

The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd began in Rome in 1954. Sofia Cavalletti, a Hebrew Scripture scholar, and Gianna Gobbi, a teacher trained by Maria Montessori developed the Catechesis with the belief that small children already have an ongoing relationship with God. Learning a way of prayer through Scripture and liturgy meets a child's vital need and leads to profound peace in Level I (ages 3-6). They develop a strong relationship with Jesus, the Good Shepherd who calls them by name. They listen to his voice and fall in love with him. This close relationship coupled with presentations on the Mass and Eucharist, encourage the children to long for the Eucharist.

In Level II (ages 6-9), the children are presented with a new image of the Trinitarian God in the parable of the True Vine. Here the children's role is not just to remain close and follow, but to actually participate in the life of the Vine. The history of the Kingdom of God is presented on a timeline with three moments highlighted in this history: creation, redemption, and parousia. The children reflect on their "blank page"; the history we live now. We see the Bible as a library of books. We prepare for first Reconciliation by presenting the parables of the Found Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Forgiving Father. We focus on the tremendous mercy of God and introduce the Great Commandment as well as the Maxims, moral sayings of Jesus. Presentations on the Mass and Eucharist create an even deeper desire for the Eucharist.

Level III (ages 9-12) continues to present in depth the personal and social morality introduced in Level II. Baptism calls the children to follow Jesus and spread his light to others. They are introduced to the Ten Commandments and the Virtues. The children ponder a timeline called the Plan of God, which traces the rise and fall of ancient civilizations, God's self-revelation to the Hebrew people and God's continued presence with us in history, in the sacraments and in the Word. We explore the history of the Jewish people and do typology studies of creation, sin, the flood, Abraham, and Moses. The children also examine the sacramental rites and the prayers of the Mass.