

A Gift to the Church

Most pastors, catechists and parents involved with CGS find it exceedingly worthwhile and effective. It has received acclaim for both its theological substance and its careful attention to the developmental capacities of the child. Widespread anecdotal evidence indicates that children in the program are active, engaged members of their Christian communities and articulate about their faith.

As a result of CGS formation courses, adults discover that their faith is greatly enhanced in the process. Course participants go on to serve in atria as well as in other parish ministries such as leading adult catechumenate in RCIA, preparing couples for marriage, baptism preparation and sacramental preparation for children. They also work in Catholic and Montessori AMI schools, Christian day care centres and in home school environments.

A Bridge between Christians

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd can also bridge the divides within the church. It appeals to liberals and conservatives among several Christian denominations. Participants in the formation courses include Catholics, Orthodox, Anglicans and Lutherans.

Endorsements From Church Leaders

go to www.cgsac.ca > quick links



For Information on Adult Formation Courses in Your Area

Visit www.cgsac.ca > Training
Course brochures may be downloaded
or email formation@cgsac.ca

Financial Aid

Never let financial hardship be a reason to avoid formation. The Ed Krupica Scholarship Fund is available to [members](#) for tuition assistance. Details may be found in the course brochures

To Become a Member of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Association of Canada

Go to www.cgsac.ca > quick links > "Join us"
Membership privileges include:

- ✓ Reduced fees for catechist formation courses, workshops and the annual CGSAC conference & retreats
- ✓ Access to the Ed Krupica Scholarship Fund.
- ✓ Fellowship and support through the formation and membership committees of the Board
- ✓ Access to the mentoring programme of CGSAC
- ✓ Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Association of Canada newsletter - One Flock, One Shepherd
- ✓ Voting privileges at the annual General Meeting

For a List of Atrium Locations in Canada

Go to www.cgsac.ca > atrium locations

For More Information See

www.cgsusa.org

YouTube: Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Introduction

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The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Association of Canada

Helping children fall in love with God



Our Mission

We will increase the involvement of children and adults in a joyful and contemplative shared religious experience of our covenant relationship with God, in which the religious values of the child predominate.

Where it Started

The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS) is a religious education movement that began almost 70 years ago and has taken hold in 37 countries around the world. Founded by Sofia Cavalletti, a scholar of Hebrew and comparative Semitic languages, and Gianna Gobbi, a former assistant to Maria Montessori who brought to this dynamic partnership, a deep knowledge of children and their developmental capacities.



Sofia Cavalletti in her atrium in Rome*

Where it Happens

The women created what they called an “atrium”; a place fashioned after a Montessori educational environment, that includes hands-on materials that children use, such as small models of various objects they would see inside the church, dioramas and figures to accompany scripture readings, prayer cards, maps of ancient Israel, timelines of the history of salvation and resources for further study of Scripture and liturgy.

Over time, the women **watched children's** consistent attraction to certain materials and discarded materials that did not provoke either intense reflection or individual work.

Parable of the Good Shepherd



Atria can be found within parishes, Catholic Montessori schools, traditional schools, day care and communities of parents home-schooling their children. Most catechists have been trained to work with 3-6 year old children, but many have gone on to complete further levels of training, allowing them to create and facilitate atria for 6-9 year-olds and 9-12 year-olds.

What distinguishes the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd from traditional religious education?

- 1. Theology of the Child** - CGS perceives the child as someone in deep relationship with God from before birth and who needs a language and a space to help this relationship grow, as opposed to one ready to be instructed about God.
- 2. Role of the Adult** - The adult is invited to move out of the role of teacher and serve instead as a kind of **spiritual director listening carefully to each child's** needs and questions and matching that child with resources from the faith tradition that will best serve **the child's spiritual journey. The adult is a co-listener** and a co-learner with the child before the word of God, not an instructor.



Pentecost Celebration - The 7 Gifts of the Holy Spirit

3. Attention to the Environment

Montessori observed that children absorb language, culture and even religious beliefs largely through what is around them rather than through lessons and lectures. The atrium is purposely structured not as a classroom, but a place within which the spiritual life can be lived.

4. Spiral Methodology

 - Five core themes are

first introduced to the child at age 3 and touched on every year until they are age 12, expanding and going deeper on what has been covered previously. The themes are the incarnation, the kingdom of God, the paschal mystery, baptism and Eucharist. Whereas, traditional religious education often dedicates each year to a different theme.



Building the City of Jerusalem

- 5. Emphasis on Essentials** - Cavalletti observed that children quickly become restless when they are given peripheral material, but concentrate and settle down when given what they are hungering for. CGS seeks to use the fewest words possible, **rid itself of “busy work”** and introduces only themes that children, over time, have indicated meet the criteria of what is essential.



The Annunciation Diorama with figures