

*The National Association of Catechesis of the Good Shepherd*  
([www.cgsusa.org](http://www.cgsusa.org))

## 2014 USA Report for the Consiglio

Presented September 30, 2014

**The purpose of our association:** To assist the involvement of adults and children in a common religious experience in which the religious values of childhood, primarily those values of enjoyment of and contemplation of God, predominate.

**Our mission** is to support catechists, parents and others in the church and beyond, as they grow in their understanding of the religious potential of children.

The National Association of Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, CGSUSA, is celebrating its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year.

### Today

#### OUR BIGGEST TASK

For the past three years, we have been planning for this week – both this Consiglio Meeting and the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of Catechesis of the Good Shepherd.

We have 580 participants attending from 22 countries.

1. Argentina
2. Australia
3. Canada
4. China
5. Colombia
6. Croatia
7. France
8. Germany
9. Honduras
10. India
11. Ireland
12. Italy
13. México
14. Panama
15. Poland
16. Puerto Rico
17. Singapore
18. Slovenia
19. South Africa
20. Thailand
21. United Kingdom
22. United States

Please join us in praying for this wonderful opportunity to gather catechists from around the world to celebrate the 60 years of this GIFT of Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. Let's pray for all who will be arriving to celebrate with us – some who have never been to the United States outside of our country and some who have never been to Arizona. Pray for all those who will be speaking. Pray for God's grace and loving presence to be experienced among all those who are attending.

With the scope of catechists being trained around the country in CGS formation courses (we estimate about 3000) and with an estimated number of atria at over 1000 in this country, we believe we have more than 150,000 children who are being served through the experience of the atrium.

## **STAFF**

We have several offices. The first began in the Chicago area. Now after about 19 years in the Chicago area, the Association's main office is now located at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Church in Scottsdale, Arizona. We held a grand opening and blessing on August 24. Bishop Olmsted, the bishop of Phoenix offered the blessing. This office became possible because of the donations from parishioners at this church and the support of the pastor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help (OLPH). This will be the office for Mary Mirrione, National Director, Sharon, Pat Sauerman, Pat Randal and Lourdes Vazquez. We still have others working for our association in other offices.

### **Phoenix, AZ (Scottsdale, AZ)**

- Mary Mirrione
- Sharon Urquidez-Weis
- Pat Randall
- Pat Sauerman
- Lourdes Vazquez

### **Chicago, IL area (Oak Park, IL)**

- Rachel Faulman
- Sara Muriello

### **Atlanta, GA area (Marietta, GA)**

- Karen Maxwell
- Betsy Brown

### **Memphis, TN**

Rebekah Rojcewicz (consultant)

## **BOARD**

We have a five member Board of Trustees who serve three years and are elected by our members. The current Board of Trustees are:

- Mary Heinrich, Des Moines, IL

- Brent Glasgow, Memphis, TN
- Kay Brizzolara, Amarillo, TX
- Jo Ann Padgett, Boulder, CO
- Patti Franz, Phoenix, AZ

## **MEMBERS**

In 2014, we have a membership of 1,929. It is the largest membership we have had to date.

We also know that there are those who use Catechesis of the Good Shepherd who are not members of our Association and therefore, we know that there are more children who are served than are accounted for through our membership.

We do know that Catechesis of the Good Shepherd serves children who are in **different Christian denominations**. Primarily, used in Roman Catholic, Byzantine Catholic, Episcopal/Anglican, Orthodox (especially Antiochian and Greek), United Methodist, Presbyterian, and Lutheran traditions. Atria can be found in churches, schools and homes.

There are a **wide variety of children served** through Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. We are especially noticing a growing interest in offering CGS to children with special needs or disabilities such as for those who have neurological disorders like autism and Asperger's, physical handicaps such as those who are blind, deaf, or who have cerebral palsy, as well as for children with Downs Syndrome.

**We serve children who are multicultural** in the United States especially children who are Spanish speaking. This is an area that we are looking to strengthen and serve more broadly in our country.

## **FORMATION COURSES LISTED THROUGH OUR ASSOCIATION**

We offer formation courses across the country – in a variety of formats. Some are courses that meet once a month, others meet several days over a long weekend for multiple weekends while others meet for a week or two over two summers. We continue to sponsor national summer

courses. In 2008-09 we held a national Level III course and in 2011-2012 we held a national Level II course.

Currently, we have **107 courses being offered around the United States**. We have **76 Level I courses, 21 Level II courses and 10 Level III courses**. We have 71 formation leaders (out of a list of 160) who are serving these courses. Some courses have teams of formation leaders; others are just led by one formation leader.

We continue to work with the Missionaries of Charity leading courses for them in various places. This year, courses have been given to the Missionaries of Charity alone by several of our formation leaders in Kolkata, India, in Latvia, in Nairobi, in Brazil, in San Francisco, and in November, in Rwanda. We continue to work with the sisters in helping to prepare some of them to be formation leaders. Over time they have a better understanding of the process of completing all formation levels and gaining experience with the children before moving too quickly.

## **RECOGNITION PROCESS FOR OUR FORMATION LEADERS**

Our process for recognizing formation leaders in the United States is based on the requirements established by the Consiglio in November 2002.

