

# Church of the Assumption

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July 16, 2009

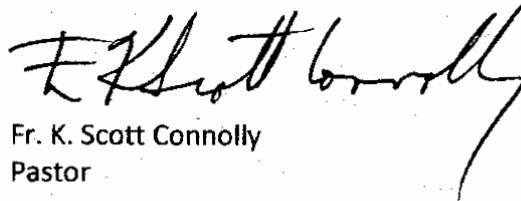
Ellen Bollard  
Assumption Parish  
6201 33rd NE  
Seattle, WA 98115

Dear Ellen:

Joann Terranova wrote recently asking for a letter of recommendation for the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Program (sometimes referred to as the Atrium). My sister, Andrea McNitt, was involved with CGS down at St. Patrick Parish in Tacoma. She told me all about it, and her energy and enthusiasm for this wonderful program rubbed off on me. I sent a number of people from our newly formed parish in Woodinville (Blessed Teresa of Calcutta) to the training program and they started CGS in 2005. We had a very young parish with several people with children that age. We were able to start with two different Atria, and eventually added a third for older children. I believe they are still going strong, but I am no longer Pastor at Blessed Teresa.

I believe this is one of the best catechetical tools for people of this age that the Church has to offer. The young people are drawn in to a method of learning and growing that is prayerful, fun, insightful and spiritual. They often come away with profound insights that could only be gleaned from the ritual and methodology of this Montessori based education. The parents with whom I have spoken praise the virtues of the program, and the children have a strong desire to come each week and come away wanting more. Anything that can make our young people more excited about their faith is a benefit to us all. My sister moved to Spokane a few years back and recently got permission from her Pastor and their Pastoral Council to begin the program in their parish this fall. Anything she or I can do to help promote this wonderful process, we are more than happy to do. Please let me know how I can be of further assistance.

Yours in Christ,



Fr. K. Scott Connolly  
Pastor



**ASSUMPTION**  
*Catholic Church*

August 12, 2009

Anne Frederick, Ed.D.  
Director of Religious Education  
Archdiocese of Seattle  
910 Marion Street  
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Anne,

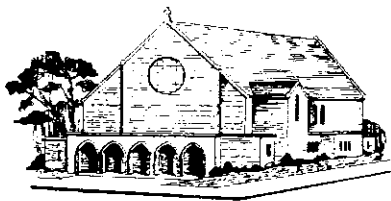
I first learned about the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd about twenty years ago and had some experience with it at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Bothell with Mary Klein our director. An Atrium has been at Assumption Parish since 1998. The Catechesis has been used for preschool and elementary age children and our Religious Education includes using some of the materials with our sacramental preparation programs for both children and adults. Children and adults alike seem to be drawn to the presentations in a deep way. I have seen the fruits of this method in the children who have been exposed to this Catechesis.

Catechesis a hands-on method where the catechists prepare the environment and listen to God with the children enables the child to develop his or her own relationship with Christ. I have learned to admire what this Montessori approach does for children's education both religiously and secularly. I would recommend the approval and continued use of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd in the Archdiocese.

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

Reverend Oliver F. Duggan  
Pastor/ Assumption Parish

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# St. Anthony Parish

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*Evangelization: Fanning the Flame*

August 12, 2009

Ellen Bollard  
Office of Communications  
ARCHDIOCESE OF SEATTLE  
710 9th Avenue  
Seattle, Washington 98104-2017

Dear Ellen,

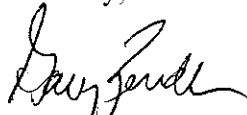
I am writing in regard to Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS), which is the method for catechesis that our parish has used for younger children for five years.

From the experience of parents and listening to catechists and as well as my own observation, I believe that CGS is a most effective way to share the faith with our children. Because of the Montessori style of instruction, the children not only learn at their own pace, they also have a very "hands-on" experience in their learning. They learn wonderful things about Jesus, the Good Shepherd, and how their experience of his care for each one of us who are called by name is then experienced in the Church's prayer, the Liturgy

I am encouraged that our recent Archdiocesan Faith Formation Assessment also gave high marks for this program and that our Hispanic Community is growing in their enthusiasm for initiating CGS in their catechetical program.

I hope that these comments are helpful. May God bless you in your efforts.

