



The United States Association of

The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd®

Sustaining CGS in the Parish

Sharing our experiences with and observations of the child

How do you speak about CGS to people who are not acquainted with this method of formation? As a catechist, it is important to build a collection of stories about your experiences with and observations of the child. Consider what, out of your experiences with the child, that has astonished you? Criteria for these should include

- that the experience shared has theological content,
- that the experience can be understood by anyone,
- that it is believable, i.e., not that there is a judgement of the experience shared to be untrue; but rather does is sound so incredible it is unlikely or even suspect,

As catechists, we need to be able to speak to how the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd nurtures the religious life of the child. This is done by giving the child time and space for that relationship with God to be nurtured. This process is similar to writing your album page. We have to use our own words and share our own observations of the child. And we must practice, practice, practice. We can practice with one another, sharing and telling our stories to our fellow catechists.

Sample Stories

- After Mass, the four-year-old boy worked his way through the crowd of adults, weaving in and out between the towering figures of people as they exited the Church, he was on a mission to find the priest. Upon seeing Father who was engaged in conversation with several other adults, the young child approached and tugged on the priest's chasuble. The priest looked down at the young boy, whose own head tilted back, eye's gazing on the priest's face, and the boy proclaimed, "Father, I did not see your epiclesis today." For a moment, the priest wondered if he indeed offered the gesture during Mass (he did), while the other adults wondered, 'What is an epiclesis?'
- Max, is in sixth grade. He has been diagnosed with autism and Tourette syndrome. He stopped coming to Mass, as he was anxious and worried about saying a bad word in Church because of Tourette's. We spoke to Max's parents and convinced them to let him come to the atrium. Each week he works with a material *Eucharistic Presence of the Good Shepherd*, where he takes great delight in placing simple wooden figures of people who listen to the Voice of the Good Shepherd, around a small wooden altar table. The atrium is now like home for Max, he has become a different child, happy and confident. Not only does Max now go to Mass, but he is an altar server.

- Josh, who is autistic, and now in high school, has been in the atrium since he was in fourth grade. Even as a fourth grader, his parents did not allow Josh to receive his first holy communion. They felt as though he did not understand the basics of our faith tradition. His first year in the atrium, Josh was working with the materials on the Last Supper: a wooden model of the Upper Room and wooden figures of Jesus and the apostles gathered around the table. I walked over to observe what he was doing. Josh was rocking back and forth, singing quietly, "Jesus gave them bread, pa rump pa pa pum, they were happy, pa rump pa pum." That night, I called his mom and shared what I had observed. Josh made his first communion later that month. The atrium has been an important part of Josh's life and I am sure he will continue coming to us, even as a young adult. When Josh entered the Level Three atrium for the 9-12 year-old child, his catechists observed that he had become much more verbal and expressive, and a leader within the atrium community.

Bulletin items about CGS

CGSUSA has an array of sample bulletin items for those starting CGS, as well as 15 months of liturgically themed bulletin items, which are available to our Organization Members.

Is it possible for the pastor to write or share information about CGS in the parish bulletin? Or to make a pulpit announcement?

Written Testimonials or spoken reflections may be offered from Catechists, Parents, Ex-bambini, as well as snippets from magazine articles found on the CGSUSA website.

Social Media

How often is there information regarding CGS in your parish social media? Including Facebook posts, Instagram photos, and Twitter?

Are there other ways for parishioners to learn about CGS? Information can be placed in the Gathering Space/Narthex

- Green booklets from CGSUSA
- Information about upcoming formation courses
- Photos of children in the Atrium, photos of children's artwork in the Atrium on Facebook, in the bulletin, on TV screen in gathering space

Take advantage of gathered groups of parishioners at Parent Meetings, Baptism Classes, Open Houses, a Seed Planting Workshop, or Time and Talent sign up, etc.

- Recruit catechists
- Recruit parishioners to help make materials
 - Recruit sewers
 - Recruit painters
 - Recruit woodworks
 - Have samples of all those materials needed
 - Have pages from Materials Manual, i.e. schematics
 - How else can we invite parishioners to take ownership of CGS?

Presence at Parish Events

- Coffee and donuts
- Parish breakfasts
- Dinners
 - Have the Atrium open during these events
 - Invite parishioners to visit the Atrium before they leave
 - Have “seasonal” gift in the Atrium for families?

Send Postcards and personal notes to parishioners inviting them to attend formation

- Write sample note(s)
- Make a list so catechists do not duplicate names
- Parents, baptism class, ask catechists to make a list
- Newcomers
- New grandparents
- Young families

Is it possible to display children’s artwork on the wall outside the Atrium? Allowing the parishioners to come to know more about the prepared environment?