It was with great pleasure that the Board of Trustees of the National Association held its annual winter meeting this past January in Chicago. It was the first official meeting with our new National Director, Mary Mirrione, and enthusiasm was high. Present with Mary were board members Tracy Gaestel, Mary Heinrich, Jo Ann Padgett, Marilee Quinn, and Linda Sgammato as well as staff members Rachel Faulman, Karen Maxwell, Sara Muriello, Marrey Picciotti, and Pat Sauerman.

Mary Mirrione invited us all to a careful re-reading of our Association’s purpose, mission, and vision statements as a way of beginning our discussions as to what is before us in the context of what has gone before. Much has been accomplished regarding the last vision statement the Board issued, and it was the time to think again about what the Association is being called to in the present. Some things will always be in our vision, like good accessibility to CGS for all who are interested, and ongoing communications with the International CGS community, but some things will evolve with changing situations. One such example is how best to provide ongoing support and communication with the ever burgeoning numbers of catechists and formation leaders that are involved in the CGS work. Another example is how to address the needs of the many denominations that are adopting CGS. The increasing numbers of catechists and atria are encouraging the development of regional associations which in turn will require help and support from the National Association.

The Board listened to a report from the Chicago office and learned the greatest challenge has been, not surprisingly, the new website. While the website brings new and exciting capabilities for the National Association to meet the needs of its membership and others, its beginnings have placed great demands on the time and energies of key staff people. The Board approved a temporary increase of Marrey Picciotti’s hours to help with this enormous task and listened with admiration and gratitude to the efforts that have gone on to make this new website possible.

Mary Mirrione discussed the need for strategic planning if the National Association will adequately meet the volume of work that is being demanded of it and to develop the financial resources necessary to fund the work. She discussed the different types of planning required to meet different types of needs.
One particular challenge that was presented to us is the discrepancy between the Association’s cost of doing business and the current level of income from memberships, contributions, and sales of publications. Mary Mirrione challenged the Board to think of ways to address this and emphasized the very real need to raise more money this year. Knowing the level of commitment that is out there for the work of CGS, the Board felt hopeful that there would be a positive response to an initiative to ask for greater funds through increased membership participation and increased donations.

As I sat through the various reports and discussions, I had the same thoughts I always have whenever I meet with people involved in Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. I never fail to be amazed at those who are called to this work and how they generously give their talent, their time, and their resources. It witnesses to me of the value people see in CGS and the love they hold for our Good Shepherd and his children. It is such a pleasure for me to be able to journey with people such as these during my time on the Board and to be encouraged by their dedication.

Please know that the Board invites any and all questions about this report or anything else that may be of concern or interest. Please feel free to contact any of us at any time.

In the love of the Good Shepherd,
A humble member of his flock,
Jo Ann Padgett

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### On Formation

*by Karen Maxwell*

*Director of Formation*

Central to our association is the work of formation – forming catechists in Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, providing ongoing formation opportunities for catechists, as well as forming formation leaders.

In 2010, which served in many ways as a transition year for us, we embarked on a new initiative for training formation leaders leading Level I courses. It wasn’t the first time training has been offered to formation leaders over the years, but it was a new model for us. The hope and expectation is that by regularly offering courses for formation leaders at each level, our recognized formation leaders can be assured of receiving the most consistent and up-to-date preparation for leading each course level.

In addition, we were first introduced to Catechesis of the Good Shepherd in Canada and United States with intensive multi-week summer courses. Primarily, these were designed to accommodate Sofia’s and Gianna’s travel from Rome, and as interest grew in Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, the structure of these courses changed to accommodate various needs of catechists around the country. However, there is still something valuable about experiencing a two-week summer course, and that is the kind of bonding and community that is built among the catechists coming from all areas of the country as well as sometimes from other countries. So although we are supportive of courses that develop locally or regionally, there is also a need to offer national courses. Sometimes, these national courses pool resources that allow us to model current practices, deepen an understanding of key principles of our work, and provide up-to-date information. After all,
this is a living work!

