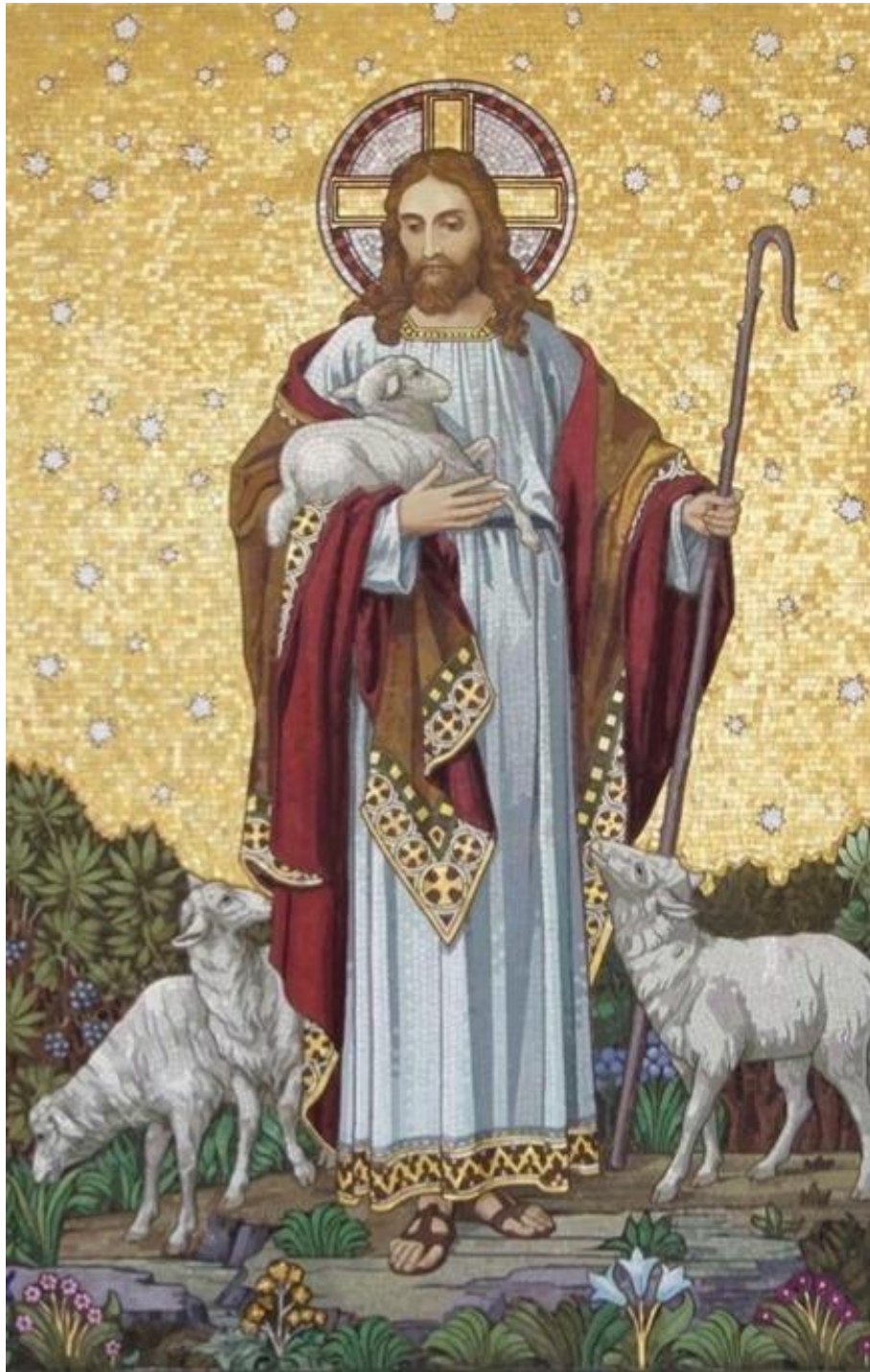


St. Michael Catholic Church
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM
CATECHESIS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD



ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES

ENVIRONMENT – The Atrium is a special place of prayer and enjoyment of God, where children listen to the Good Shepherd's voice during catechetical presentations and can meditate on God's Word while working. In order to cultivate a prayerful environment, we teach children to use the slow Atrium walk and a quiet Atrium voice. Please model a quiet manner of speaking and walking to help your child become accustomed to using their Atrium voice and Atrium walk.

