



In the Meadow

Where the sheep gather



Greetings!

Welcome to

In the Meadow, a resource for our Organization Members. As an Organization Member of CGSUSA, we value your support of and partnership with the National Association. As a valued member of the CGS community, we want to provide information that you can share with catechists, parents and parishioners about our work in CGS. Each month we will send you *In the Meadow*, which will focus on a particular theme.

This month we look at Grace and Courtesy which is the term we use in CGS to express how we live beautifully in community.

Our hope is that you will forward the entire newsletter to catechists; copy and paste information in your parent newsletter or send to your bulletin editor; or select a piece of information to post on your social media. Please know that additional resources on this and other topics are located in the [document library](#) on our [website](#), information is also available on [social media](#), as well as the videos found on our [YouTube channel](#).

For the Parish Bulletin or Parent Newsletter or Catechist Note

32 Points of Reflection

What are the principle points which distinguish this catechesis and because of which it is called the "Catechesis of the Good Shepherd"? The following characteristics are intended to represent the principle aspects of the catechesis as they have emerged after more than fifty years of work with children of different countries, cultures and socio-economic backgrounds. These characteristics are reflective of the constants which have presented themselves in this work and are presented here with the invitation to go deeper into them for further reflection.

1. The child, particularly the religious life of the child, is central to the interest and commitment to the catechist of the Good Shepherd.
 - The catechist observes and studies the vital needs of the child and the manifestations of those vital needs according to the developmental stage of the child
 - The catechists live with the child a shared religious experience according to the teaching of the gospel: "Except you become like little children, you cannot enter

the kingdom of God." (Matthew 18:3)

- The catechist attends to the conditions which are necessary for this life to be experienced and to flourish.

For the Parishioner: You may have heard about The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd method of Faith Formation. What words or phrases in the above characteristic strike you as important for the spiritual life of the child?

For the Parent: How do you as parents live a religious experience with your children? How does your child offer you a glimpse of the kingdom of God?

For the Catechist: What have you observed this year in the atrium as the "conditions" for religious life to be experienced? What in your Atrium that has allowed the life of the child to flourish? What did you observe in the first months with the child that makes you aware of any changes that need to be made?

For Catechists or For Parents

Faith Vocabulary for January 2017

This month we look at terms that were introduced by Dr. Maria Montessori and that we use in the formation of CGS catechists.

Grace and Courtesy -

Children are formally instructed in social skills they will use throughout their lives, for example, saying "please" and "thank you," interrupting conversations politely, requesting rather than demanding assistance, and greeting guests warmly.

Normalization - A natural or "normal" developmental process marked by a love of work or activity, concentration, self-discipline, and joy in accomplishment. Dr. Montessori observed that the normalization process is characteristic of human beings at any age.

Normalizing event - Within the prepared environment of the Atrium, children experience a normalizing event every time they complete a basic work cycle, which includes 1) choosing an activity; 2) completing the activity and returning the materials to the proper place; and 3) experiencing a sense of satisfaction.

For Parents

Parent Newsletter - January 2017

*This month we look at **Observation as a Tool for Parenting**. The **Parent Resource page** on our website has a library of parent newsletters on a variety of topics.*

Observation as a Tool for Parenting

Observation has played a vital role in the development of both Montessori education and Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. It was Maria Montessori's

serve parents as they seek to help their children grow in life giving ways. Here we will explore what observation is and offer some ideas for parents to utilize it

For the Catechist

Grace and Courtesy



Liza and Kacie making peace.

At the beginning of your year, you may have spent time on lessons of Grace and Courtesy. Toward the end of the last month, your children may have shown the results of spontaneous kindness and consideration in the Atrium environment. As you return from Christmas break, you will want to revisit Grace and Courtesy with the children as a reminder of how we care for each other.

Grace and Courtesy Revisited with the Younger Child

Will your children benefit from the catechist representing or by helping the child remember what it would look like? You may want to revisit prior to entering the Atrium, as the children are arriving. "Who remembers how to ask someone if they can watch them work?", "Who remembers what you might do if you want to talk when someone else is talking?", "When we need to cough is there a way we can help make sure we are careful of others?" Are there other situations you want to revisit with the children? You may want to include: how to interrupt. how to sit in a chair, etc.

Grace and Courtesy Revisited with the Older Child

Discuss that just as there is a beautiful order in creation, what is the order that we need for the Kingdom of God and for our time in the Atrium? Using "What If" sentences, ask the children, "What if everyone wanted to talk at the same time?". "In the Atrium how do we make the environment beautiful?", "How do we work with in groups? What does it look like?", "How could this be in our Atrium?"

How to recognize the Normalized Child in the Atrium

The child is normalized who thoughtfully and carefully selects all the materials and items needed for a particular work. When a child does this, he or she is thinking about the process of the work or activity.

The child is normalized who is able to concentrate. Have you noticed when a child is concentrating, unaware of activity that is going on around them?

Signs of normalization in the Atrium would include

- Love of work, the child freely chooses their work and finds joy in the chosen work.
- Concentration, where the child becomes absorbed in their freely chosen work.

- Joy, the child works without becoming tired or weary. When the work is done, the child is refreshed and full of joy.

E. M. Standing, in his book Maria Montessori: Her Life and Work states: "The crowning characteristic of a group of normalized children is joy. It pervades the little community like a perfume; and is as hard to describe as it is easy to perceive."

For Reflection...for the Catechist in the Atrium

The Sources: *from Sofia and Gianna*

"Young children have a natural ability to enjoy their relationship with God in a very deep way. Children are capable of enjoying the presence of God; they are able to give themselves totally to God's love. It is only before the age of six that children are completely inside this joy."

- The Good Shepherd and the Child: A Joyful Journey p 10

Who is the most joyful person you know?
What hinders you from experiencing joy?



We look forward to hearing from you. Please let us know what resources may be helpful to you as an Organization Member.

In the Shepherd's Care,

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