



The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

- An Association of Children and Adults -

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PRESS RELEASE

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The National Association of Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (www.cgsusa.org) announces the that one of the founders of Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, Dr. Sofia Cavalletti, 94, died peacefully in her home in Rome, Italy on Tuesday, August 23, 2011. Dr. Cavalletti, along with her colleague Gianna Gobbi, began to work with children in 1954 in the area of children's religious formation. Dr. Cavalletti was first inspired to understand children's spirituality following a discussion over a passage of scripture with several children. The children's engagement and response to the discussion caused her to seek a deeper understanding of the relationship between God and the child.

Dr. Cavalletti and Ms. Gobbi met through a mutual friend and together they collaborated for more than 50 years listening to and observing children in the context of a prepared religious environment called an atrium, basing their approach on the principles of education developed by Maria Montessori. What children revealed to them was their unexpected capacities for relationship with God. Children from very diverse geographical, social and cultural environments responded to this relationship with a profound sense of joy which as Dr. Cavalletti said, "puts them in a particular state of peace, such as to make us think that this relationship satisfies a vital need within children."

Dr. Cavalletti received her degree in Hebrew and Comparative Semitic Languages from the Universita La Sapienza in Rome. She contributed to several editions of the Bible (Old Testament), translating Isaiah, Leviticus, Ruth, Esther, Judith, and Proverbs, and to international publications on biblical studies. Dr. Cavalletti was also a specialist in the field of ecumenism, especially pertaining to the Jewish-Christian relationship.

It is her work with children, however, that she is best known. Her experiences and insights about children's spirituality are well-documented through her books such as *The Religious Potential of the Child*, *The Religious Potential of the Child, Six to Twelve Years*, and *The Good Shepherd and the Child: A Joyful Journey* as well as in numerous articles. Many of these articles are found in the annual *Journals* of the National Association of Catechesis of the Good Shepherd.

Dr. Cavalletti also believed the formation of the adults as catechists to children was vital. She shared her biblical scholarship and liturgical studies along with her observations of the children's responses to certain biblical and liturgical themes in lectures, seminars and courses for adults as well as through her books, most particularly, books on the study of salvation history in *History's Golden Thread* and liturgical studies in *Living Liturgy*. Both of these books have been revised in Italian and will soon be republished in English as a two volume set illustrating the link of Bible and Liturgy. Upon their re-publication in English they will be entitled: *History of the Kingdom of God: From Creation to Parousia, Volume 1* and the *History of the Kingdom of God: Building the Kingdom through Liturgy, Volume 2*. Dr. Cavalletti's most recent book is *Ways to Nurture the Relationship with God*, co-authored with Patricia Coulter.

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Dr. Cavalletti and Ms. Gobbi were somewhat surprised by the interest and development of their work beyond Rome, once some of Cavalletti's books were published in other countries. People began to come to Rome seeking training courses or inviting Dr. Cavalletti and Ms. Gobbi to lead courses in other countries.

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd was first offered in the United States in 1975 in a course given by Dr. Cavalletti in St. Paul, Minnesota. Since that time, Catechesis of the Good Shepherd has developed in churches, schools and homes in various denominations in the United States. Today there is a large family of CGS catechists and children in thirty-seven countries around the world who are connected through an International Council of representative associations. Catechesis of the Good Shepherd has often been referred to as a movement of the Spirit in the Church. What Dr. Cavalletti has provided children as well as adults is a theologically sound and systematic approach to Christian formation which is rich in the Bible, liturgy, and sacred history.

Dr. Cavalletti's reverence for the Bible and liturgy, her fresh and compelling style of writing and speaking, her wise and intelligent way of discussing complicated theological themes simply, her sense of humor and personal warmth will be greatly missed.

For more information, please visit the website for the National Association of Catechesis of the Good Shepherd in the USA – www.cgsusa.org or contact National Director, Mary Mirrione at marymirrione@cgsusa.org, or 480-228-5189.