



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is CGS?

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is a Montessori-inspired approach to spiritual formation for children. It provides time and space for children to encounter Jesus and to develop a personal relationship with Him. It is based on years of observation of the developmental characteristics of children as they encounter the beauty of their faith.

How is CGS different?

It involves a beautifully prepared environment filled with carefully-constructed hands-on materials, multi-age groupings of children, long un-interrupted periods of work time which allow for individual and internal growth, indirect instruction which invites discovery, well-trained catechists to accompany the child, the chance to experience holy friendships, and orientation towards the religious life of the greater Church. For more information see

<https://www.cgsusa.org/discover/cgs-approach/>

Is it a Catholic program?

CGS is indeed Catholic and was founded as such. Because it is so grounded in Scripture and so developmentally-appropriate, Christians from other denominations have adapted it. In some ways, the beauty of this approach may bring greater Christian unity. However, when purchasing CGS materials or enrolling in training, it is prudent to inquire about alignment with the Roman Catholic tradition. In the Diocese of Columbus, catechists are trained with complete fidelity to the teachings of the Catholic Church.

Is it expensive?

There is an initial investment to make or buy materials and to pay for catechist training. After that, yearly costs may be much less than traditional, book-based programs. CGS is offered throughout the world in communities with wealth and communities in poverty. With careful planning and by tapping into community resources, CGS can flourish in any economic circumstance.

Email CentralohioCGS@gmail.com for more information.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS - UNIQUE COMMUNITY NEEDS

Does it work in schools?

Yes! There are a variety of models in which CGS is used in local Catholic schools. It may be used just in pre-school or offered all the way through sixth grade. It may be used as a primary mode of religious instruction or as a supplement to book-based study. The content presented in CGS correlates with diocesan standards. Several factors (including space, scheduling, staffing and enrollment) determine the particular details of how CGS is structured in a given school. For more information see <https://www.cgsusa.org/discover/begin-cgs/cgs-in-the-school/>

Does it work as a PYC program?

Yes! Depending on the size of the enrollment, a parish may choose to run multiple sessions during the week or weekend. Often this works well with busy family/volunteer schedules and allows for parents to make sure that their children are getting to Sunday Mass AND to catechesis. CGS offers high-quality and accessible programming for children from public schools and those who are schooled at home. For more information see <https://www.cgsusa.org/discover/begin-cgs/cgs-in-the-parish/>

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Our parish has a vibrant Latino population. Can CGS serve us, too?

Yes!
Many of the catechetical materials have been translated. While school-aged Latino children often speak English, they live their spiritual lives in Spanish. It is helpful then, for them to learn the names of liturgical articles and prayers in the language they share with their families. In Columbus, we hope to expand our outreach to include Spanish-speaking catechists in the future!

For more information see <https://www.cgsusa.org/discover/cbp-en-espanol/>



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS - PHILOSOPHY

Why the multi-age groupings?

Montessori classrooms are based on natural developmental stages and allow children within those stages to learn alongside each other. This gives children the opportunity to enjoy being both leaders and learners, to establish secure relationships over three years with the same adult and to avoid some of the comparing behaviors that exist in narrower grade bands. CGS works best in multi-age groupings of 3-6 year olds, 6-9 year olds and 9-12 year olds. However, it may be adapted by grade level, especially to fit into the model of a Catholic school.

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Why have two hour-long sessions?

We give the child the gift of sufficient time to consider the important truths of our faith. Longer sessions allow for greater concentration, depth of discussion and the formation of holy friendships -- things that cannot be rushed. The children are often surprised at how quickly the time passes in the atrium, because they are happily busy with their chosen work. In some instances, the two hour time is narrowed to accommodate parish or school schedules, but always with the hope and intention of eventually providing the child with the time he or she really needs to grow in faith.

Is CGS accessible to children with special needs??

Absolutely. Because CGS reaches children by using a variety of modalities, special needs children can flourish in an atrium. A multi-age environment results in less comparing and more compassion, so differently-abled children feel welcome and valued. Catechists can work with parents to determine the best ways to support children. For more information see <https://www.cgsusa.org/discover/children-with-disabilities/>



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS - SCHOOL

What is sacramental preparation like in CGS?

Sacramental preparation begins at age 3, when the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist is proclaimed. The child grows in awareness of the gifts of Baptism and Communion throughout the level I atrium (3-6 years old). In level II (6-9 years old), a child's readiness may be discerned by the parents, catechist and priest. Following the model of the RCIA, the child makes a public declaration of intent and the community commits to support. Special meditations and presentations are offered as direct sacramental preparation. This includes a retreat prior to receiving Reconciliation and First Eucharist. There is an opportunity for mystagogy afterwards and the atrium community celebrates this important event.

Why does catechist training take so long?

CGS catechist training standards are set by an international council and monitored by a national body in the US to ensure the quality of the CGS experience. Catechist training empowers a volunteer and includes child development, theology, pedagogical methods, prayer, material-making, and practical advice. The role of the catechist is so important -- it is worth the investment of significant time.

What about assessment?

Following Montessori practice, the primary method of assessment in CGS is catechist observation, which includes the adult's attentiveness to the child's comments during reflection, the child's actions and also the child's art and writing.

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