



Parent Page Newsletter

For the parents of children in the CGS Atrium
October 2024

The Atrium

Dwelling Place

A dwelling is a place where someone lives. There are holy places where God dwells. The Church is God's home, and the children know that God dwells inside of them; the children also understand that God is present in physical places, like the atrium environment. The atrium can be likened to a retreat house. It is in this prepared environment where the child experiences the presence of God in their life, and in doing so, forms the person they are to become. The environment itself can help, or it can prevent the development of the person. The environment needs to be prepared in a way that answers the needs of the child and helps the child to grow in his or her relationship with God. Both the parent and the child need a "lovely dwelling place" (Psalm 84) in which to draw nearer to Him and respond authentically to the gifts of God's love.

Word of God

As we begin our year in the atrium, we want to help the child begin to become familiar with the prepared environment, particularly the prayer corner and how we speak and move in this place, especially how we honor God's presence at the prayer table. We celebrate the gift of the Bible in the life of the atrium with a prayer celebration. The children come to know that the Holy Bible contains the Word of God. When we read from the Bible, or listen to His Word, God is present with us. We open the Bible and proclaim and reflect upon sacred scripture, perhaps John 8:12 or Psalm 119:105.

When pondering, "How is the Word of God like a light?", a ten-year-old boy responds, "Light helps us to see. When we read from the Bible, we are able to see and know things about God that we could not see before." The children help us to know that Light touches and transforms everything. What are those things the child (and the adult) will now be able to see about God that was not visible before?

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In the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, the name "atrium" is owed to Italian educator María Montessori. It refers to the space of the ancient Roman basilicas, between the street and the church. It was a place to prepare to enter the temple. Imagine the pilgrims traveling to Rome, who arrived after days, weeks, even months of being on the road. The atrium gradually gives way to the passage between the things of the world and the place where we will encounter the Lord. In the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, the atrium is a place for work, for celebration, and for prayer. The atrium is the child's prepared environment, a place where God, the Holy One, comes to dwell. A place where the child experiences God dwelling in the Word, God dwelling in all of creation, and God dwelling in our hearts.