We provide the following guidelines for catechists in the discernment process:

1. A catechist must have completed all three levels of formation.
2. A catechist must have at least three years' experience working with children at the level she wishes to train.
3. A catechist must have written a personal album for each level which must be read by one of our formation leaders.
4. A catechist in this discernment process needs to have a mentor to whom she can go with questions or with whom she can assist in a formation course.
5. A catechist must maintain current membership in our association.
6. As a formation leader she must seek to be up-to-date by attending our formation events, seek further study in the Bible, Liturgy, or Montessori's work with children, and in reading CGS texts.
7. Although we don't require observation in a Montessori school at this time, we encourage that a catechist or formation leader observes at least 6 hours in a Montessori environment, if possible.

## **PROJECTS/INITIATIVES**

We have a **Facebook page** to offer those interested in Catechesis of the Good Shepherd an opportunity to share comments and news. It has become already something that is like a

“piazza” where many come to share and connect with one another. We have recently started using a **new database** which will help us in keeping up to date with our members.

### **Formation Leaders Training Courses**

In 2010 we began a new series of training courses for our Formation Leaders in order to help give them an opportunity to receive updates and to deepen their understanding of CGS in preparation for leading courses. We have held five of these courses since 2010 – three have focused on leading Level I formation, 1 has focused on leading Level II formation, and 1 has focused on leading Level III. Most recently, in June 2014, we offered another Formation Leaders Training Course for Level I formation Leaders. In each case we have served anywhere from 28 – 51 formation leaders and catechists who are involved in our process to be recognized as formation leaders.

### **Montessori Foundations of Catechesis of the Good Shepherd**

In July 2013, in collaboration with Siena Academy (a Catholic Montessori School in Great Falls, Virginia), we offered a course for catechists that focused on the vision of the human person and the discoveries of the child from Maria Montessori as it pertained to Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. We had about 50 catechists attending from the United States and also three catechists from Mexico – Avelina Mugerza, Brenda Saucedo, and Adelina Palomar. The course was given by Rebekah Rojcewicz along with three trained CGS catechists who are trained as Montessori guides and work in Montessori schools. Both the first and second plane child was a focus of this course was on both the first and second plane child. The course was very well received and the information that was shared in this course will be further offered to our formation leaders and other catechists to help them have a more solid foundation in Montessori’s pedagogy and how it applies to Catechesis of the Good Shepherd.

### **Formation Leaders’ Handbooks**

We have *Formation Leaders Handbooks* for Level I and Level II that we have updated and are still updating. We will also produce a *Formation Leaders Handbook* for Level III as well. These handbooks are a way for us to offer information to all formation leaders and provide guidance to formation leaders as they prepare to lead courses.

### **Publications**

The following publications have been produced since 2011:

- *Taste and See: Savoring the Child’s Wisdom* by Pam Moore
- *The Little Gospels – Infancy Narratives, Parables and Paschal Narratives.*
- Second edition of the *Atrium of the Youngest Children DVD*. It is now in three languages – Italian, English, and Spanish.
- *History of the Kingdom of God: From Creation to Parousia, Part 1*

- *History of the Kingdom of God: Building of the Kingdom through Liturgy, Part 2.*

We are so happy to have this year in 2014 the following new publications:

- *The Good Shepherd and the Child, A Joyful Journey, second revised edition*
- *The Development of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, The Rome Atria*
- *Facets of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, The Foglietto*
- *Journals of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, 2009-2013*
- *Like Leaven* by Patricia Coulter
- In process with translation of *Io Sono Buon Pastore* into English. Once these are published, we will offer training for those interested in using these books for their work with children. Since we are aware that these books have been used in other countries for quite some time, we would like to know how they have been used and if training has been offered to those using these books.
- Also in process, Rebekah is writing a book similar to *Joyful Journey* but focusing on the 6-12 year old child.

### **SOME CHALLENGES**

1. Catechists who want to lead formation courses before they have been recognized as formation leaders by our association.
2. Courses offered inconsistently with variations in materials, practices and styles causing questions or confusion about Catechesis of the Good Shepherd.
3. Formation leaders who lead courses who are not up-to-date. As an association we find that we must be clearer about how we pass along the GIFT of Catechesis of the Good Shepherd to our formation leaders and catechists and help them remember what is most essential.
4. As an association we seek to listen to the best ways to assist denominations in adapting CGS to their traditions without losing an understanding of the vital needs of the child.
5. We seek to build relationships with our sister associations so that we can share the work of Catechesis of the Good Shepherd with integrity in our country as well as globally. We need to build better communication and sharing among our sister associations.

6. Establish a protocol for courtesy when formation leaders are invited to lead courses in other countries outside their own or where there is another association established.
7. Need to recognize catechists who are seeking to be a formation leader who train in our country but are living and working in other countries where there isn't an association. They not only seek our resources but they need support so they are not isolated. This doesn't mean they will use our certificates. We will need to establish a special category for these persons.

With all of this said and all that we are doing, we also must keep in mind that our work of the National Association of Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, USA, like all our associations, is still a mustard seed work. It may appear that we are big as an association but we are in the eyes of the world, very small and in many ways hidden.

*Our challenge is to remember daily that it is the Good Shepherd's work we do, and remember how precious that work is; how full of mystery in its unfolding.*

We are deeply grateful for Sofia and Gianna, who with the children, have helped us listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd and to follow Him.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Maxwell, Director of Formation, CGSUSA  
Consiglio Representative

Dan Teller, Consiglio Representative