



The United States Association of

The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd®

Dear Fellow CGS Catechists,

It was wonderful to be together online this past Friday, February 5 to reflect on the new Directory for Catechesis that was published by the Roman Catholic Church this past summer. Many thanks to Mary Mirrione and Barbara Matera for leading the session and helping us get at some of the most essential points included in the book-length Directory and to reflect on its parallel points with CGS. Already, in translating Francesca Cocchini's wonderful reflection on the Directory that we shared in a Foglietto this past summer, we could all begin to marvel over how in-sync we already are with much of the Directory's position on catechesis. During our breakout group's discussion on Friday, we were all rejoicing in the affirmation of our work we had discovered in the Directory, and this was shared by the whole group as well when we came back together. For CGS catechists, there is much to celebrate in this new Directory.

Furthermore, we are being given an opportunity to marvel all the more over the fact that Sofia and Gianna had discovered and were already living the truths expressed in the Directory for 25 years before *Catechesi Tradendae* was published in 1979, in which Pope John Paul II first clarified that catechesis is as much about those being catechized as it is about the content to be delivered. As Francesca pointed out in her article, the first volume of *The Religious Potential of the Child* predates *Catechesi Tradendae*! And yes, because we have often had to struggle with credibility with our parish priests and DRE's over the years, it is very tempting to gloat a bit over this fact. But what is far more important is that we seek to re-discover how and why Sofia and Gianna and their collaborators came to realize the most significant proclamations in the new Directory more than sixty years ago!

This quest takes us back once again to our origins in the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, remembering Sofia's statement that "in order to truly know a thing, one must know its origins." CGS was not created in the "heads" of an esteemed Hebrew scholar and a master Montessori practitioner. However, qualified they might have been to "create" a program for the religious education of children, that is not what happened at all. Again, how did CGS come to be? Not as a doctoral thesis, not as an intellectual exercise at all. Rather, it was the fruit of an encounter with children. Because of their own, differing formation, coupled with their true humility, Sofia and Gianna were able to "see" the children before them and to recognize their religious potential and allow them to lead the way in the discovery of what is most essential in our faith.

Thus, although I take joy in reading the Directory, I also see that something very important is still missing: its lack of any direct affirmation of the marvelous religious potential of children. The focus remains on us as catechists, on our identity as teachers of the faith, along with a welcomed reframing of how best to do that. On the bright side, the Directory is another invitation for us to celebrate the unique gifts of CGS, especially its respect for the wisdom of the children and the way they go on amazing and changing us. Minimally, were I given the opportunity to “edit” the Directory, I would add one point to the list of characteristics identifying the catechist: “The catechist is one who knows herself/himself as blessed to be able to recognize the “hidden riches of the child” (Characteristic #27) and to be open to being transformed by the children in their relationship with God.” Afterall, Jesus commanded it in Matthew 18:3, in telling us that we must “change and become like children.”

Finally, this takes me back to the words of our beloved CGS co-founder, Gianna:

The effectiveness of the catechist rests in his/her ability to listen to God WITH the child.

Rejoicing in this joyful journey we share,

Rebekah Rojcewicz

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