This year we will begin a National Level II Formation Course in Chicago. Part 1 of this course will be held July 17-29 at the Cenacle Retreat and Conference Center. Registration is still open for this course until early June. This is considered a “resident” course in that participants are encouraged to stay at the Cenacle to obtain the most benefit from the course experience. Anna Hurdle, Marilee Quinn, Betsy Peterson and Julie McCauley make up the formation team, along with the director of formation and the course registrar. Part 2 of this course will be held July 15-27, 2012. This national course also gives us the opportunity to work with Pat Sauerman and her team in preparing for the Online Level II Materials Manual.

We are also preparing this fall for the second in the series of training courses for formation leaders. The Formation Leaders Training Course for Level II Formation Leaders will be offered in Atlanta October 26-30 at the Ignatius House Retreat Center. Although the model for this course may be a bit different than what was offered for the Level I Formation Leaders Training Course, the underlying principle for the course will be the same – to help prepare formation leaders to lead Level II courses consistently and with the most up-to-date information.

Looking ahead…

In one of my first meetings last fall with Mary Mirrione in her role of National Director, we discussed some of the various formation needs that I have been in conversation about with the Formation Committee and the Board. We mapped out a plan for formation events for the next 5-10 years. This plan ended up including lots more than formation events, as we know how all our work is intertwined — from our Publications projects to our connections and associations with Weaving Our Gifts Conferences and Consiglio meetings. We brought “The CGSUSA 10-Year Plan” to the winter board meeting, where it was discussed and revised. Then “The CGSUSA 10-Year Plan” went to the February meeting of the Formation Committee, where it was also discussed and revised. With so much discussion and planning, what can we share about the future of our Association? Well, you can expect the next 10 years to be life-giving in all things CGS. We hope you will find a number of options available for you to help continue your growth in this beautiful work. During this year, we will share with you more of what is being planned, but in the meantime, just to give you a sneak peek, here are a few of our upcoming events:

Our next Formation Leaders Training Course for Level I Formation Leaders is on the horizon for the summer of 2012 while we anticipate hosting a Level III Formation Leaders Training in the fall of 2013.

This September, representatives from our Association have been invited to attend the next CGS International Council (Consiglio) Meeting which will take place in Rome September 4-8. We are very excited about proposing at this next Consiglio meeting our desire as an association to host an International Catechists Gathering in 2014 to celebrate the 60th year of Catechesis of the Good Shepherd worldwide.

Some of you have inquired about when we will offer another Montessori Essentials for Catechists. We have been in discussion about this course as we consider it a very important experience for catechists in understanding the roots of Catechesis of the Good Shepherd in Maria Montessori’s approach to education. We have been discerning the needs of catechists around the country in order to decide what would be the best model for this type of course. More information about this course will be shared in the near future.

In the meantime, we hope you will find your membership in our association to be vital to helping you strengthen your role as a catechist in Catechesis of the Good Shepherd.
EVER ANCIENT, EVER NEW: The Revisions to the Roman Missal and CGS

by Mary Heinrich

There are many reasons why I feel called to this work in the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. The Montessori care of the environment appeals to my sense of order. Since I was very young, I have had a desire to create order. As an adult, this has manifested itself in my need to be organized. The other childhood love that has grown with me into my adulthood is my love of the Mass. I know that I am not alone, as you, my brother and sister catechists share in this love of Liturgy.

As I heard about the revisions in the Roman Missal, I wondered if it would be difficult to learn the new prayers. How long would it take before the prayers and responses became familiar and comfortable to my ears and lips? What would these changes mean for the atrium? Because the liturgy is one of the pillars of our work, I knew that there would be a need to remake materials. How long would it take to remake the necessary materials in three atria? What would be the most important materials to remake first, what would be a priority? What would happen if I could not finish remaking everything by the time the children came to the atrium? The work before me seemed overwhelming.

For the past few months I have had the privilege to be a member of the CGS Roman Missal, Third Edition Committee, along with some very talented catechists. The work of the committee focuses on the preparation for and the implementation of the Roman Missal within our CGS community. The process that we have been following has been a real gift to me as a catechist and Formation Leader.

We began by sitting with our album pages, rereading the pages and looking at the sources listed on our album pages. We read our album pages and the words of Sofia and Gianna through the lens of the Roman Missal. We began to lift up sentences and paragraphs from Sofia and Gianna that spoke so clearly about our work and about the spirit of the revision of the Roman Missal. The words of Sofia and Gianna are like the Mass itself, the same and unchanging, but we were able to see and delight in them as fresh and new. We then turned toward the resources we had collected regarding the Roman Missal. The language of the Roman Missal led me to rediscover the richness and beauty of the Roman Catholic Liturgy and rediscover the joy of being a catechist in this work!

