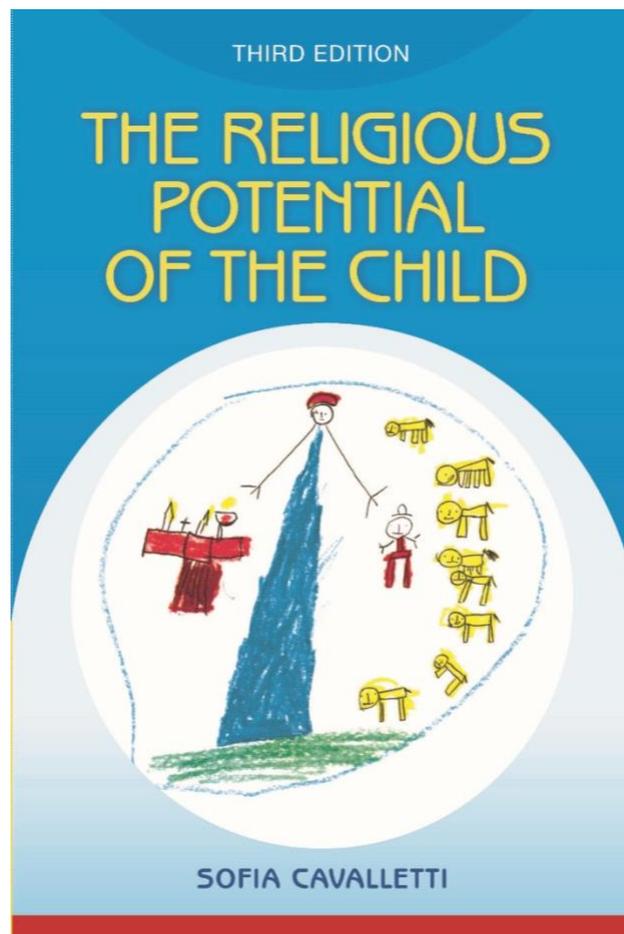




The United States Association of  
*The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd*



*Religious Potential of the Child 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*  
**Book Study**  
*Questions for Conversations*



The United States Association of

*The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd*

***Religious Potential of the Child Book Study  
to observe the release of  
The Third Edition of *The Religious Potential of the Child, Experiencing  
Scripture and Liturgy with Young Children****

As we begin, let us pray:

*Beloved Good Shepherd send your Holy Spirit, Giver of all good gifts, to us and fill our minds and hearts. Give us the gifts of knowledge and understanding and the grace to use them wisely.*

*Help us to more deeply recognize the religious potential of children and in doing so may we “assist the involvement of children and adults in a common religious experience in which the religious values of childhood, primarily those values of contemplation of and enjoyment of God, are predominant.” We ask this in Your most Holy Name. Amen*

**Why a third edition?**

This book describes an experience with children from ages three to six, an experience of adults and children dwelling together in the mystery of God. In the preface of this third edition, we read, “Our defining document: “The Characteristics of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd: 32 Points for Reflection,” states that ours is a “mustard seed work.” Among other things, this means it is a living work, and a central feature of all living things is that they grow and change. The content of CGS offered to the young child has remained the same especially because of the young child's essentiality. “ This third edition, however, includes additions that refine how catechists can best present the content to children. This classic text has been updated to reflect Sofia Cavalletti’s edits to the Spanish edition and includes a new Preface and Afterword by editor Rebekah Rojcewicz. As we read the preface, will discover the updates to this third edition.

**Foreword: An American Experience of the Catechesis pages v - xi**

- What struck you as you read the forward?
- Had you read the forward before? If so, was there anything you read in the forward that was new for you this time?

- Had you thought about the framework you use, or could use, in which you can share your experience of God and the child in the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd? (p v)
- Rebekah describes the experience of catechesis in light of the Gospels. Is there a particular scripture that resonates for you what she describes?
- “Perhaps it is difficult for us to sense the fullness of life in the atrium or to recognize the particular quality of the children’s joy if we have not first discovered our own joy in response to God’s presence. But the children help us with this.” (p xi) How have the children help you discover your own joy in response to God’s presences that was concealed to you before you CGS Formation?

