

# All About the Atrium

*A newsletter for parents of children in the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Atrium*

## Parables

Jesus' primary teaching method is the telling of parables. The evangelists report a great number of parables, noting that Jesus used them to teach many things (Matthew 13). Moreover, Matthew states that Jesus would never speak to the crowds except in parables (13:34).

- Sofia Cavalletti, *The History of the Kingdom of God: From Creation to Parousia*, p 167

## The Parable of the Mustard Seed

The Parable of the Mustard Seed is found in all three levels\* of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd and the children, no matter what age, tell us that it is one of their favorites. The older child is able to articulate that they are able to discover within two verses of scripture, that something seemingly so tiny and insignificant contains such power and strength to grow into a gigantic tree. This parable is so short, yet we continue to offer it to the children throughout their years in the atrium: the child will hear it when they are three or four years old, when they are older and again when they are eleven and twelve. What is it about this parable?

He proposed another parable to them. "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that a person took and sowed in a field.

It is the smallest of all the seeds, yet when full-grown it is the largest of plants. It becomes a large bush, and the 'birds of the sky come and dwell in its branches.'"

- Matthew 13: 31-32

The Parable of the Mustard Seed offers the child the beginning and the ending moments of the process of growth and transformation: the image of the seed and of the large bush. Jesus did not talk about what happened in between those two points. This further highlights the contrast between the smallness of the seed and the greatness of the shrub.

What does this tell us about the Kingdom of God?

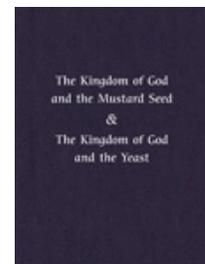
## Parables at the Prayer Table

It would be valuable to meditate on this parable with your children. It could be a source of prayer for your family. In the evening, at your prayer time, you could read The Parable of the Mustard Seed or one of the Kingdom Parables, allowing your child to make their own observations (asking "What did you hear?") and then conclude with a prayer of thanksgiving to God who has given us the great gift of His Word.

**We would love to see photos of your prayer tables at home! Or photos of your children at your prayer table. Post photos on our [CGSUSA Facebook page](#). One family out of all who post photos will be randomly chosen to receive the Little Gospel: The Kingdom of God and the Mustard Seed.**

## Reading Scripture at Home - The Little Gospels: The Kingdom Parables

Near the family prayer table, include a set of the Little Gospel Kingdom Parables. At prayer time, select one of the small books to share as a family. This set of five books includes a rigid, clothbound slipcase with foil stamping and five hardcover books with foil stamping on the front and back cover. Each 32-page book is 4 3/4 x 6 1/2 and fits perfectly in the hands of a child. Included in this set: *The Kingdom of God and the Mustard Seed* (with) *The Kingdom of God and the Yeast*, *The Kingdom of God and the Pearl* (with) *The Kingdom of God and the Hidden Treasure*, *The Kingdom of God and the Growing Seed*, *The Good Shepherd*, and *The Found Sheep*.



**A Word About Parables:** *When we are in the Atrium with the children, we announce the parable, meditate with the children and wonder with them about the words of Jesus. We allow the child to work with the materials as part of their own meditation, as well as time for silence, prayer or song. The most difficult thing for us to do as adults is to simply stop and be still. We do not want to put ourselves between the Word of God and the child. In parables, we let the scripture do the teaching. We do not tell the children how to interpret parables, offer definitions of the parable, as no one formula or definition speaks to everyone at the same time.*

\*Montessori observed four distinct periods or planes in human development. She saw different characteristics and learning styles in each of these planes, which each call for a specific educational approach. There are three levels in the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, referring to the planes or age levels of the children: ages 3 to 6, ages 6 to 9 and ages 9 to 12.