



## **Our Lady of Perpetual Help**

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**Catechesis of the Good Shepherd**

**Parish Life Center**

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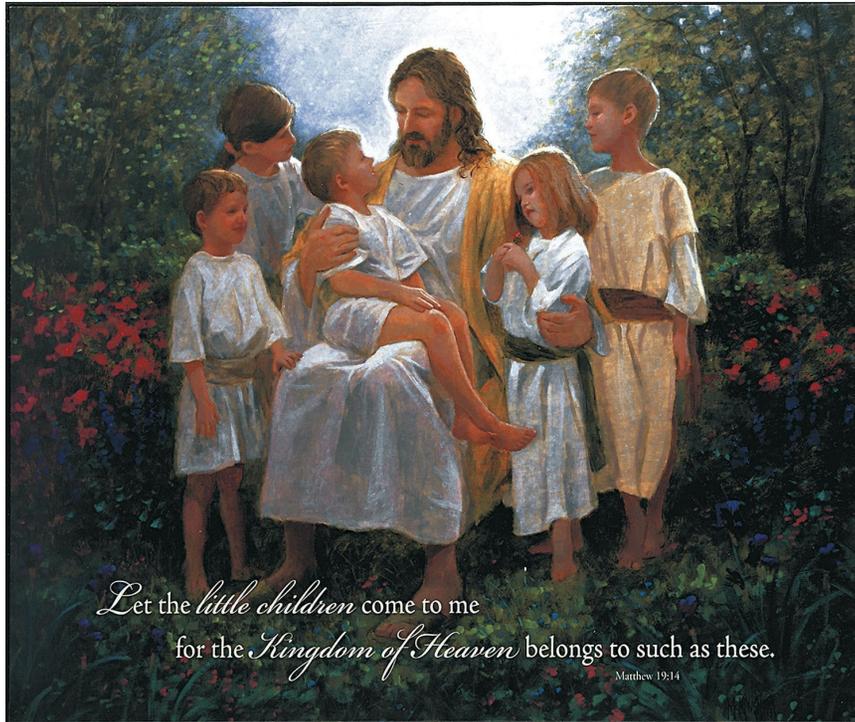


**Our Lady of Perpetual Help  
Catechesis of the Good Shepherd  
Spiritual Formation for Children**

**PARENT HANDBOOK**

If anyone wishes to rank first, they must be servant to all. Then He took a little child and putting His arm around him said, “Whoever welcomes a child such as this for My sake welcomes me.”

Mark 9:35-37



Help us, O God, to enter into the secret of childhood so that we may know, love and serve the child in accordance with the laws of Thy justice and following Thy Holy Will.

Maria Montessori

### Safe Environment Training

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Church strictly adheres to the Diocesan *Policy and Procedures for the Protection of Minors*. All volunteers need to update their safe environment training annually.

If you have never taken an in-person safe environment foundation class, please go online at their website:

[www.safeenvironmenttraining.org](http://www.safeenvironmenttraining.org) and register for the class titled *Protecting God's Children for Adults*. You can choose any location and time that works for you. At the foundation training, you will receive a volunteer application and code of ethics that must be completed and turned into the location at which you wish to volunteer. Once the Parish receives your paperwork, we contact references, and you will be contacted for a face-to-face interview. For those who have already taken *Protecting God's Children for Adults* in the past, please go online at: [www.safeenvironmenttraining.org](http://www.safeenvironmenttraining.org) and follow these instructions to renew.

1. Click on *My Obligations*
2. Type in your first name
3. Type in your last name
4. Type in your street address only
5. Click on *Search*
6. Verify your personal information and update if necessary
7. Scroll down and click on *Update Information and Continue*
8. In red typing you will see, *Classes you are currently required to take*

Please complete your training and you will be automatically updated in the Diocesan database. There is no need to sent the parish a copy of your certificate.

If you have questions, please contact Mari Pittman at [mpittman@olphaz.org](mailto:mpittman@olphaz.org) or (480) 874-3710. *If you no longer volunteer at OLPH, please call or email so we can update your file.*

We thank you so much for your time you give to OLPH Catholic Church. God bless you!

## **Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS) Forms of Communication**

We hold an open house on Catechetical Sunday before classes start and additional meetings for sacraments. Please read the parish bulletin and emails from CGS. We ask parents to communicate by phone, email and direct contact with catechists.

### **Materials**

The materials in the Atrium are attractively displayed inviting the children to explore and deepen experiences at their own rhythm. The most important characteristics of the materials is their close link to biblical and liturgical sources. The shelves include maps of Israel and miniature dioramas representing the elements of the parables and historical events from Scripture that have been shown to satisfy the spiritual needs of the child. The altar, baptismal font and other liturgical items initiate the child into the liturgical life of the church. Much of the child's time in the Atrium is spent working with these materials. For this reason please do not expect to see work sheets coming home from these sessions.

