



# In the Meadow

*Where the sheep gather*

*A newsletter for the Organization Members of CGSUSA*



## Greetings!

This month we celebrate the Feast of Christmas, this "news of great joy for all people" is given first to the shepherds who were nearby, who go to adore him and then glorify God. Let us lift up the words "great joy" - what do you imagine when you hear those words? What would "great joy" look like for you? For your family? For your community?

The word joy is from the Latin *gaudia*, "I rejoice," Did you know the word JOY is found in the Bible approximately 182 times, REJOICE is found approximately 248 times? May the joy we hear proclaimed in the Scriptures and the joy our children experience in the Atrium be a great gift to you this Season!

*For the Parish Bulletin or Parent Newsletter or Catechist Note*

## The Characteristics of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd The 32 Points of Reflection

*What are the principal 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 principal 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.*

**5. The themes presented in the atrium are those to which the children have responded with depth and joy. These themes are taken from the Bible and the liturgy (prayers and sacraments) as the fundamental sources for creating and sustaining Christian life at every developmental stage and, in particular, for illuminating and nourishing the child in his/her most vital religious needs.**

For the Parishioner: The children respond with joy to the themes presented in the Atrium. They feel a particular kind of joy. It is not a joy that produces an emotional excitement, which leads to fatigue and irritability. Rather it is a joy that makes them peaceful, relaxed and involves the child completely. One child, having felt a physical joy with being with God responded, "My body is happy." How does / can your community support Catechesis of the Good Shepherd so that all the children have an opportunity to experience this joy?

For the Parent: Sofia Cavalletti, founder of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, notes that just as increased height and weight are signs that the child's physical needs have been met, joy is the sign that a child's spiritual needs are being met. How have you seen (or heard from your child's catechist) that your child's religious needs are being met in the Atrium?

For the Catechist: When have you seen a child respond in joy this year? What vital need was being met that led to this response? To what was the child responding, ie scripture proclamation, gesture, time at the prayer table, silence game, working with materials, etc.? Have you taken the time to Journal about what you observed?

### *For Parents*

*This information may be included in your communication with parents.*

*This month our focus is [The Holy Family](#)*



## All About the Atrium

CGSUSA Parent Newsletter

The Holy Family

As the youngest of four children, I was used to

identity: Will I be among those who know and

### *For the Catechist*

*In both The Religious Potential of the Child and The Good Shepherd and the Child: A Joyful Journey, we read the story of a young child:*

*A little three-and-a-half-year-old girl asked her father where the world came from. Her father, who is not a believer, gave her a long speech to explain that the world had not been created, and so on. After this explanation he added that some people say that everything was made by a most powerful being, whom they call "God." At this point the little girl started running around the room in a burst of joy saying, "I knew what you said wasn't true. It's Him! It's Him!" The grandmother was present during this. Though an atheist herself, she was the one who related this. When the father was speaking, the child felt he was betraying her in some way, but she could not defend herself because she was lacking the words. As soon as her father pronounced the word, she grasped it immediately and said, "It's Him; It's Him. I knew what you were saying wasn't true."*

*We know that there is a mysterious bond between the child and God. How have you seen the lived out in your Atrium sessions?*

*How is this bond manifested with the older child?*

*Name the ways that the child has recognized God in the environment this year.*

*Have you been surprised ("It's Him!") at His presence this year? Describe the situation.*

### *For the Catechist and the Children*

*This month CGSUSA member Paula Rush shares the song, "We Wait in Joy."*

*What songs are you reviewing as you prepare for the Feast of Christmas?*



*We Wait in Joy*

### *For Reflection...for the Catechist in the Atrium*

## **The Sources: *from Sofia and Gianna***

In early 2018, we will begin to explore the Kingdom Parables with the children. Let us return to our sources and read about the Work of the Child. Does your Atrium have a prayer card with the verse from the Our Father listed below?

#### **THE WORK OF THE CHILDREN**

**The most important word of the children as they continue to absorb the Good News of these parables of the Kingdom will be that of re-reading the text (using the Scripture booklets and asking an adult or another child to read for them if needed) and working with the related material (diorama or other manipulative materials if there is one). Another important activity will be their creative artwork, along with reading and copying or illustrating related prayer cards.**



**For the Kingdom parables, we give them a prayer card with only one verse from the Our Father or the Lord's Prayer:**

*Your kingdom come; your will be done!*

**With older children we will ponder the whole prayer, but for the now just this one line captures the joy and the longing that is stirred in young children in coming to know about and fall in love with God's kingdom.**

- Sofia Cavalletti, [The Good Shepherd and the Child: A Joyful Journey](#), p 55

The black and white version of some of the elements that you would like to copy and paste to your parish bulletin or catechist communication can be found [here](#).

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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