



# Parent Page Newsletter

For the parents of children in the CGS Atrium

October 2025

## Language Acquisition

Throughout an atrium year in Level I, catechists show and name a variety of articles, materials, biblical characters, and liturgical gestures, e.g., articles from the Model Altar or Baptism, the “Map of the Land of Israel,” “the Magi,” or the “Gesture of Epiclesis.” When doing so, they use a method that Dr. Maria Montessori developed to help children acquire the language of the atrium vocabulary of the world around them. This method is called “The Three Period Lesson.”

The Three Period Lesson is modeled after the normal stages of language development of everyday life in the home. Children, ages 0-6 years, are in the sensitive period for language acquisition. From the moment of their birth, they are listening to their family members naming a myriad of things in their home and surrounding environment—*naming these things over and over again*. This early and first stage of language development is what catechists model when giving children the names of the various items in the atrium and the Church; this is the “first period” of the Three Period Lesson.

Initially, with the youngest children (toddlers), catechists might use only the single label, e.g., “Chalice.” When showing this to the child. With the first-year children in the Level I atrium (for 3 to 6 year-olds), it might sound like this: “*Chalice*. (Long pause) The *chalice* is the beautiful cup at Mass.” These few words allow the child to focus on 1) the name of the article, and 2) its description. To maximize the number of times the children hear the name of an item, the catechist’s next statement might be: “John, you hold the *chalice*,” and, after allowing time for the child to hold and look at it, the catechist might say, “John, please hand the *chalice* to Emily,” and so forth. With a little group of 3 or 4 children, they might hear the name of each article up to nine times in that presentation. Catechists try to avoid using pronouns when referring to the various objects, because use of pronouns (e.g., it, they, them) only reduces the number of times the child can hear the name of the item.

Parents of very young children, e.g., toddlers, might use this same focused approach when naming particular items around the home for their children. Initially, say only the name of the item, e.g., “ball,” “cup,” “Jesus,” whenever encountering it with the child. When they’re older, after naming the item, follow with a brief description or comment, e.g., “Ball. I will roll the ball to you! You roll the ball to me!” or “Jesus. (Pause) Jesus is with us at Mass.” Using this simple method, parents will be surprised with their children’s growing accumulation of vocabulary, whether of the home or the Church!