold 8 or 9 kids per session. That really doesn't translate well to a large parish. This year we will offer many sessions. The Level 1 Children's House Atrium is the building block. The dream is to turn our old convent into a larger space that would contain several levels and age groups from toddlers to 12 years old. This year we were able to add on a fenced-in garden area. This offers an outdoor extension for the child to wonder in God's creation.

Your parish does not have a school attached to it. How is that affecting your decisions?

In many ways, post pandemic, we are facing a new landscape in Catholic education. We are seeing parents making choices that reflect their distrust of public-school education. But many families also are constrained in what kind of choices they can make financially. Growing is the number of families choosing to home school. Our church is looking to support those families in a number of ways. The homeschool group is comprised of 60 kids who meet once a week as a whole group to alternately engage in art projects, science experiments and physical education. There are other times during the week where they utilize the facility for tutoring.

What is your capacity for the catechist training? And is there overnight accommodation?

We are hoping to see 20 students for level 2 and that they register for August 1st and costs \$450 for the first session. The final session is next summer. It is the hope that catechists will create their own materials and resources and work through lessons over the course of the year in between. Registration is on our website. As for accommodation, we have been suggesting Airbnb's as there are some locally for as cheap as \$50-\$60 a night but if finances are a concern, there are families willing to host students. That would need to be worked out personally.

Please see more information in the events section for details to register for either of these trainings



Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Prayer

Dear God, our Father, we praise and thank You for loving us.

Thank You for sending us Your beloved Son, our Lord Jesus, as our Good Shepherd.

We long for Your presence and gentle touch in our hearts as we lie down in green pastures and walk through shadowed valleys.

Help us to encounter You in the silence and stillness of our hearts, as well as in the hearts of the children we may encounter and teach this day.

We trust You to help us give them through Your Body, the Church, all they need love You with their whole spirit, soul, and body.

Thank You, Father, for Your mercy, grace, and peace. In Jesus' name. Amen.