

## What is *Io Sono il Buon Pastore* (I Am the Good Shepherd Book Series)?

One of the breakout sessions at the 2014 International Retreat and Celebration, “ The New Child and the New Adult,” was a presentation from the Mexican Association concerning their use of *Io Sono il Buon Pastore* (I Am the Good Shepherd) which is a series of children's workbooks (referred to in Italy and in Latin America as children's "albums") for children ages six to twelve years old, accompanied by catechists' guidebooks.

This book series was first written by Sofia Cavalletti for school children in grades 1-5 in the Diocese of Rome. In 2007, Sofia decided to revise the texts and this second edition was published by Tau Editrice and, thus, made them available to "the public." (Both editions of these books received the Imprimatur in Rome.) Over the last several years, the CGSUSA board has had many discussions about these books and their use in the United States. There has been a concern that having this series of books published (in such a "textbook culture" as ours) could impact an understanding of CGS for children as rooted in the life of the atrium. Also, there were other texts by Sofia and Gianna that the board felt needed translation and publication as they were key to catechists' understanding of the work (*Religious Potential of the Child Six to Twelve Years, Listening to God With Children, The History of the Kingdom of God, Parts 1 & 2, The Good Shepherd and the Child: A Joyful Journey, Ways to Nurture the Relationship with God*, to name just a few).

Sofia and Gianna came to feel that the content of CGS needs to be available to every child, regardless of whether they are fortunate enough to be in atrium or not. When Rebekah Rojcewicz and Mary Mirrione went to Rome in December of 2010, Sofia asked Rebekah to "help her" write a statement regarding the child's work with the "albums." She wrote: “The Good Shepherd calls his sheep by name; it is up to us to train the ear to detect the sound of this voice who calls. This voice reaches us through different instruments, but, regardless of the instrument, the voice resounds in the depths of the heart.”

At that time, she was considering making an additional point to the Characteristics of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd regarding these workbooks and guidebooks. Ultimately, she left that decision up to the Board of the International Council who, following Sofia's death, decided to incorporate a point about the *Io Sono* series into Characteristic #17, which now reads: *In the atrium the materials are placed at the disposal of the children to aid their continued meditation upon and absorption of the theme presented by the catechist. In places and situations where it is not [yet] possible to have a full atrium environment, another instrument for transmission of the message is the series of children's*

CGSUSA Statement on *Io Sono – I am the Good Shepherd Textbooks*.

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*workbooks and catechist guidebooks called: I Am The Good Shepherd. The voice of the Good Shepherd can be heard through different instruments: the atrium with its materials and the workbooks and guidebooks of I Am the Good Shepherd. Regardless of the instrument, his voice still resounds in the depths of the heart.*

CGSUSA is working on the translation of these books from Italian to English. While these books have an Imprimatur from Rome, the English translation needs its own. Year 1 and 2 have received the the Nihil Obstat and the Imprimatur, year 3 has been translated and are being edited. Year 3 will be submitted for the Imprimatur in the coming months. Year 4 and 5 are in the process of being translated.

Their availability and use in the United States, in light of the current understanding that CGS is something that takes place in an atrium environment, brings many considerations. Like all CGS catechists, those who desire to use this method will need to receive some formation which CGSUSA will provide to meet that need. We will proceed carefully, knowing that Sofia's introduction of these books in the Diocese of Rome did not replace sixty years of experience with children in the atrium. They simply became another tool available for children for whom an atrium was not yet possible.

Each country where CGS has blossomed must consider the culture and needs of the country when making such decisions about these books without losing the experiential nature of the atrium for children that aids their discovery and enjoyment of their relationship with God. We have placed a high value in recent years on truly embracing and deepening our understanding and practice of the first three characteristics of CGS. We have offered courses and support to our catechists in deepening their understanding and practice of Montessori's pedagogy as it applies to the atrium environment. We look forward to offering you more information and support with these books as well.