



The United States Association of
The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

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The CGSUSA Formation Leader Discernment Process Overview

Thank you for your interest in the Formation Leader Discernment Process with the United States Association of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGSUSA). On behalf of the Formation Leader Discernment Team, we look forward to getting to know you!

As of July 15, 2024, due to the high volume of applications, we are beginning a new approach to handling inquiries about the Formation Leader Discernment Process. Receipt of Formation Leader Discernment Applications will be closed from July 15, 2024 -February 15, 2025. The application process will resume February 15 to May 15, 2025.

If you want to begin the **CGSUSA Formation Leader Discernment Process**, please review the **Guidelines for Determining a Catechist's Readiness to Begin the Process** below. This will offer guidance in your preparation until the application process resumes. If you are interested in this process, please complete the **Preliminary Interest Form** available on the **CGSUSA website** (See **LEARN**, then **Becoming a Formation Leader**). These guidelines serve as a framework for recognizing CGSUSA Formation Leaders who represent the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd and our association in leading catechist formation.

Guidelines for Determining a Catechist's Readiness to Begin the Formation Leader Discernment Process

1. You must **maintain an annual individual membership** in the United States Association of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd.
2. You must have **completed all three levels of formation** (Level I: 3-6, Level II: 6-9, and Level III: 9-12). If it has been more than ten years since you attended Level I catechist formation, it is wise to consider auditing another Level I catechist formation. This will also be true for Levels II and III later if you pursue recognition at these levels. You will also add information to your application if you have received the seminal Infant-Toddler Catechist Formation.
3. **Your album for each level must be personally written and read by either your formation leader** for that level or another CGSUSA-recognized formation leader. This first recognition phase will focus only **on recognition as a Level I Formation Leader**. You do not need to complete all three albums to be recognized as a Level I Formation Leader. However, you will need to have the Level I album completed and read by a formation leader. Recognition as a formation leader at each succeeding level will depend on completing this guideline.
4. You must **identify your experience working with three to six-year-old children in a Level I atrium and show that you** have had **at least** three consecutive years of experience with children in the Level I atrium within the past five years. More years with children in the atrium are always beneficial. (The same guideline will apply for recognition at Levels II or III.)

5. You must **provide photos of the Level I atrium environment** where you are serving as a catechist. The committee will look to see how well you have prepared and arranged the atrium environment and how the materials are prepared in light of the Level I Materials Manual. (This requirement is also true for Levels II and III Formation Leader Discernment Process.)
6. **Observation Experience in a Montessori school environment**
It is valuable for a potential formation leader to have had some experience observing in an Association Montessori Internationale accredited Montessori School (AMI) or an American Montessori Society accredited Montessori School (AMS). Observation hours can be from 1 to 3 hours. So much of this, we understand, is what the school allows. Once you are actively involved in the Formation Leader Discernment Process you will need to send observation notes from this experience. You can request a copy of the Observation Form from Karen Maxwell. Observing in a Montessori school may not be feasible in some areas but providing information on any of the ways you have deepened your knowledge of Montessori's principles of education regarding the child through reading her books, attending seminars, courses, or viewing online webinars is helpful to know.

The process includes completing several application documents, in which you will indicate how you have met or will meet the above guidelines.

What you can do now in Preparation for applying to The Formation Leader Discernment Process

1. Continue to gain experience working with children in the atrium.
2. If you completed your catechist formation ten years ago at the level you would like to be recognized as a formation leader, consider auditing another course at that level.
3. Write your personal catechist album to get it ready for review by a mentor formation leader.
4. Observe in a Montessori primary (for Level I) or elementary (for Levels II and III) at an AMI or AMS-accredited school. (Take notes.)

Formation Leader Discernment Application Documents

The Formation Leader Discernment Process will accept applications for the next cohort beginning February 15, 2025. The following is a list of what will be part of that application.

- **Formation Leader Discernment Application and Application Fee**
This is an online application where you will document your experience and how you meet the guidelines. A \$25 application fee is paid when the application is submitted.
- **Letters of Reference**
You will ask three people who know you and your work in Catechesis of the Good Shepherd to write **Letters of Reference on your behalf**. One of these three people needs to be a recognized formation leader. Another could be the priest or a person on staff at your parish or school as long as they know your work as a CGS catechist. This, too, is an online form that will be included with the application.
- **The Atrium Environment Photos**
The Formation Leader Discernment Application includes sending photos of your Atrium Environment. The committee will see how well you prepare the atrium environment and the materials in light of the Level I Materials Manual and according to the Level I Prepared Atrium Environment overview.

- **Album Reader Response Form**

Once a CGSUSA formation leader has personally written and reviewed your Level I album, the leader must complete an Album Reader Response Form.

Once you have been accepted into the cohort of the Formation Leader Discernment Process

You will need to have a mentor. This person is an experienced formation leader. You will receive guidance on who can serve as a mentor. The mentor will be the person who reviews your album. This will likely be the person with whom you serve as an assistant on a course. You will serve on at least one and possibly two courses as an assistant.

As an **assistant on catechist formation** in Part 1, you will primarily focus on being an observer in the course, listening to adult reflections, watching the presentations, and taking notes to update your album. During the catechist formation, you will want to observe the group dynamics and the interactions between the formation leader and participants, noticing what questions are asked and how they are answered. During the second half of the catechist formation, you may be asked to give a presentation (s), discuss album pages with a small group, or assist in preparing the materials and the atrium environment for each course session, discuss with the formation leader the details needed for the session's presentations. This role is very important for the experience it can offer you to prepare for the formation leader role. It is best that you do not also serve as the hosting coordinator, taking care of hosting details for the course while trying to serve as an assistant to the formation leader. The hosting duties may distract your focus from the course session.

The Formation Leader Discernment Team will be looking to see if you have gained experience on at least one, and possibly two, full Level I courses. They will look for feedback from your mentor as well as from you.

As a member of the Formation Leader Discernment Cohort, you will be invited to participate in the **Formation Leader Discernment Seminar**, which will be offered again in 2026. This hybrid event includes a portion of online study and a 4-1/2-day in-person meeting at a retreat center.

This is a discernment process for those interested in Catechesis of the Good Shepherd catechist formation. It begins with you and includes the CGSUSA Formation Leader Discernment Team. We join with you to discern your readiness to take on this important role of sharing the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. Although many people drawn to Catechesis of the Good Shepherd seek to serve children, not all who become catechists are called to be formation leaders. If you have read this far, you have already begun your own prayerful discernment about becoming a formation leader; therefore, we want to encourage you to continue listening to how God is calling you to this role.

I'm happy to serve you in this process and on behalf of the discernment team we look forward to getting to know you.

Grace and peace to you in Christ,

Karen Maxwell, Director of Formation

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