

CATECHESIS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD CATECHIST FORMATION PROGRAM

The Level One Formation course consists of 90 hours of study and prepares the catechist to work with child (ages 3 to 6). The catechist will become grounded in both theory and praxis, in order to create and facilitate a Level I atrium in a parish setting. The following topics are covered:

- **The Developmental and Religious Characteristics of the Three to Six Years Old Child:** Catechists will study the important aspects of the child's development, focusing particularly on their relationship with God
- **The Trinitarian God:** Catechists will study the relationship between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, so as to understand how the child comes to know a God who is deeply relational. Traditional prayer language of the Church in which God is addressed as Father, Son and Holy Spirit is considered.
- **The Economy of Salvation/Salvation History:** Catechists will explore the theme of Incarnation and how the person of Jesus Christ is presented to the 3-6 year old as the greatest gift of God – which is shared by Christ throughout the world with the coming of the Spirit. God prepared humanity for this gift through the prophets, which are also studied.
- **The Life of Jesus Christ (Incarnation and Pascal Mystery):** Catechists will enter into mystery of who Jesus, the greatest gift of God, is. In Jesus, is found the clearest revelation of how God works in history so the land in which he lived and the core events surrounding his birth, death, and resurrection will be studied.
- **The Teachings of Jesus:** Catechists will study the particular Gospels, which reveal that the primary, overarching theme in Jesus' preaching and teaching was the Kingdom of God. Several "Kingdom parables" will be studied in an attempt to grasp the true nature of this Kingdom. In addition, the image of Jesus as the "Good Shepherd" – who calls by name and invites all into an intimate personal and communal relationship to him for the "fullness of life" will be studied.
- **The Church:** Catechists will study multiple images from scripture in which humans are invited to share in both a personal and a communal relationship with God, thereby laying a foundation for a rich theology of Church, particularly in Baptism & Eucharist where the images of liturgical life reveal what it means to be Church.
- **The Liturgical and Sacramental life of the Church:** Catechists will study the articles of the Mass, the Church's rich language of liturgical signs, the rhythm of the liturgical year, key gestures and prayers in Liturgy and in the Rite of Baptism

- **Prayer:** Catechists will become familiar with different forms of how the young child prays. Prayer phrases from the larger Christian Tradition, Psalms and the Gospel are lifted up for reflection.
- **Christian Morality:** Catechists will learn to develop a learning space that is conducive for listening, in a most particular way for the voice of the Holy Spirit, who will guide the child consistently toward that which will bring him/her the 'fullness of life' the Good Shepherd promises. Such disciplined listening lays the foundation for the formation of conscience.
- **Education for Community Life:** Catechists will learn the foundations necessary for the children to learn how to relate to each other and live with each other in a healthy, Christian manner, through a series of exercises showing how to prepare the child to care for the environment, care of self, and care of the community around them.

The Level Two Formation course consist of 120 hours of study and prepares the catechist to work with Level II child (ages 6 to 9). The catechist will become grounded in both theory and praxis, in order to create and facilitate a Level II atrium in a parish setting. The following topics are covered:

- **The developmental and religious characteristics of the 6-9 yr. old child:** Catechists will learn the important aspects of the child's development, focusing particularly on the rich scriptural & liturgical heritage of our sacramental tradition.
- **The Trinitarian God:** Catechists will study the Traditional Trinitarian prayer language of the Church, especially in the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist along with a study of several Johannine parables and narratives in Jesus' life that speak of the relationship of the Father, Son, and Spirit.
- **The Economy of Salvation/Salvation History:** Catechists, focusing on the three key moments of Creation, Redemption, and Parousia, come to understand how the 6-9 year old child is introduced to God's Reign as it has unfolded in time.
- **The Life of Jesus Christ (Incarnation and Pascal Mystery):** Catechists will continue a deeper study of the mystery of Christ through the geography and core events surrounding his Birth, Death, and Resurrection and Ascension. Common themes or threads that permeate these stories e.g. the presence of the Spirit, the juxtaposition of great and small, etc. will be covered.
- **The Teachings of Jesus Christ:** Catechists will study the image of the True Vine and Christ's unique role in this Kingdom and to begin to explore its social implications. 'Moral' parables are introduced as the child increases in her/his desire to understand what it means to live in this Kingdom.
- **The Church:** Catechists, through presentations on Baptism, Eucharist and images of Christ from Scripture, will explore what it means to be Church.
- **The Liturgical and Sacramental Life of the Church:** Catechists will study key moments of the Rites of Baptism, Eucharist, Reconciliation and their accompanying prayer.
- **Christian Morality and Catholic Social Justice** teaching Catechists will discover how the firm foundation of love and listening established in the 3-6 atrium experience prepares the 6-9 year old child to hear key moral parables and maxims in the teaching of Jesus.

- **Prayer:** Catechists will study more structured forms of communal prayer, especially through the practice of the Liturgy of the Hours. The Our Father is studied as a particularly treasured prayer in the Church.
- **Education to Community Life:** Catechists will learn guidelines and practices for harmonious communal living, directly addressing and discussing — in context of the atrium community, the relation to the larger world we live in.

The Level Three Formation course consists of 160 hours of study and prepares the catechist to work with Level III child (ages 9 to 12). The catechist will become grounded in both theory and praxis, in order to create and facilitate a Level III atrium in a parish setting. The following topics are covered:

- **Developmental and Religious Characteristics of the 9-12 year old child:** Catechists will learn the important aspects of the child's development, particularly the child's growing desire and capacity to wrestle with the mystery of time and their own role in history.
- **Trinitarian God:** Catechists will continue to study the Traditional Trinitarian prayer language of the Church – especially in the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist along with a study of several Johannine parables and narratives in Jesus' life that speak of the relationship of the Father, Son, and Spirit.
- **The Economy of Salvation/Salvation History:** Catechists will study the "Plan of God" in great detail through extensive study of the Old Testament, archeological and historical material. Key moments and figures in the history of Israel and common threads that run throughout this history to aid the child to reflect more substantially on his/her own role in God's plan. The prophets continue to be lifted up as those who have a special call in listening for and discerning God's Plan and announcing it to the world.
- **The Life of Jesus Christ/Incarnation and Salvation History:** Catechists will study events surrounding childhood, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, noting common themes that permeate these stories.
- **The Teaching of Jesus Christ:** Catechists will deepen their study of Jesus' 'Kingdom parables' so as to help the children grasp the true nature of this Kingdom and to wrestle with its social implications.
- **The Church:** Catechists will study the sacraments in light of the universality of the Church across nations, cultures, and history including the fractures that have taken place in the Church over the past 2000 years in this context of God's larger plan that 'all will be one'.
- **The Liturgical and Sacramental Life of the Church:** Catechists will study the rites of the sacraments and the Roman Missal.
- **Christian Morality:** Catechists will study the moral parables and maxims in the teaching of Jesus. The moral life is presented as a joy-filled path leading to ever more abundant life.

- **Prayer:** Catechists will explore how to help the 9-12 year old child link their prayer to the prayer life of the larger Church – especially through the practice of the Liturgy of the Hours and the planning of prayer rituals for themselves that include readings from scripture, praying the psalms, petition, praise, and song. Traditional scriptural prayers of the Church are introduced formally.
- **Education to Community Life:** Catechists will study the teaching of Jesus, the guidelines and practices of harmonious communal living– in context of the atrium community and in relation to the larger world.