ARRIVAL – On-time arrivals are essential so that you do not disrupt group presentations given at the beginning of Atrium. If late arrivals become habitual (more than 3 times), the catechist will discuss an alternative plan for your child. Before arriving at the Atrium, please be sure children have eaten a well-balanced meal and have gone to the bathroom. Since the Atrium is a reverent environment, like a church, please encourage your children to use their Atrium voice and Atrium walk when entering. Toys from home are not permitted in the Atrium.

DISMISSAL – At the end of Atrium, the children gather around the prayer table to listen to the Word of God, pray and sing. When Atrium is over, children are called by name to line up for dismissal. Children will only be released to designated persons authorized by parents or legal guardians. If you arrive late, your child will wait for you in the Atrium. In the best interest of your children and catechists, please be prompt in collecting your child.

ILLNESS AND ABSENCES – Please keep children who are sick at home until they recover. In the event of an illness or absence, we are unable to let children make up Atrium sessions on other days in order to keep consistency with each session.

ATRIUM BEHAVIOR – Following the discretion of the catechist or assistant, if a child hurts another person in the Atrium (by hitting, kicking, biting, pinching, scratching, etc.,) we will ask that the child skip the next week of Atrium. This is to cultivate an atmosphere of respect in the Atrium. If this happens a second time, the child will be asked to wait until the following year before returning.

CHILD'S PAPERWORK – Each child will have a folder in which to keep papers (coloring, pasting, etc.) At the end of the year, we will send the work home. Parents should not expect paperwork after each session, since one of the key Montessori principles is that young children work for the process and not the end product.

CANDLES – Candles are lit in the Atrium when Scripture is read and during sacred moments. An adult always supervises the children when they are near candles. Only the adult handles matches.

INCLEMENT WEATHER – We follow Fairfax County's School Policy for inclement weather or emergency closures and delays. If Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) close, the Atrium is closed. If FCPS are delayed, the Atrium is open and on time.

PARENT VOLUNTEERS – We are very grateful for parental help. It is a wonderful way to be involved in your child's Atrium experience. We need volunteers to assist during the Atrium, monitor the hall and escort children to the bathroom, clean-up after Atrium, artistically paint figures, sew, and do wood-working. Please contact the atrium coordinator if you are interested in volunteering.

TUITION SCHEDULE

In parish	
1 child	\$425
2 children	\$800
3 children	\$1,150
4 or more children	\$1,475
Out of parish	
1 child	\$625
2 children	\$1,200
3 children	\$1,750
4 or more children	\$2,275
Late Registration Fee	
	\$50

*Checks should be made **payable to “St. Michael Church.”***

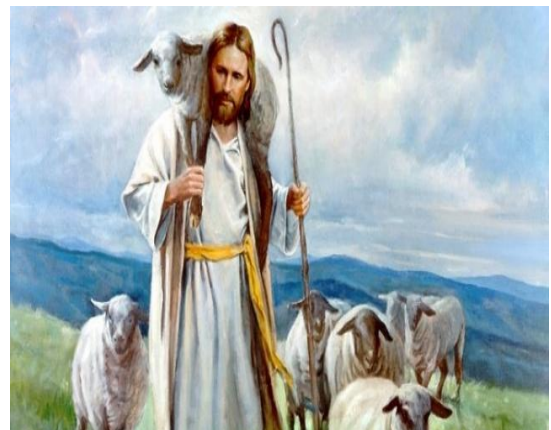
ENROLLMENT, TUITION, FEES - Registration for the fall begins each spring and ends on August 31. Tuition is due at registration and covers the cost to furnish and construct the catechetical materials used in the Atrium. Late registrations are taken on a case-by-case basis and there is a \$50 Late Registration Fee.