**Preface: The Religious Potential of the Church (third edition) pages xiii - xv**

- In the preface to the third edition, Rebekah Rojcewicz shares what the reader will discover in this edition that is not found in the previous editions.
- What struck you as you read the preface? What is calling you to go deeper?
- “The Good Shepherd and the young child are meant for each other; they delight in each other’s company.” (p xiv) How have you witnesses this in your work with young children?
- “The greatest strength of this book is found in voices and artwork of the children.” (p xv) Have you spent time pondering the art found in this book? How has the artwork of the child impacted your role of the catechist?
- Find one piece of artwork and read the corresponding explanation of the artwork (starting on p 147), why were you drawn to that image today?

**Preface: The Religious Potential of the Church (second edition) pages xvii - xxvi**

- What struck you as you read the preface?
- Had you read the preface before? If so, was there anything you read in the preface that was new for you this time?
- Had you thought about the broader pastoral applications of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd? How have you seen it lived out in your parish community or school setting?
- Searle describes catechesis and ministry as an “Encounter with the mystery of God”; can you describe your first experience of CGS as an encounter with the mystery of God? (p xviii)

- “Liturgy, Cavalletti suggests, is primarily a visual experience. It can only “work,” therefore, for those who are trained to allow their inner eye to be guided by the unfolding rite to that which is represented but cannot itself be seen.” (p xxi) What have you seen in the liturgy that was hidden to you before you CGS Formation?

### **Introduction pages xxix - xxxvi**

- What struck you as you read the introduction?
- Had you read the introduction before? If so, was there anything you read in the introduction that was new for you this time?
- Sofia describes the center of catechesis as a “place in which the community of children and their catechists live their religious experience together...”; can you describe your first experience of this slower pace of the child before God? (p xxxi)
- The introduction gives an essential overview of the book. Is there a particular chapter you are looking forward to the most?

### **Chapter One: God and the Child pages 1 - 17**

- What struck you as you read this chapter?
- Was there anything you read in the chapter that was new for you this time?
- What do you think is the most essential point of this chapter?
- Sofia suggests. “Before beginning any discussion about the religious education of children, we should ask ourselves a basic question: Is it justifiable to give religious education to children?” (p 1) After reading this chapter, how would you respond?

### **Chapter Two: The Child and the Adult - pages 19-31**

- What struck you as you read this chapter?
- Was there anything you read in the chapter that was new for you this time?
- What do you think is the most essential point of this chapter?
- Sofia suggests that “the essentiality of the child is perhaps the element that imposes the severest discipline on the adult. “(p 19) Has this been true for you?
- What did you discover about the Sources (p 25), the Materials (p 26), or the Environment (p 27) that helped you understand the role of the adult?

- It is in this chapter that Sofia discusses the Adult as “Unworthy Servant” found in Luke’s Gospel. A description we all know well and sometimes have been challenged by. She goes on to say that “The initiation of a child into the Christian Life is not a work that can fulfilled by the catechists alone nor by the parents alone. It is the whole Christian community that proclaims Christ, and the child must enter into contact with the entire Christian Community.” (p 31)
- How do you see this lived out in your community?

**Chapter Three: Christ the Good Shepherd pages 33-48**

- What struck you as you read this chapter?
- Was there anything you read in the chapter that was new for you this time?
- What do you think is the most essential point of this chapter?
- Has this chapter made it even clearer to you why “the Good Shepherd parable is the cornerstone of all this work” (p 35)?

**Chapter Four: Christ the Good Shepherd and the Eucharist pages 49-66**

- What struck you as you read this chapter?
- Was there anything you read in the chapter that was new for you this time?
- What do you think is the most essential point of this chapter?
- “There does not exist a Bible that we read and the Liturgy that we live; there is the Bible we live with the whole of our life and especially so I the Liturgy. The former without the latter would be deprived of its most intense moment of life; the latter without the former would be based on a void. The Bible finds its fullness in the listening of the community that lives in justice and builds itself in the Eucharistic Celebration. Therefore, the child who comes to know the Good Shepherd should be initiated into the greatest action in which we meet Him: the Mass” (p 49) Have you experienced this in your community? How has this chapter helped you better understand Sofia’s statement?