Sincerely,



Fr. Gary Zender

# St. Mary Star of the Sea Church

1335 Blaine Street  
Port Townsend, WA 98368

August 28, 2009

Anne Frederick, Ed.D.  
Director, Religious Education  
Archdiocese of Seattle  
710 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Dr. Frederick:

I am an extern deacon from the Diocese of Phoenix ministering in the Archdiocese of Seattle at St. Mary Star of the Sea, Port Townsend, which is my home parish. It was in Phoenix while at St. Catherine of Siena Parish/School when I first became aware of a method of Christian education that presents the most important teachings of our faith to the youngest members of the Holy Mother Church through a technique called "The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd." I am moved and excited by the success of this form of catechesis and ask that you consider the following as you move through the process of authorizing this particular method of curriculum based catechesis in the Archdiocese of Seattle.

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS) is a world-wide religious formation program for a young child which is Montessori based and provides catechist prepared lessons along with in scale hands-on material for children. It is in this material and personal involvement that children are able to experience their Catholic faith through scripture, liturgy and sacraments. Children meet in a specially prepared environment, the "Atrium" that is designed to make them more comfortable. This child-centered program is dedicated to meet the needs of individual children, as they explore their own relationship with God.

This particular method of Christian education more so than any other is predicated on the fact that young children have deep religious experience which should be encouraged to grow. It is accepted that a child understands that God has made himself present to them and that they are fully capable of forming an intimate relationship with God at their level of understanding. The catechist needs only provide the guidance and vocabulary for children to become aware of their own personal relationship with God. In this way children learn how to express their relationship and love of God.

Two detailed means are employed to encourage this formation process. The first is through the prepared environment, the "Atrium"; the second, a trained catechist whose catechetical sources are Scripture and Liturgy is necessary for a successful learning experience for children. Here at St. Mary Star of the Sea, Port Townsend, we have begun implementing the CGS method by beginning to prepare an environment, an Atrium that will contain materials that are models of things used in the Church's worship such as an in scale altar, Eucharist, baptism, liturgical colors, vestments, etc. It is our goal as we progress to have an environment which will contain material on matters of faith such as parables, prophecies, geography of Israel, and the life of Christ. We presently have two catechists in Level I training at St. Michael's Parish; who will make presentations chosen to convey the essentials of the faith in a manner appropriate to the child's developmental age. The intent of the CGS process is to encourage the child to experience on an inner level the lesson and then respond to the presentation by working themselves with the materials made available in the Atrium.

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Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is divided into three levels. Level 1 is age 3-6, Level 2 is age 6-9, and Level 3 is age 9-12. "In Level 1 the primary image for children is Christ the Good Shepherd who loves his sheep and gives everything he is for them. The Good Shepherd knows his sheep and calls them by their name. The child comes to discover who the Shepherd is and who the sheep are. What stands behind all this is the first moment of the covenant, the moment of gift. Level 1 stays focused on the moment of gift with the aim of children coming to a deep enjoyment of it." Children in this level enjoy a special gift of God as they develop a foundation of religious insight that I personally find missing from other catechetical methods. Level 2 students are afforded the opportunity to reflect and experience their personal response to the gift of God in their lives. Children delve into Christology, and the History of the Kingdom of God. The child begins to discover God's plan of salvation and understand that they have something to contribute to it. Level 3 encourages deeper human response on the part of participants. The teachings are focused on the Plan of God as worked out in the Bible and human history

I am personally excited about Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, from my own personal experience and through my study of this catechetical method, because it is in CGS that the child encounters the essentials of our Faith. The levels include presentations on the Sacraments, the Bible, Geography, Infancy and Passion Narratives, Prophecies, Parables in a manner appropriate to a Childs learning ability. I believe it to be wonderfully faithful to the teachings of the Catholic Church. I believe that this method above any other simply presents the truth and beauty of Scripture and Liturgy in a way that is accessible, meaningful, and truthful to children; the passion to fidelity of Church teaching that I insist on in our parish catechists.

We can all acknowledge that the development of an interpersonal relationship is somewhat of a mystery. The relationship between God and the child which produces in the child the desire to draw near to God in the very relationship that is encouraged through this catechetical is exciting. In the words of Dr. Sofia Cavaletti, who developed the program, "If we want to help the child draw nearer to God, we should with patience and courage seek to go always closer to the vital nucleus of things. This requires study and prayer. The children themselves will be our teachers if we know how to observe them."