NEW STUDENTS – To be enrolled in our Program, students must be baptized at the time of registration or by August 1 (one month before the beginning of the school year). The student's Baptismal Certificate is required at the time of registration. Registration will not be considered completed until all required documents have been presented and the tuition paid.

TOURS – Registered children receive a brief Atrium tour the first week of Atrium. If you would like a tour, please contact the atrium coordinator at least 2 weeks before classes begin to schedule a tour.

REFUNDS – In general, tuition is non-refundable except in circumstances where the family moves to a location outside the Parish boundaries, in which case the refund will be mailed to the new address. However, during the first 3 weeks of Atrium, we assess the child's readiness for the Atrium. If we determine that the child is not ready (i.e., not potty-trained or not able to follow simple instructions and work independently), we will ask that the child wait till the following year. Tuition will be refunded if this determination is made by the Catechist. After the first 3 weeks, tuition is non-refundable.

BATHROOM POLICY – Children must be fully potty-trained and bathroom independent before their first day. Please dress your child in clothing they can manage on their own, such as elastic-waist bottoms with no snaps, zippers, or buttons. If a child needs to use the restroom during a session, an assistant will escort them. Atrium personnel support each child's independence, dignity, and privacy, but do not provide hands-on bathroom assistance. If a bathroom accident occurs, a parent or guardian will be contacted immediately to manage their child's clothing needs. Atrium personnel cannot change soiled clothing.



GENERAL INFORMATION

What does the word “catechesis” mean?

The word “catechesis” is often defined as oral instruction given to catechumens (those preparing for baptism). It is from a Greek word, related to the word, “to teach,” and means “resounding” or “echoing down.” It refers to the passing on of the truths of our faith.

The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd takes its name from one of the earliest and most central presentations offered to children, the parable of the Good Shepherd (John 10:3-5, 11-16). This catechesis is rooted in the Bible, the liturgy of the Catholic Church, and the educational principles of Maria Montessori. The children’s “classroom” is an “atrium,” a room that has been prepared specifically for this catechesis and which contains simple yet beautiful materials for the children to use.

How can the beautiful materials in the Atrium help the religious life of the child?

If an adult hears a beautiful passage from the Bible, the adult may read it slowly, pondering it again and again. But a little child, too young to read, needs another way. In an Atrium the child can ponder the biblical passage or a prayer from the liturgy by taking the material for that text and working with it – placing wood figures of sheep in a sheepfold of the Good Shepherd, setting sculpted apostles around a Last Supper table, or preparing a small altar with the furnishings used for the Eucharist.

Is Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Catholic?

Yes. This catechesis came about through the work of two Roman Catholic laywomen in Rome: Sofia Cavalletti and Gianna Gobbi. They were inspired by the educational principles of Maria Montessori, also a Catholic. The materials they prepared for children, beginning in 1954, were based on the Bible, the Roman Catholic liturgy and sacraments, Tradition, and church teachings.

A Window into the Atrium:

The children are gathered around the catechist who gives a brief introduction to the scriptural story, recalling something the children already knows about Jesus (lifting up any words that may be unfamiliar). Then a candle is lit and the solemn reading of the scripture takes place. The catechist might ask, “What did we hear in this scripture?” At this point the material is introduced. “This is the sheepfold. This is the Good Shepherd. These are the sheep.” The catechist reads the parable again, moving the material with very simple movements: placing the sheep in the sheepfold, the shepherd calling them out, the shepherd going ahead of them, the sheep following.

The second narration is followed by the catechist posing a few, open-ended questions: “I wonder how the Good Shepherd knows each sheep by name?” The catechist invites a prayer response from the heart of the child (There are other moments when the catechist begins to introduce formal prayers).

The catechist shows the children how to gently put the materials away and where the materials are stored so that they can choose this work for themselves during their individual work time. The expectation is always to return materials to their place ready for the next person. The children work repeatedly with this material, moving it in their own way as they appropriate its truth.