As I began to reread album pages, the sources, and discuss them with the other catechists at our weekly meetings, I did not feel overwhelmed any longer. There was a rhythm to our work together. While we have a checklist, a timeline and deadlines, the real priority and joy was the process of reading and discussing our work together.

One of the questions I opened with was: What would happen if I could not finish remaking everything by the time the children came to the atrium?

When I began my own home atrium ten years ago, I had three materials: the Altar Work, the Good Shepherd and the Annunciation. I began slowly and made materials as I could afford and as I was able. I did not try to create an entire atrium before I began to present materials to the children. Today, as I think about remaking materials, I am not overwhelmed. In considering my experience of that first atrium and in the rhythm of the work of our committee, I was reminded of one of the Characteristics of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd:

25. The reasons why the catechist is requested to make the materials with this/her hands are:

   to absorb the content more deeply;
   to combat hurry, consumerism and even excessive “efficiency”;
   to pace oneself more to the rhythm of the child and thus also-or so we believe- to the working of the Holy Spirit;
   to try to reach the integration of hand, mind and heart.

While our goal would be to have all the material revisions made by the First Sunday of Advent 2011,
Roman Missal from page 4
and that may be a possibility, I know that I have another goal. I want to give the catechists I work with in my parish and in my region the opportunity to read more and to discuss with each other, and perhaps to fall more deeply in love with the Mass.

The CGS Roman Missal, Third Edition Committee is so pleased to share the fruit of our discoveries with you. Please visit our website: CGSUSA.org for regular updates on the work of the committee, answers to your questions and information about the CGS Roman Missal Kit.

Announcing a Matching Gift for the Tina Lillig Memorial Fund

To remember Tina Lillig on the occasion of her birth on May 28, 1945, and to thank God for her life, and for her devotion to the Good Shepherd and to our National Association, Kathleen and Stephen Hopkins have offered to match all gifts up to $5,000.00 to the Tina Lillig Memorial Fund. To take advantage of their generous offer, and to double the impact of your donation, you can donate online at cgsusa.org. You can pledge a one-time gift or pledge a recurring gift. You can also send a check to the The National Association of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, P.O. Box 1084, Oak Park, IL 60304. Please put Tina Lillig Memorial Fund Matching Gift on the memo line. Let’s meet Kathleen and Stephen’s challenge as together we celebrate the anniversary of Tina’s birth on May 28.

Simplify Your Giving!

The National Association now has the capability of accepting contributions via an electronic transfer, or ACH debit, directly from a donor’s bank account. This allows a donor the ultimate in flexibility to make a contribution to CGSUSA. A donor can specify any amount and have their bank account debited automatically for a one-time donation, or a donation may be spread out in increments over a specified time period. For example, a donor could have the amount of an annual gift to CGSUSA made as smaller monthly or quarterly debits from their account, making it easier to manage cash flow and while affording generous support to our Association.

A simple form authorizing the transaction is all that is needed to begin. Please contact our Director of Development, Rachel Faulman, rachelfaulman@cgsusa.org, for more information on making a donation to our Association via an ACH debit.

Our new website, cgsusa.org, also allows a donor the choice to make regular periodical contributions with a credit card.

We are so grateful for the generosity of all of our donors. If you have any questions regarding your contributions to CGSUSA, please contact Rachel by email, or at (708) 524-1210.
Membership:

Your membership in the National Association of Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGSUSA) connects you with catechists and supporters from around the United States, and even from around the world, who share a commitment to the Christian formation of children. Your membership support not only gives you access to wonderful resources in Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, but also helps our association spread the word about how a relationship with the Good Shepherd can nourish the spiritual growth of children and can also be life-changing for adults. In addition to keeping members connected and updated, memberships go a long way to support the association.

The association values its members and strives to listen and respond to your ideas and needs. For our work to flourish, however, we need an active membership. The regular membership fee hasn’t gone up in over a decade. Certificate fees and sales of publications also help courses to happen and the office to exist, but all of these funds together don’t provide enough to move us forward in responding to the needs of our work with new projects and events, new staff positions, board and committee meetings, participating in the International Council meetings, providing resources for our formation leaders, and nurturing our catechists. If you believe in this association and the work we have ahead of us, please invite a friend to join us.