We are blessed here at St. Mary Star of the Sea parish in that our pastor the Rev. Fr. John Topel, S.J. was previously responsible for the Masters Program for Religious Education at Seattle University. He had read and studied a number of articles on CGS since making him aware of this method of catechesis. He has encouraged the development and implementation of it here at St. Mary Star of the Sea. Again, I ask you to give consideration through prayer, and discernment to authorizing the implementation of Catechesis of the Good Shepherd within the Archdiocese of Seattle. I have enclosed two articles for your review supporting Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. The first is from America, September 15, 2008, titled The Faith of a Child, by Ann Garrido. The second is from Church magazine, National Pastoral Life Center, summer 2008, titled The Faith Formation Of Children, Are We Asking the Right Questions?, by the Rev. Fr. Chris Aridas.

Yours in Christ,



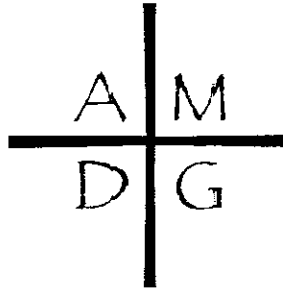
Rev. Mr. Carl W. Swanson

Pastoral Assistant

Cc: The Rev. Fr. John Topel, S.J., Pastor

Encl

James Harbaugh, S.J.  
Parochial Vicar



## ST. LEO CHURCH

A Jesuit Parish  
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July 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2009

Ellen Bollard  
Religious Education  
Assumption Parish  
6201 33<sup>rd</sup> Ave. NE  
Seattle, WA 98115

Dear Ellen:

Kim Ward, from our neighboring parish, St. Patrick's, asked if I would write you in support of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. I told Kim I would be happy to do so. I have been familiar with the Catechesis for seven years now, first during my time as pastor at St. Therese Parish, Seattle, and now at my current assignment, St. Leo's, Tacoma. At St. Leo's the Catechesis has only been offered for a year, so most of my information is based on my experience with the St. Therese atrium, under the leadership particularly of Carla Orlando.

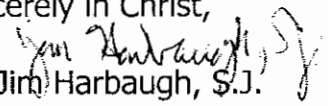
I have read the basic texts of the Catechesis, Sophia Cavaletti's two-volume explication. As she notes, the Catechesis is remarkable for several reasons. First, it is deeply grounded in the Bible, and particularly in the Gospels. Children in the Catechesis hear the voice of Jesus with great clarity, and respond whole-heartedly. Second, the Catechesis is intimately bound with the Mass, and with the liturgical seasons. Children in the Catechesis are engrossed with the Mass, with bread and wine and water, with the vestments and the chalice and the paten, in no small part because they get to touch and work with child-sized versions of these elements. Finally, especially for older children, the Catechesis provides a strong sense of salvation history, especially of the Gospel story and of our story now. It also gives a strong sense of the place, of the places where the Gospel stories take place. This is particularly valuable since the Catholic church takes a historical, not a fundamentalist, approach to understanding the Scriptures and our response to them.

While I was at St. Therese I participated as often as I could in the seasonal celebrations of the children, the catechists, and the parents who were connected to the atrium. I loved sharing the light and the water and the prayer of all involved; quite as remarkable as the attention of even very young children was the enthusiastic participation of their parents. Parent support for the Catechesis was deep and strong. I've been privileged to hear, first- and second-hand, some of the marvelous things the children have said in the atrium over this time; I will leave it to the catechists to submit some of these. More than once I have used them as the basis for homilies that have captivated adults.

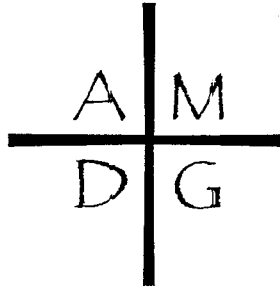
Finally, what I most value about the Catechesis is that in it, the adults walk with the children and listen to the children tell their experience of God. A few years ago I heard an excellent talk at Palisades, sponsored by the archdiocesan office for Faith Formation, given by a theology professor from Loyola-Marymount in L.A. He stated, most persuasively, that good Catholic catechesis does precisely this: it accompanies seekers on their faith journeys, seeking always to avoid coming between God and the person being catechized (a principle also crucial in the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola, on which I have written).