### **Observing in the Atrium**

We are happy to have you observe this sacred space any time you like, in fact we encourage it! To preserve the natural rhythm of the Atrium we ask that you pick up a copy of the guidelines for observing from your child's Atrium and please let your child's catechist know when you would like to come for a visit so a place can be prepared for you.

### **Session Times**

**After school** Sessions start promptly at 4 pm and end at 5:30 pm.

### **Sick Children**

Only well children are permitted in the Atrium. If your child is experiencing a profusely runny nose, a fever, has vomited or is experiencing abnormally loose stool in the past 24 hours he or she must be free of illness for 24 hours before returning to the Atrium.

### **Snacks**

The Atrium is a place of prayer and therefore a sacred space. Food and drink is not permitted in any of the Atria.

## **Catechesis of the Good Shepherd**

### **Information for Parents**

### **Just what is Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS)**

The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is an approach to the religious formation of children 3-12 years of age. It originated in 1954 with the founding of the children's center or "atrium" in Rome, Italy. Inspired by Montessori Principles of Education, it now extends to many countries all over the world. Atriums can be found in home, parish and school settings.

The Catechesis is based on the conviction that God and the child are already in relationship. The child has a deep need to experience and a special capacity to enjoy the presence of God. The task of the adult is to help the child live fully the encounter with God. When helped to do so, this experience becomes formative in the child's whole person and generates great joy.

### **...Then what is the "Atrium?"**

The atrium is one of the elements that help the relationship between God and the child to flourish. The atrium is the environment where this formation takes place. The atrium can be compared to a retreat house facilitating reconciliation and silence. In the early church the atrium was a place where the catechumens were prepared. For the child, too, the atrium is a place of preparation for involvement in the larger worshipping community

## Catechesis of the Good Shepherd for your Child

**Level I** is for preschoolers and Kindergarteners (3-6 year of age)

**Level II and Sacramental Preparation** (6-9 years of age)

We follow the policies of the Diocese of Phoenix. These policies may be found on the diocesan website, [www.diocesephoenix.org](http://www.diocesephoenix.org).

Children begin their preparation for all three sacraments when they begin Level II of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd which is a three year process. First graders are in the first year of this process.

In the second year of Level II the children prepare for and receive the sacrament of Reconciliation, provided they are ready. The sacrament is conferred in February. Parents attend a meeting in the fall. Parents and children attend a retreat together prior to the evening of First Reconciliation.

Children in their third year of Level II prepare for the sacraments of Confirmation and First Eucharist (Communion). These children are normally in third grade. Parents play a vital role in this preparation. They attend a meeting in the fall and are invited to a prayer service in the Atrium in January. A retreat is given the weekend before the sacraments are conferred. Parents attend with their child. These sacraments are conferred at the same Mass either at the end of April or beginning of May.

**Level III** (9-12 years of age)

Children in 4th and 5th grades attend weekly sessions in the Atrium. The goal here is mystagogia, moral formation, the plan of God in salvation history and “my place in it,” as well as connecting the New Testament to the Old. Now the children respond to the love of God by asking, “What is my role as a confirmed Catholic?”

### Commissioning our Catechists

Our program begins with the commission of our catechists and assistants at Mass on the 3rd Sunday in September. Sessions begin that week and continue until the middle of May.

### Attendance

It is our goal to provide the best possible religious formation for our children here at OLPH. If your child cannot attend a session, please call the office at 480-874-3710. If the office is not called the absence is unexcused. Please have the consideration to notify us before class begins. It is difficult for your child to make up a missed session. Please make every effort to have him or her here. If your child has 3 unexcused absences we will need to meet with you and assess how to proceed and what is best for your child. For sacrament preparation, the parent meeting, prayer service and the parent and child retreat must be attended. Communication is the key!

### Before the session, PLEASE...

Let your child know you think their work is wonderfully important. Avoid sugary snacks and drinks before coming...and please make sure your child goes to the bathroom before entering the atrium.

### Curriculum & Themes

After years of working with this age group, it was found that whatever their culture, children responded in the same way to certain elements of the Christian message. Because of this fact, a core curriculum took shape. The curriculum is constructed so that it accommodates and nurtures faith and the moral developmental stages of the child’s growth. The themes are offered in such a way as to encourage the religious potential present in every child: the capacity to love and be loved. For a detailed description please ask in the Parish Life Center for the “beige booklet”.

### Discipline

There is an atmosphere of peace in the Atrium that develops from the start. The children learn how to move and be in a way that does not distract others. We take time in the beginning of the session to settle. From time to time a child may have difficulty settling. We have various peaceful ways of helping the child with this. We may ask you for help by coming into the session. We are here to support your child, please keep open communication with your child’s catechist to help us in this work.

### Lost & Found

If a child is missing anything, please inquire with your child’s catechist.