Our mission is to support catechists, parents, and others in the Church as they grow in their understanding of the religious potential of children. This is a worthy endeavor, one that is filled with joy. There are many catechists who are not yet members, perhaps they are simply waiting for the invitation. Please invite them to come and help us live out Characteristic #22: “The catechists work together in a spirit of unity and harmony, in tune with God’s plan for communion in the history of salvation and in keeping with the themes of unity so strongly expressed in the parables of the Good Shepherd (John 10:1ff) and the True Vine. (John 15: 1ff) They generously offer their talents and experience for the good of all.”

CGS Regions:

The first regional gathering with the National Director Mary Mirrione this year was held in April at St. Maria Goretti Catholic Church in Scottsdale, Arizona. Sixty-five catechists came from around the state to pray and reflect on our work and to meet with Mary to talk about the needs and gifts of this region. As always when we gather, there was much joy, laughter and song. The Arizona region dates back to the early 1990s, although many who attended this meeting in were new to the work of CGS. In fact, CGSUSA now welcomes twenty-five new members from this region.

The Board of Trustees of our Association sees great potential in the development of regional groups of catechists in helping to support ongoing formation and development of local area atria and as a vital way to link to the National Association. Mary Mirrione is making plans to visit regions and local groups of catechists around the country this year, with visits already scheduled to the catechists in Corpus Christi, Texas, in the Sonflower Region of the Kansas City, Kansas area, and in the Denver, Colorado area.

Be sure to check our website under “News and Events” to see if Mary will be visiting in a region near you. Please contact Mary if you would like to share information or ideas about your regional group, or how you would like to see the National Association support catechists in your area. If you are a developing a regional group of catechists and need assistance, let us know. Go to the “Contact Us” link on our website (www.cgsusa.org) and choose “Regional Organizations and Events” for your message.

Upcoming Events

National Level II Formation Course
Part 1: July 17-29, 2011
Part 2: July 15-27, 2012
Chicago, Illinois

Annual Meeting of the National Association
July 23, 2011
Chicago, Illinois

Summer Board Meeting
August 10-14, 2011
Chicago, Illinois

CGS International Council (Consiglio) Meeting
September 4-8, 2011
Rome, Italy

Formation Leaders Training Course for Level II
Formation Leaders
October 26-30, 2011
Atlanta, Georgia
From the National Director’s desk…

“…early in the morning, while it was still dark…” These words from the gospel are lived out in my life in a deep way since beginning my work for the Association six months ago.

I rise early and I often head out to the airport to catch a plane to one of the many cities in this country to meet some of you. Since October, I have been to Hartford, Rome, Atlanta, Washington DC, St Louis, Chicago, and San Francisco. Soon I will travel to Corpus Christi, Chicago, Steubenville, New York City, Kansas City, Lawrence, Topeka, Wichita, Charlotte, and Denver. There are still other places I will visit for those who have invited me but we have not yet set a date. Like the women on that morning so long ago, there is a fear of the unknown, but it is superseded by the desire to do all I can for the body of Christ in our CGS work.

Sometimes, while it is still dark here in the desert, I am on the phone to those who have been awake for hours. We talk of many things, the needs and concerns of our Association, plans for the future, and the gifts of the children.

Most often, early in the morning while it is still dark, I climb the stairs to my tiny office and begin to work though the administration of our Association. There are decisions to be made for our future, bills to be paid, donors to be found, needs to be answered, and children to be fed. As I climb, I pray for His will to be done in all that we do to serve Him and children around this country.

And like the women who arrived at the tomb, I always arrive at the entrance of my office to find the stone rolled away and the light of the Living Christ living among us, and I rejoice in sharing with all of you the greatest news that ever was…. He is Risen and gives abundantly His life to us.

“…early in the morning, while it was still dark,” I begin my work with a song in my heart that I pray echoes though our association: “Let this place resound with joy, echoing the mighty song of all God’s people!”

Mary Mirrione

Our Purpose is…
to assist the involvement of adults and children in a common religious experience in which the religious values of childhood 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.