**Chapter Five: Christ the Light and Baptism pages 67-72**

- What struck you as you read this chapter?
- Was there anything you read in the chapter that was new for you this time?

- What do you think is the most essential point of this chapter?
- Have you considered what Sofia calls the “linking point” in what you present to the children? How has this helped?
- This chapter references many of the children’s artwork. Was there something in their work that particularly struck you? Do you have a favorite piece of art from your own Atrium that you would like to share with the CGSUSA Book Study?

**Chapter Six: The Historical Events in the Life of Jesus pages 73-88**

- What struck you as you read this chapter?
- Was there anything you read in the chapter that was new for you this time?
- What do you think is the most essential point of this chapter?
- Sofia suggests “...the presentation of sacred scripture, - parables or historical narratives- should never be disunited from prayer, in a structured or structured form. The proclamation is complete when it has been received, and, in one form or another, and consists of the catechist’s questions and the children’s responses.” (p 86) What responses of the child have you witnessed when pondering the Life of Christ with them?

**Chapter Seven: Prayer pages 89-105**

- What struck you as you read this chapter?
- Was there anything you read in the chapter that was new for you this time?
- What do you think is the most essential point of this chapter?
- Sofia writes of a “real education to silence” in this chapter. “(p 104) What education to silence have you experienced with the children? How important is silence in your life? How can you better develop silence in your life and the lives of the children you serve?

**Chapter Eight: Education to Wonder and the Kingdom of God pages 107-118**

- What struck you as you read this chapter?
- Was there anything you read in the chapter that was new for you this time?
- What do you think is the most essential point of this chapter?
- “An education to wonder is one that helps us to go always more deeply into reality. If we skim over things, we will never be surprised by them. Wonder is not an emotion of superficial people; it strikes root only in the person whose

mind is able to settle and rest in things,...” (p 108) Have you considered the gift of wonder as a necessary habit of the spirit of the catechist?

### **Chapter Nine: Moral Formation pages 119 -124**

- What struck you as you read this chapter?
- Was there anything you read in the chapter that was new for you this time?
- What do you think is the most essential point of this chapter?
- In this chapter Sofia discusses the need for catechesis to begin before the age of six so that the child is free from any preoccupation and open to the encounter with God and to the enjoyment the child derives from this encounter. How can we best articulate this need to the parents and pastors of the children we serve?

### **Chapter Ten: The Method of Signs pages 125-134**

- What struck you as you read this chapter?
- Was there anything you read in the chapter that was new for you this time?
- What do you think is the most essential point of this chapter?
- “The method of signs educates the child and the catechists in humility (that virtue which has been defined as the “cardinal virtue of the Christian”), because this method never gives anyone the sense of knowing everything, of having arrived at the core of things; given their allusive nature, signs will never be exhausted of their meaning.” (p 133) What was the first sign that brought you this humility in your work in CGS?

### **Chapter Eleven: Anthropological Catechesis and Conclusion pages 135-141**

- What struck you as you read this chapter?
- Was there anything you read in the chapter that was new for you this time?
- What do you think is the most essential point of this chapter?
- In writing of CGS as an anthropological catechesis, Sofia lifts up three constants and four objects. Choose one to share your experiences with the child. (p 170, 171)
- Finally, in her conclusion, Sofia asks the question: “What is the profound relationship that binds together the subjects listed in the previous chapter?” How do we respond to this question?

**Afterward: The Death and Resurrection pages 145-146**

- What struck you as you read the afterward?
- What do you think is the most essential point of these two pages?
- Is there a particular material or presentation that lifts up the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and remind you of an experience with the children in the Atrium?

*Thank you for  
in this book club  
have experienced  
contemplation in  
this book.*



*participating  
and hope you  
joy and  
the study of*