In the light of all the gifts that I have known the Catechesis to bring to a parish community, I am happy to recommend its continued use, and am particularly glad that we are now using it at St. Leo's. I would of course be happy to add any information on the subject that might be useful.

Sincerely in Christ,

  
Fr. Jim Harbaugh, S.J.

Stephen Lantry, S.J.  
Pastor



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November 13, 2009

Anne Frederick, Ed.D.  
Parish & School Faith Formation  
710 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Seattle, WA 98104-2017

Dear Anne,

I believe we have not yet met; however, I saw and heard you introduced a couple of months ago at the Holy Spirit liturgy celebrated by the community at Bellarmine Prep. Dotti Krist-Sterbick, Kim Ward, and Demetra Schweiger asked me several months ago to write to you about my perceptions concerning the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS). The delinquency in responding to their request is wholly mine.

Dotti Krist-Sterbick discussed CGS with me and showed me some of the materials almost three years ago. But it is Trinka Hamel who, as the chief catechist in the Atrium, has revealed to me the amazing effects it has on both children and adults. While it was obvious to me that the program is geared for children, I did not have the necessary skills to evaluate the program. It was not until August of 2007 that I actually began to understand how powerful this educational approach is. At that time, I accepted an invitation from Kim Ward to visit the Atrium at St. Patrick's in the North End of Tacoma. I'm not sure that language alone can do justice to my experience during the 20-30 minutes she and I spent there; we spoke very little until after we had stepped outside. The way the room was arranged by "works", the perfect sizing of everything for children, the obviously scriptural, liturgical, and sacramental orientation of every object, the very feel of the place-----all impressed upon me the sacredness of that space. At that time, I could not have explained the interior feelings produced. Now that St. Leo Parish has its own Atrium, I understand much better its meaning and its dynamics.

Back in the mid-seventies, I was a pretty mediocre student of philosophy; however, I still remember how one professor spoke about the impact on the philosophy of Jean Piaget through his study of children and how they actually learn and understand anything. Like Bernard Lonergan, Piaget came to understand that all real human learning begins with experience. While this is true for many reasons, the central one seems to be that experience produces the questions that both provoke and guide the human quest to understand---- experience is the source of all of our "whys".

Unlike an ordinary classroom, the Atrium really belongs to the children; it is a place of quiet and solitude, even when the children are being noisy children. Even though the most popular "works" with the younger children are (as Trinka Hamel says) "the sand tray, the creation tray, and anything to do with water," the Atrium remains so Christocentric, with every "work" and activity pointing to the question, "Who is this as?" Whether working with the Sign of the Cross or the gesture of Epiclesis or the

Sheepfold and the Good Shepherd or the contour map of the Holy Land, the mystery of the child encounters the mystery of God become flesh in Jesus. The service of the water & wine, the readings from Scripture, the vestments in their liturgical colors signaling the changing liturgical seasons-----all draw the children deeper into the mystery the whole community celebrates each Sunday.

The three Atrium levels seem well geared to different developmental movements in children: 1) Level I (3-6) focuses on the Good Shepherd and the child's individual relationship with Jesus; 2) Level II's (6-9) theme is the True Vine, engaging the communal nature of our relationships; and 3) Level III (9-12) focuses on the plan of God, through time & space, and the part each one of us has to play in working for justice and the kingdom.

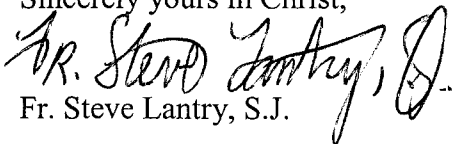
What has impressed me most strongly is that all the children's learning is incarnate, i.e., it grows like they do, organically, out of the combination of their study and their times together with the whole community. Its not that they understand the full meaning of all of the signs and symbols they come to cherish. Rather, like all of us, sacred objects, sacred rituals, sacred gatherings become a deep part of them, even as their understanding of the meaning deepens with the passage of time and the broadening of experience.

