

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

Epiphany Catholic Church

December 2018

Welcome to Catechesis of the Good Shepherd! It's a religious program for children based on the educational philosophies of Maria Montessori.

What an exciting experience to begin Catechesis of the Good Shepherd at Epiphany Catholic School in Spring 2016! We are so blessed to have this program at our school in a newly remodeled space. We have implemented Level I for 3-6 year olds which includes the Pre3, Pre4, PreK and Kindergarten classes. This school year we added 3rd Grade to our 1st and 2nd

Grades in Level II. This completes our Level II atria. We also added our first Parish Preschool class in January of 2017. It's been wonderful to have it again this school year! Each class visits the atria once a week for 1 hour 30 minutes to 2 hours.

Our first week together in the atria we had an introduction to the atrium to learn about our environment. The next



week we had a special procession and Enthronement of the Bible. We lifted up the scripture verse John 8:12 in which Jesus says, "I am the light of the world." Each week we gather at the prayer table to pray, read from the Bible and sing songs. We then have a religious presentation. After our presentation, the children

may work with the materials in the atrium that have already been presented to them. It may be the materials for the presentation they've just received or materials from previous presentations.

Children are exposed to hands-on catechetical learning materials. Some choices the atria are Montessori materials, too. In the atrium, work and study spontaneously become contemplation and prayer. This will help our children at Epiphany to fall in love with Jesus and foster their relationships with God. What a gift, a joy and a blessing!

Why is it called an "atrium"?

The atrium was the space in the ancient basilica which lay between the street and the inner sanctum of the church. It 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.

Atrium Vocabulary

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd uses different vocabulary that you may have heard your child use.

| Instead of: | We use: |
|--------------|----------------|
| Class | Atrium Session |
| Student | Child |
| Lesson | Presentation |
| Play | Work |
| Toys | Materials |
| Teacher | Catechist |
| Religious Ed | Catechesis |



The Bible

We had a procession and Enthronement of the Bible in the prayer corner. The children may choose to spend time at the prayer table to read the Bible or pray. They may ask an adult to light the candle for them.

The Infancy Narratives

The children have been presented the Annunciation and the Birth of Jesus & Adoration of the Shepherds. We will end with the Adoration of the Magi when we return from Christmas Break. There are Little Gospel books and dioramas with figures for each Infancy Narrative. There are also tracing packets for each.



Liturgical Colors & Liturgical Calendar

The children work with chasubles on stands and a liturgical calendar puzzle to learn about the liturgical colors and liturgical calendar. We sing, "Purple and green, red and white, are the colors of the year."



Biblical Geography

Prior to Advent, we work on Biblical Geography in the atrium. This is to make known to the children that Jesus walked the earth and had a place, just as they do. We learn where Jesus was born, lived, died and rose. We use a globe to find Israel, then on a map of Israel locate Nazareth, Bethlehem and Jerusalem. We also learn about the regions of Israel.



The Altar

The children receive a presentation about the altar and learn the names of the altar pieces. They may choose to work with the materials by getting out the pieces from the sacristy cabinet and setting up the altar. They can ask to have the candles on the altar lit. There is also a presentation about the tabernacle, ciborium, sanctuary lamp, ambo and lectionary. It teaches us that Jesus is present at Mass in both the tabernacle and the Word.



Advent

It's been joyous celebrating Advent in the atrium! We had an Advent celebration with a procession at the beginning of Advent. Our prayer table cloth is purple, the color of preparation. There is a statue of Mary with an empty manger, as she waits (as we do) for Jesus' birth. Each week we light the candles on our Advent wreath. We have learned about prophets. We read prophecies from Isaiah and Micah, including the Prophecy of the Light, Prophecy of the Names, Prophecy of the Mother and Prophecy of the Place.



Thank you!

Thank you for enrolling your child in our Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Parish Preschool Program! I have enjoyed working with your child this semester and am looking forward to next semester. I'm so happy that I was able to include 3-year-olds in addition to 4-year-olds for a mixed-age atrium group. It is such a joy spending my Friday mornings with them in the atrium! I have included all of your child's atrium work from the semester in this packet.

I wish you all a blessed Christmas!

Mrs. Havens

Please contact me if you have any questions:

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