

Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton Parent Handbook 2016-2017

CATECHESIS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD *Where a child can fall in love with God*



Dear Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Family

Welcome to the atrium and to the joyful journey with the Good Shepherd! We are so grateful to God to be able to offer this approach to faith formation to your child.

THE ATRIUM:

The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd classroom is called an atrium. The name comes from the place where people were prepared for joining the Church in the earliest days of Christian history. It is a place in very close proximity to the church just like the atrium or indoor courtyards in modern office buildings are today. The atrium is a place of quiet and meditative discovery. It is here that your child will delight in his or her relationship with God.

We know that even the youngest children, in their deepest being, are in an intimate, loving relationship with God. The atrium environment helps them give expression to that relationship. Every movement and even every word in the atrium environment is purposeful in helping children to that end. The environment is carefully and lovingly prepared and controlled to give the children the independence and silence they need to meet the Good Shepherd and delight in His presence.

You might wonder how this is accomplished. First and foremost it is a gift from God the Father, accomplished through Our Lord Jesus Christ the Good Shepherd, by the power of the Holy Spirit. In a prepared environment (the atrium) with trained catechists whose primary sources are Sacred Scripture and Liturgy the children come to live the joyful life of a child of God. Through Scripture the Father who is in heaven comes lovingly to meet His children and talks to them. In Liturgy the children of God respond in faith and love to the greatest gift of God's blessings.

With Scripture and Liturgy as the pillars the children will be soundly supported in learning about the Kingdom of God, the Life of Jesus, the Mass, the Sacraments and prayer. They will also develop practical life skills like pouring, sweeping, polishing, folding all of which are skills necessary to keep the church (and you home the domestic church) clean and neat. Some of the skills they learn this year will help prepare them to serve Mass when the time comes. But most of all they will know how much the Good Shepherd loves them and their joy will be deep within them and they will delight in the realization that God has chosen them to receive such a magnificent blessing.

OBSERVATION IN THE ATRIUM:

Know that you are always welcome to observe in the atrium, but if possible please let us know at the beginning of the class the week before you would like to observe. This will give us time to prepare the children for the observation something that is important to the order of the atrium. There is an observation sign-up sheet out front of the atrium, or just ask your child's catechist. In your packet there is information about coming into the prepared environment. It is important to the life of the atrium to follow guidelines. Like monks, their work is their prayer!

The first few weeks will be spent helping the children learn about life in the atrium. They will learn to speak in a quiet voice and to walk slowly, both of which respect the work of the other children in the atrium. It may be wise to wait a few weeks to observe unless you are certain that your presence will not be a distraction to your child or any other child in the atrium.

CHILD'S ARTWORK:

The child's artwork is kept in the atrium with the catechist in the child specific art folder. This can be prayerful meditative work of the child, so we gather it in the atrium and keep it in a special place that each child knows it is theirs, we send this special artwork done in the atrium home with you and child twice a year – before Christmas break and at the end of the year

ARRIVAL:

Before arriving at the atrium, please be sure children have eaten a well-balanced meal and have used the restroom.

The Parish center and hallways are extensions of our Church building with many activities going on each day; please encourage your children to be respectful, use inside voices, and walking feet when entering and leaving the Parish Center.

When you arrive with your child, about 5-7 minutes prior to class time, please help them hang their coat or jacket and other outer wear on coat rack, use the restroom and say good-byes outside the atrium in the hallway gathering space. Here the assistants and catechists will greet the children and invite them to sit down while we wait for the other children to arrive and ready ourselves to enter the atrium. We may discuss a little about what we will be presenting in the atrium, and sing the CGS atrium songs.

After a brief time, and all children have arrived, the Catechist will invite each child by name to enter the atrium or in some cases all will enter the atrium together.

LATE ARRIVALS:

If you arrive late, please gently knock on the atrium door, and an assistant or catechist will come to the door to invite the children in. Late arrivals can be disturbing to the children in the atrium, so please avoid to your best ability. If it appears that you will arrive 20 or minutes late, it is best to just miss and wait until the next atrium session.

DISMISSAL:

None of the children are released from their rooms until their parent comes to get them. If your child is leaving with someone other than yourselves, please fill out the Release form before our sessions begin for the year. We will keep a copy with your child's catechist, so that the children are safely released back to you. The catechist will dismiss the children from the atrium individually; the catechist will make sure they see you in the hallway before sending them forth.

INCLEMENT WEATHER/EMERGENCY CLOSURES:

If atrium session is cancelled the Catechist will be in touch with the parents to let them know. We will use your preferred contact method chosen on the Contact Information Form.

ILLNESS AND ABSENCES:

Please keep children who are sick at home until they recover. Please contact the catechist by email-phone-text to let them know that your child is ill, and then they will not await their arrival.

FIRE DRILLS AND WEATHER WARNINGS:

We will discuss the fire drill procedures with the children and conduct a fire drill sometime in the first weeks of sessions. If ever a tornado warning, then we take the children into the women's restroom, until warning is concluded.

DURING ATRIUM SESSION:

Parents with younger siblings not attending atrium can gather and wait in the nursery during the atrium sessions if staying on site.

Or parents are welcome to visit the chapel to pray for the children and their catechists during their child's atrium session.

PARENT TAKE HOME WORK PROJECTS:

We will throughout the year have various work projects of materials and supplies that you as Parents and older siblings can help with. These would not be for the children attending the atrium to prepare, but something you can do to help us in the atrium. We have a few cutting projects available tonight that you can check out and volunteer for. We have a sign-up sheet on the counter and instructions and supplies with each project packet.

ATRIUM ASSISTANTS:

Adults and high school students are needed to assist the catechists in the atrium. We ask that you prayerfully consider becoming an assistant. Assistants will be provided with training and materials, no experience needed. Current certification in Safe Environment required; for further information, visit the Archdiocese website. <http://www.archomaha.org/safe-environment>

2016-2017 SCHEDULE:

Sessions begin September 8, 2016 and meet weekly through May 7, 2017. We will have various weeks off including Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Years, Holy Week, Easter and a few other weeks.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Christi Olsen, CGS Director
402-740-7790
colsen@infinitycpagroup.com

CATECHISTS

CGS Level I (ages 3-6) (through Kindergarten):

Cheryl Reeson 402.493.8205 (Thursdays 4:30-6pm) thereesons@gmail.com
Paul Santos/Renee Santos 402.493-3288 (Saturday 9:30-11am) paul.santos@creighton.org
Maria Christensen 402.496.2414 (Sunday 9:15-10:45am) mjchr1@cox.net

CGS Level II (ages 6-9) (1st through 3rd grade):

Jeanne Schulte 402.660-6104 (texts welcome) (Thursdays 4:30-6pm) spicierlife@me.com
Christi Olsen 402.740.7790 (Saturday 9:30-11am) colsen@infinitycpagroup.com
Lynne Santos 402.493-3288 (Sunday 9:15-10:45am) lynnemsantos@gmail.com

QUESTIONS:

Always feel free to call or see your child's catechist if you have any questions; we welcome your interest and are always happy for a chance to talk about Catechesis of the Good Shepherd!

God's richest blessings upon your family,

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton
Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Committee

"Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven."

Matthew 19:14