Finally, it is the impact on the families of these children that so confirms the profound faith effects of CGS. In the Children's Catechumenate, one to young yet to read still notices that the prayer card has changed; when other children read "Alleluia", she begins to sing the word. During infant Baptism preparation, parents, children and catechist are gathered around the little rock font, Paschal Candle, other candles white garment, and oils. After the Prologue from John's Gospel is read, the catechist lights a candle from the Paschal Candle and greets each parent by name: "N., the light of Christ is fro you!" After all receive in silence, a parent suddenly lights a candle and presents it to the catechist with the same greeting. Spontaneously, someone begins to sing, "This Little Light of Mine" and all join in. In an RCIA gathering, the catechist shows the signs of the Epiclesis and the Prayer of Offering; all practice the signs, then the catechist tells them that the founder of the CGS program calls them our signs of "cosmic respiration".

The CGS program is like a small stone tossed into a pool: its ripples have only begun to cross the whole worshipping life of the community. I expect to see even more and even greater effects as the mystery of our children's moving toward Jesus unfolds.

May God bless you and all your works, Anne; in those same works, may you be both blessed and a blessing. Peace to you as we enter the hope and expectation of Advent.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

  
Fr. Steve Lantry, S.J.



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August 17, 2009

Anne Frederick  
Faith Formation Dept.  
710 9<sup>th</sup> Ave.  
Seattle, WA. 98104

Dear Anne,

Blessings as summer begins to heat up once again! I am writing to offer a few reflections on Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS).

CGS has been a part of our catechetical efforts for over seven years. It began because of the interest of Joanne Terranova who had been trained in this methodology and saw the potential for us as a parish. It grew slowly and with deep roots. As we saw the potential, we sent more people for training and began to expand our offerings. It is now part of the Faith Formation we provide as a parish to augment the effort of the primary teachers of the faith, the parents (which can be a tough sell to them.)

It has been my experience that those children and parents who participate in CGS have a deep understanding of their faith at a level far greater than most children. This is especially true in terms of liturgy and sacraments. Because of the style of CGS, the children have hands-on learning, repetition, learning at their own pace and learning together.

I am grateful for CGS as part of our Faith Formation. We have integrated it into Sacramental Prep and RCIA. It is my desire that we continue to deepen our commitment to this process of passing on the faith.

If I can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to call on me.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fr. James E. Lee". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Fr. James E. Lee  
Pastor, St. Michael Parish



## st. patrick parish center

September 2009

About fourteen years ago when I came to my present parish of St. Patrick, I decided to try something different in regard to Religious Formation. I felt that our program was weak and ineffective not unlike many others that I have experienced before. We researched many of the programs available but one particular program caught the attention of my then Faith Formation Pastoral Assistant. When she introduced me to this program I was somewhat skeptical and hesitant to implement it but at her insistence and because of her obvious joy at finding what she considered a pearl of great price, I decided it was worth a try. And I must say with the benefit of hindsight I am very pleased that we did. The results speak for themselves.

Through the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd which has been around for many years, the best kept secret, I have seen a remarkable change in the children who have participated so far and in their parents as a result of their participation. The parents get drawn in because of the effect it has on their children. It is hard to believe that little ones can spend two hours in atrium and be completely absorbed by the materials which speak to them of the whole history of salvation and the life and times of Jesus and what Jesus accomplished by his death and resurrection. Scripture, liturgy, and prayer are intertwined in such a way that our children do not just learn about God but literally immerse themselves in the mystery of God's love for them through Jesus our Good Shepherd.

It is a Montessori based program which enables the children to grow in their relationship with God and God's people in a practical, deeply personal and meaningful way. One cautionary note however, patience is required because of the depth of training needed to be a catechist of the Good Shepherd and finding people who are willing to commit this amount of time on a volunteer basis. Once people are introduced to the program, however, catechists are attracted by what they see, and for many it becomes a kind of conversion experience. As I said earlier, the results speak for themselves and I am truly gratified by what I have seen and witnessed so far. The introduction and implementation of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd has enriched our parish community immeasurably. I look forward to its continued growth and eventual impact on our entire community.

If you have any questions I will be happy to respond as best I can.

Sincerely in Christ the Good Shepherd,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rev. Seamus Laverty". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Fr. Seamus Laverty